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In the shadow of Paardeberg: Anglo-Canadian Identity and the South African War, 1896-1911

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In the shadow of Paardeberg: Anglo-Canadian Identity and the South African War, 1896-1911

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Abstract

The Boer War was a significant moment in the development of Canadian identity and had a profound legacy for Anglo-Canadians. Though smaller in scale than the First World War, the South African War was Canada's first foreign engagement and the largest military action since the War of 1812. This thesis looks to expose how the forces of imperialism and nationalism worked both in competition and conjunction in the wake of the Boer War to develop the Anglo-Canadian identity. It examines three key areas of impact: political, military, and cultural in order to demonstrate the significance of the war on the evolution of Canadian identity. The war was a massive political challenge for Prime Minister Laurier when it broke out in late 1899, with imperialist and nationalist factions having the potential to rupture the country irrevocably, and as such required a deft political solution. Following Canada's involvement in the war, the dominion was able to be a major part in the renegotiation of Empire through the colonial conferences and by contributing to imperial defence. Defence became a vital space for inter-dominion and inter-imperial cooperation during the decade. Nationalism and imperialism worked collaboratively as the growth of Canada's defence capabilities in both the Militia and fledgling navy were nationalist achievements for imperial ends. Finally, the experience of the war had profound cultural impacts. It both provided evidence for previously held beliefs and myths about national identity, while the memorialisation of the war was vital in identity construction. The war demonstrated to Anglo-Canadians the truth of the Militia Myth, that they were naturally good soldiers and important victories like Paardeberg were vital to this. However, the losses incurred in the fighting meant that the nationalist achievements of the soldiers were memorialised in imperial rhetoric to give greater symbolic meaning. Through memorialisation and experience in South Africa the British connection was maintained. The thesis tackles the standard nationalist narrative of colony-to-

nation by reinserting the Boer War and elaborating on how the forces of imperialism and nationalism operated.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Thomas Edward Davies.

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Contents

Introduction

In the autumn of 1899, over a thousand volunteers left Canada for the South African Veldt in answer to the call of the British Empire. The Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) created an arena politically, socially, and culturally for negotiating Canadians' conception of themselves and what that meant in relation to Empire. Ultimately, just over seven thousand Canadians would serve the British Empire thousands of miles from their home in Canada's first foreign conflict and its largest military action since the War of 1812. These Canadian men participated in Britain's largest and most costly conflict since the Napoleonic Wars. Despite vastly outnumbering the enemy, the British military struggled to overcome the Boer forces and it took nearly three years of brutal fighting to subdue them. This action also resulted in the eradication of farms, the subjugation of civilians in camps, and international embarrassment for the British military. Though the Second Anglo-Boer War has largely been overshadowed by the far larger and more destructive First World War, it was a great event in its own right. The war broke out at a time of transition for the British Empire, as it marked both the apex of Empire and the beginning of a slow decline in imperial power. The British Empire was never as powerful again after the Second Boer War, as international rivals were burgeoning, both on the continent in Germany and across the Atlantic with a rising United States.

The economic downturn of the 1880s had been reversed and the Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 provided a reminder of the strength and breadth of the Empire, and in particular the growing power of the white settler dominions. The 1890s had also brought about a revival in colonial matters with the rise of New Imperialism which incorporated the ideas of muscular Christianity as well as a belief in the civilising mission of the Anglo-Saxon race to bring a British sense of liberal ideology to the world.[1] This renewed interest and zeal for imperialism was shared in Canada largely through Ontario and also more broadly in English Canada, much to the resentment of French Canada. Canada in the years leading into the war was poised to become the new jewel of the Empire, as its vast open and recently tamed prairies were ready to explode in both population and productivity and its landmass bordering both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans made it ripe to be the connector of the eastern and western parts of the Empire. Thirty years into Confederation, the Dominion of Canada was now beginning to develop a distinct sense of nationhood within the Empire, and the war in South Africa provided an opportunity to consolidate its place in the British world.

Elected in 1896, the Prime Minister of Canada Sir Wilfrid Laurier was simultaneously a French Canadian, a true believer in English liberal ideology, and a proponent of empire. He bridged the ethnic gap in Canada and was positioned to bring it into the new prosperous century.[2] The Boer War was a major challenge for his administration, as it divided the country along English and French ethnic lines. It unleashed the press as a political force against his policy of mitigation and had the potential to set a dangerous precedent of Canadian involvement in future British conflicts. Following the war, its consequences were significant and long lasting. The South African War has often been written about as a turning point in the road to independence following the traditional Whig view of Canadian history, which sets Canada as being on a continuous road from colony to nation. Yet the war in many cases actually strengthened the British connection and at the same time Canada's contribution to the war gave it a greater standing in Empire and allowed

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[1] John M. MacKenzie, "Empire and Metropolitan Cultures," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume III: the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 281.
[2] H. Blair Neatby, "Laurier and Imperialism," in *Imperial Relations in the Age of Laurier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 4.

it to take part in the renegotiation of the British imperial system in the subsequent decade. This duality demands a reexamination espousing a more nuanced and detailed approach to follow where imperialism ends and nationalism begins, and to acknowledge the complex interplay of imperialism and nationalism. The biggest shifts that occurred in the post-war Laurier era were in the realms of culture and imperial defence, with the war giving Canadians confirmation of national foundation myths and providing impetus for developing Canada's military capability. Social, cultural, military, and political developments also challenge the predominant narrative that the First World War first gave Canada a sense of identity since the Boer War also proved foundational. For example, Canadian experiences in South Africa like the Battle of Paardeberg provided a template for the memorialising methods and conceptions seen in the veneration of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The Second Anglo-Boer War is vital for understanding the development of the Canadian nation, as doing so encourages moving away from the simplistic colony-to-nation narrative. It provides the framework through which to examine how the forces of nationalism and imperialism shaped the country and its growth within the wider imperial system.

This thesis examines how Imperialism, Nationalism and the South African War shaped the national identity of Canada. It challenges the standard narratives of dominion statehood and national development, narratives which became important following the trauma of the First World War and were widely propagated in the later twentieth century at the centenary of Confederation.[3] The simplistic teleological narrative ignores the complexity of the Canadian involvement in the Empire and the genuine commitment to the British World. This narrative has created a tendency to belittle the Canadian experience to that of colony rather than its position as a senior dominion and major player in the Anglophone world. Moreover, this thesis inserts the Second Anglo-Boer

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[3] Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), xi.

War back into the conversation as more than a sideshow event but as something of considerable magnitude. The Boer War was engrossing for the Empire and Canadians, yet it is largely forgotten in the standard narrative of Canadian history in place of the First World War — tellingly the South African War does not feature on the Canadian Encyclopedia's popular website 'significant events' timeline.[4] While the First World War was irrefutably bigger and far more costly and destructive, the Boer War was by no means less impactful at the time. To understand how and why Canada developed the way it did, the conflict in South Africa must be included. This thesis argues that Canadian involvement in the Boer War did not signal the end of Canadian commitment to Empire, and that imperialism and nationalism are vital to understanding the development of the Canadian nation as well as a broader comprehension of how Empire operated in the settler Dominions. By examining Canada in the Laurier era, its experience in the First World War can be better understood, as can its gradual shift away from Britain later in the twentieth century. More pertinently, the Boer War, military defence, and cultural conceptions of Empire and nation were aspects of the Empire and Canadian nationhood that mattered to people at the time. This is significant to consider because these notions were foundational for Canadians forming potent conceptions of themselves that would endure.

Compared to the other dominions, the Canadian experience is distinctly different. It was both the oldest and largest dominion and the nature of Canada's Anglo and Francophone populations forced a constant evaluation of the impact of closer allegiance to Britain. In Canada, the dynamics of imperialism and nationalism are particularly visible, while the shared contiguous border with the United States was a constant source of anxiety providing a perennial counter against which Canadian identity could be moulded. The US provided cause for greater ties to

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[4] "Significant Events in Canadian History," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed 10th August 2023, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/100-great-events-in-canadian-history.

Empire, and yet also demonstrated at times of crisis such as the Alaska Boundary dispute, the limits to British support and the restrictions on Canadian power.

To properly answer how the South African War and the forces of imperialism and nationalism impacted Canadian national development, this thesis is divided into three chapters that each have a different thematic focus. The first chapter focusses on the outbreak of the war and the political instability that it brought. Though Laurier had been in power for three years, the war in South Africa seriously tested his political leadership and administration. The war threatened to divide the country along English and French ethnic lines, with the Anglo-Canadians being pro-war and the French the opposite. In this scenario the forces of imperialism and nationalism operated in conflict, separating the body-politic and causing political strife for Laurier. Laurier may tacitly have favoured Canadian independence, but he was certainly in no rush to achieve this aim or to break from the Empire. As such he had to manage the potentially destructive power of imperialism and nationalism and worked to avoid the breakup of the fledgling Canadian nation. Usually, Laurier is charged with being forced into committing troops, so he is painted as a figure bowing down to imperial pressure from the metropole and its agents in Canada.[5] This thesis argues instead that Laurier's non-committal position was a deliberate political strategy to manage the crisis, and that when the popular opinion turned, he acted on their wishes by successfully locating a politically and socially acceptable middle ground. The political handling of the outbreak of the war, the way in which Canadians were enabled to contribute, and Laurier's astute political sense meant that Canada did not fissure irrevocably yet it clearly demonstrates the power of imperialist and nationalist forces on the country.

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[5] John W. Dafoe, *Laurier: A Study in Politics* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1922) is a perfect example of this kind of characterisation.

Chapter two examines the impact of the Boer War in Canada in two ways. Firstly, it explores the military and defence developments following the conclusion of hostilities and how this affected Canadian national development, and secondly it demonstrates how Canada used imperial defence to take part in the renegotiation of the imperial world system by examining the conflict through the Colonial and later Imperial Conferences. In the years following Confederation, the Canadian militia had been left in disrepair and had become a source of easy political patronage.[6] Sir Frederick Borden, Minister of Militia for the entirety of Laurier's tenure, was committed to reform and developing the fighting efficiency of the force. Canada's involvement in the Boer War also gave leverage to change the relationship between itself and Britain from being one of dependency to one of parity. This negotiation can be viewed clearly through the Colonial Conferences where the dominion heads and the British government met periodically to discuss the future course of the Empire. The conferences illuminate that as local politics became more pertinent to Dominion leaders and as Britain was less able to impose policy, defence became a key area of continued cooperation that enabled discussions which reinforced imperial bonds and worked to avoid a breakup or at the least slowed the separation of the white settler dominions from the Empire. The colonial conferences are usually missed for the sake of the changes they instituted, but the actual exchanges held at these meetings give an invaluable insight into exactly how this reordering of the Anglosphere took place and how the legacy of the Boer War influenced it.

The third chapter centres the study back onto Canada and examines the cultural impact of the war on the home front's idea of national identity. Similarly to the previous chapter, imperialism and nationalism were again working in tandem within the cultural sphere to aid in the construction

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[6] Stephen Harris, *Canadian Brass: The making of a professional army, 1860-1939*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 24.

of a national identity. Nationalist myths and ideas that made up a sense of identity predated the war in South Africa. These pertained to the Anglo-Saxon sense of masculine strength being engendered by the northern climate and how that made Canadian citizens naturally good soldiers. The contingents that were sent to the South African veldt were mostly volunteer civilians and their good performance meant that this rhetoric, embodied by the Militia Myth, was proved. Thus Canadians were seen to be naturally good fighters. Yet, this was Canada's largest military conflict since the War of 1812 and unlike the century before, soldiers were no longer anonymous. They were citizens with families, jobs, and friends. People would notice their absence. Consequently, as much as the victories of the Canadian contingent were constructed to be tantamount proof of Canadian martial prowess, it came at the cost of Canadian blood. While the victories were written of in nationalist terms, the sacrifice of the men was placed into imperial rhetoric to give it added sentimental and national importance. The memorialisation of the war was a key space for the formation of national identity narratives. Through memorialisation the British connection was retained and, in many cases, it was enforced rather than rejected, yet thanks to the specific actions of the Canadian contingents their actions continued to be heralded in nationalist terms. Imperialist ideas were so ingrained that even ardent nationalist thinkers who wrote of Canadian independence could not help but employ some aspect of a British connection. In this way, the Boer War had cemented a distinct Canadian identity and yet also reinforced the British connection.

Any study into national development and identity requires a careful handling of various topics and theoretical frameworks. In this case, the nation and state need to be defined, as does imperialism. Initially, this thesis agrees with the widely accepted ideas of Benedict Anderson in that the nation is an 'imagined community,' a group which perceive a sense of belonging to a larger whole without necessarily knowing each individual.[7] The ‘nation’ can therefore be theoretically separate from the state in that it is a collective identity, however, gradually over time the two have become synonymous and conflated. For this study, the state is an entity, in that it is a nation that has systems of government, administration, and well-defined borders.[8] In this sense, the Canadian state existed and had been growing in strength since Confederation, yet because of the continental size of the country, the federalist government and historic ethnic identities, there still existed within Canada what could be called nations. People can and do have multiple identities, so while the province of Quebec had a French identity, they too perceived themselves as Canadians, and the same is true of Anglo-Canadians in Ontario. The larger nation-state was Canada with smaller identities within. This study focusses on how English Canadians viewed themselves and Empire, they took their own ideas of ‘national’ identity and transmuted that onto the entire country. This does not mean that every other Canadian accepted or believed in the Anglo-Canadian prescribed sense of national identity, but this study addresses how this group of Canadians used their own Canadian identity and that of the Empire to develop the nation of Canada.

Imperial and national identities have proved a controversial topic in Canadian historiography, with Canadian historians preferring to overlook this complex interrelationship rather than analyse it until very recently.[9] As with the idea of people having multiple identities, so too is it difficult to label for the purposes of study various groups into specific categories. Carl Berger’s hugely influential and groundbreaking study *Sense of Power* essentially painted Canadian imperialists as proto-nationalists, showing how imperialism was in no way at odds with Canadian

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[7] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, Revised Edition 2016)
[8] René Grotenhuis, *Nation-Building as Necessary Effort in Fragile States* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 31.
[9] Graham Thompson, *Ontario's Empire: Liberalism and 'Britannic' Nationalism in Laurier's Canada, 1887-1919*, (PhD diss., University of Oxford, United Kingdom, 2016), 2.

nationalism, that the imperialists were not colonials blinded by imperial deference and instead were seeking to develop the Canadian nation within the imperial system.[10] This thesis largely agrees with the sentiment that Canadian imperialists wanted to grow Canada within an imperial system, however, that was more to do with a shared sense a 'pan-Britannic' identity, a sense of shared identity with the other white settler dominions and the motherland. Berger's analysis has imperialists inadvertently aiding Canada's march to independence, that because they wanted a Canadian nation in an imperial federation they were therefore nationalists. But having imperial federation as the only signifier of an imperial identity is too narrow an approach and consequently excludes a large aspect of Canadian views towards themselves and the Empire. Phillip Buckner points out that Berger's limited view of imperialism not so much turns imperialists into nationalists as he overlooks the inverse, that most Canadian nationalists were to some degree imperialists.[11] In Buckner's argument therefore, Canadian nationalism was a fallacy because it was part of this broader pan-Britannic identity.

Douglas Cole resolutely disagrees with Berger and argues that he has misidentified nationalists with patriots, since they did not want to create a separate Canadian nation or culture.[12] What Cole sees instead is that these nationalists were 'patriots' that they supported a form of 'patriotism' because they were concerned with the development of the Canadian state and its powers rather than the nation.[13] This means that nationalists and imperialists cooperated with shared identities because of the larger pan-Britannic nationalism, and that the only opposing force

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[10] Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013, 2nd edition), 4.
[11] Phillip Buckner, "The Long Goodbye: English Canadians and the British World", in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 187.
[12] Douglas Cole, "The Problem of "Nationalism" and "Imperialism" in British Settlement Colonies", *Journal of British Studies* 10:2 (1971): 172.
[13] Cole, "Problem", 164.

was that of patriotism because it was specifically concerned with increasing autonomy and advancing the state. This idea is termed 'colonial nationalism' by Ramsay Cook in his study of the Canadian liberal imperialist John W. Dafoe, as it explains that the ultimate objective of the policies of autonomy were actually for the benefit of the Empire since it strengthened Canada and thus the imperial whole.[14] Nationalism was therefore fluid, it contained within it, like imperialism, multiple layers of identity that overlap and correlate.

Canadian nationalism and imperialism both were informed by a much larger sense of British identity. Even when Anglo-Canadians identified themselves as Canadian, they retained a broader sense of British nationality that came with being part of a dominion in the British Empire. Duncan Bell explains the prevalence of the idea of 'greater Britain,' beyond purely political federalist movements. Late Victorian thinkers conceived of the Empire in a way that included a distinct sense of a British identity across the settler dominions, in a shared connection to the people of the British World. What Cole labels nationalism as the connection between people is the space that pan-Britannic nationalism existed in. Discussions of British identity were then framed into the language of race in a global hierarchy, within which the Victorians naturally placed the Anglo-Saxon at the peak. For Canadian nationalists and imperialists, the creation of distinct Canadian ethnic signifiers were not at the expense of British ones, but were instead extensions of them. This idea remained for many English Canadians according to Buckner well into the twentieth century. Cole suggests that ideas of independence did not mean a separation from the ideals of pan-Britannic nationalism, thanks to the strength of the connection to the British World.

That connection did not come from mere sentiment alone. As David Edgerton has shown in his *Rise and Fall of the British Nation* the Dominions were intimately connected in a multiplicity

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[14] Buckner, "Long goodbye", *Rediscovering*, 188.

of ways. The wealth of the Empire was concentrated in these areas of white British settlement and they had their own parliaments which were subservient to the 'Imperial Parliament' in Westminster which produced a conception of the Empire as being one body-politic.[15] The Empire did occasionally act as one giant unit, having various councils or committees that were imperially oriented such as the Committee of Imperial Defence, and tellingly it was the entire empire that went to war in 1914. All this cemented the idea of a pan-Britannic identity in the United Kingdom and the Dominions.[16] Similar to Buckner and his comment on the longevity of the identification with Britishness for Canadians well into the twentieth century, Edgerton demonstrates that the rhetoric of the imperial whole remained and emanated from Britain up to the Second World War.[17] Edgerton claims that British people too shared a sense of combined kinship with the dominions, just as Canadians did with Britain. A pan-imperial (white) identity did exist between Britons and those of the Dominions, it was reciprocated and even up to the Second World War the Empire was talked of in terms that implied a cohesiveness and congruity which Canadians participated in.

This study places the idea of a pan-Britannic identity under the term imperialism, which concerns any sentiment that involved the Empire, or Canada's place within it. This approach encompasses both the imperial federationists and those who aligned far more with Cook's liberal imperialism, that the Empire should be maintained through sentiment rather than strict and enforceable ties. By using a broader definition of imperialism, the study more accurately takes into consideration the variety of forms that the force of imperialism exerted on Canada and its development. Conversely, unlike Cole or Berger, this study will place patriots and patriotism in the same category as nationalists and nationalism, because nationalists along with patriots wanted

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[15] David Edgerton, *Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History*, (UK: Allen Lane, 2018), 21.
[16] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall*, 22.
[17] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall*, 24.

to develop the Canadian nation and state. While there may not have been, as Cole argues, desires for a totally unique Canadian cultural identity that was divergent from Britain, there was a growing sense of Canadian identity as being distinct from the motherland despite retaining the identity of 'British.' Rather than being limited to the state and separate from a colonial nationalism, Canadian nationalism was fluid and therefore dovetailed with imperialism but ultimately remained a force for the development of the Canadian nation, whichever way individuals viewed it.

To analyse the impact of the Boer War on these identities and how its legacy informed and was informed by the forces of imperialism and nationalism within this burgeoning Canadian nation, this thesis utilises a multiplicity of historical approaches. It combines the ideas of a traditional military history with a top-down and bottom-up vantage because the legacy of the conflict was wide reaching and meant different things to different groups. Viewing the events from the top allows for an analysis of the key decision makers and how they viewed the situation thus exploring how these forces impacted the very highest levels of authority. Conversely, the nationalist narratives and Canadian sense of identity, occurred at the popular cultural level, thus requiring a bottom-up approach as well as analysis of cultural sources such as books or songs. Furthermore, by combining perspectives the complexity of imperial and national identities can be appreciated and their impacts illuminated. These historical vantages are supported by the notion of constructivism, suggesting that the state and nation are constructed, and yet are influenced by and function with larger structural forces that exist simultaneously. Hence the constructivist view treats imperialism and nationalism as separate forces that worked within existing state structures of both Canada and the imperial metropole to shape the discussions and interpretations of events and actions of Canadians.

To encompass the variety of themes and approaches needed to fully address this complex interplay this study employs an equally varied and wide-reaching source base. Personal communications of the key members of the Canadian government such as Wilfrid Laurier and Frederick Borden will be examined along with communiques sent to and from the Colonial and War Offices to examine both the rationale for decisions as well as to locate the impetus of various actions taken. The most significant government publication for this thesis are the minutes from the Colonial Conferences. These documents contain transcripts of the exchanges between dominion premiers and the British government allowing for a nuanced study of the negotiations of the future of the Empire. Not every meeting is available in this form as some were confidential and can only be known from private letters and diaries after the fact. Furthermore, government documents were a key source not only for the legal decisions taken but also for the development of the militia. Aspects of military planning and the development of strategic thought which affected Canadian defence planning took place through various councils and committees in the War Office in London, as such both the Canadian and British national archives have been utilised. Similarly, the Canadian parliamentary debates have been used to explore how the government was challenged on its policies as well as how MPs represented both their own and their constituents' views on imperial and nationalist matters. Also vital to this study are the plethora of popular ephemera, ranging from books, songs, and poems to national and local newspapers. Newspapers are an interesting source since they represent both the views of the editors but also popular sentiment, they would not sell after all if they were not catering to their audience. Other popular media is necessary to examine how the Boer War's legacy was digested and interpreted by the vast majority of Anglo-Canadians. Collectively this cross section from the high political realm to the populist sentiment on the conflict covered by this range of sources enables this thesis to extend beyond simply a military, political, or cultural study. Combining the different approaches and sources has provided a more full and complete understanding of what the conflict meant for the development of Canadian identity.

There were aspects of the Canadian experience that were simply beyond the scope of this thesis however the scholarship exists to allow a future historian to expand this body of historical work. Primarily this study does not examine the relationship between French and English Canada, there is already considerable existing scholarship that explores the development of Quebec and its place within Canada as well as a wealth of literature covering the 'Quiet Revolution' of the 1960s and 70s.[18] It is also vital to acknowledge that although outside the reach of this study, an important part of the population of Canada that was largely excluded from the national negotiation that this study examines were the Indigenous and First Nations peoples. They had experienced a nadir in population and cultural obliteration following the collapse of the buffalo and the enforcing of the Indian Act in the late nineteenth century.[19] Despite their physical presence, in the context of English Canadian identity they were not considered to be part of the Anglo-Saxon race and therefore were not brought into the discussion of Canadian identity. By focusing on the complexities of the rhetoric of imperialism and nationalism an intersecting area that deserves a study entirely of its own and was therefore beyond the reach of this thesis is the gendered experience of women in the development of the Canadian nation. Not only was the language of Empire gendered in the context of the mother land and the rhetoric of white settler dominions as children, but women also had an important role in the spreading, maintenance, and development of the Empire. This was through migration such as the homesteads on the Canadian

[18] Michael B. Behiels, "Transcending the Bounds of Nationalism: Contemporary Quebec Historiography," *Acadiensis* 11:1, (1981): 115-137.
[19] James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: disease, politics of starvation, and the loss of Indigenous life,* (Regina: University of Saskatchewan Press, 2nd Edition 2019).

prairies, and the social and activist groups which were immensely popular in the Edwardian period. In particular, the role of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire in the memorialisation of the Boer War cannot be overlooked. While there are studies into these aspects that go into greater depth on the role of women, how these groups impacted the development of the Anglo-Canadian national identity and development of the Canadian nation in the imperial system is an area that is in want of a detailed examination.[20]

The field of imperial and colonial studies has changed and grown in the last twenty years, following a decline in the wake of postmodern and postcolonial historiographies. However, there has been a recent uptick in the field especially with the cultural turn, adding much needed analysis and nuance to the lived experience of Empire. Books such as David Cannadine's *Ornamentalism* and David Porter's *Absent-Minded Imperialists* are hallmark studies of how the Empire was perceived in Britain. Other studies from the likes of John Darwin and his *Empire Project* are detailed holistic studies of the British Empire. Specific imperial Canadian examinations received a large increase around the centenary of Confederation in the 1960s and 1970s, with the publications of Carl Berger's *Sense of Power*, and the work of Donald C. Gordon's *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence, 1870-1914*, Richard Price's article *One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture*, and Desmond Morton's *Canada and War: a Military and Political history* providing a breadth of literature. While these works remain incredibly useful and important tools for anyone studying this period of Canadian history, they have not been substantially added to in the fifty or so years since. Moreover, while there is extensive literature surrounding the development of the British Army and its growth leading into the First World War, there is less for the specific Canadian experience. Morton's *Ministers and Generals*, Stephen

[20] Philipa Levine, *Gender and Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Harris' *Canadian Brass*, and James Wood's *Militia Myths* are all important books that cover the development of the Canadian militia in the years between Confederation and the Great War. Additionally, Carman Miller's biography of Sir Frederick Borden, *A Knight in Politics*, critically examines the reforms and progress made by the Minister during his tenure at the head of the militia. While the existing imperial literature is vast and important there are key gaps which this study seeks to fill, primarily the role of the Boer War in Canadian history has largely been overlooked or reduced to a marginal status in larger studies or nationalist narratives.[21]

Consequently, this study is heavily indebted to Carman Miller's 1998 *Painting the Map Red* which remains the largest and most exhaustive study of the Canadian involvement in the Boer War. Though primarily a military history covering the exact movements of all the Canadian units across the entire South African conflict, it importantly covers the political outbreak of the war and the home front during the course of the war. However, the book remains limited in that it is a military history of the conflict rather than an examination of its impact. Miller's article *Framing the Great War: A Case for including the South African War* outlines in more detail the legacy of the conflict in the ensuing decades from the conclusion of hostilities on Canadian society both political and cultural. Thomas Packenham's *The Boer War* is a comprehensive account of the entire war but remains primarily British in focus and hardly mentions the Canadian involvement except for a few key instances such as for the Battle of Paardeberg. Phillip Buckner's work has gone someway to redressing the lack of Canada in the discussion of the war, and Simon Potter's articles, though less about the conflict, are excellent studies into the relationship between Canada and the metropole. Moreover, Jesse Tumblin's *Quest for Security* and John Mitchum's *Race and Imperial Defence*, are both excellent studies into the dominion involvement in the defence of

[21] W. G. Hardy's *From Sea unto Sea The Road to Nationhood, 1850-1910* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1960) Vol. 4 of the Canadian History Series is a prime example.

Empire following the war, taking into consideration not just the military aspects but the political and racial dimensions too. Historians of gender such as Sarah Carter, Katie Pickles, as well as Linda Colley and J. A. Mangan have increased the narrative from just the white male experience to widen the analysis thus deepening the field's understanding.

Another important aspect of the war for Canadians was the role of the Canadian Protestant churches, which largely unanimously came out in force in support of the war. They provided news, jingoistic sermons, and were important elements of the Canadian contingent's farewell ceremonies. Gordon Heath's *War with a Silver Lining: Canadian Protestant Churches and the South African War, 1899-1902* is an excellent study into the nature of this ecclesiastical support as well as the ulterior motives that the churches had to gain from their support of the imperial mission both in Canada and abroad. Heath points out how the churches not only provided news and updates about the war through their sizeable and influential print media but "aggressively sought to convince readers of the justice of the cause and of the need to support the sending of Canadian troops."[22] These Canadian churches also viewed the conflict in imperial terms framing any threat to the Empire as a threat to Canada and in that way were emphatic in their desire to see Canadians involved in South Africa.[23] By exploring the way in which the Protestant churches viewed and acted on the war, Heath adds a vital element of analysis in the ways in which Canadians at all levels perceived Canada's place in empire and how aside from mainstream news sources, support for the war and Empire permeated inside deeper facets of Canadian's lives.

Overall, the studies that cover both the Boer War and its place in Canadian national development usually subscribe to the Whig nationalist narrative which paint the conflict as a

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[22] Gordon L. Heath, *A War with a Silver Lining: Canadian Protestant Churches and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009) 140.
[23] Heath, *Silver lining*, 142.

steppingstone to independence. Consequently, this thesis seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examining the Boer War in a different light. Similarly, genuine scholarly interest in Canadian imperialism is usually relegated to the political thought of a few major players or is coopted with larger studies of the British Empire which diminish the specific Canadian experience like in Duncan Bell's *The Idea of Greater Britain*. Moreover, the experience of Anglo-Canada has largely been simplistically tied to imperial unity without a greater specific analysis.[24] This thesis looks to tie together various strands of this historiography, to connect the political, military, and cultural experience and how the forces of imperialism and nationalism shaped Canada in the eyes of Anglo-Canadians. In doing so, the thesis provides a concentrated analysis of a period that has been regularly overlooked and devalued yet remains vital to our understanding of Canada in the past and today.

Finally, a note on terminology. The thesis will use various terms for the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. The conflict is usually referred to by Canadian historiography as the South African War, but in British studies the term Boer War as well as Anglo-Boer War are far more prevalent. All of these names refer to the same event as such this thesis will use them interchangeably.

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[24] Norman Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,1965), vii.

Chapter 1 - *Imperial Crisis*

Following his election in 1896, Wilfrid Laurier had overcome several serious political challenges. Yet by the summer of 1899, the most serious test of his administration was looming. The outbreak of the Boer War in South Africa in October 1899 might have caused a crisis in Laurier's Canada. Burgeoning in Canada was a clear expression of imperialist and nationalist forces operating in conflict each with different expectations of how Canada should respond to the outbreak of war in South Africa. This division had the potential to rip the country apart along ethnic French and English Canadian lines. Quebec, which was vital to Laurier's political powerbase, was generally anti-war while Ontario and English Canadians were largely in favour of intervention. Laurier therefore had to carefully manage the political and social forces of imperialism and nationalism if he was to maintain Canadian unity and retain political control of the country. The outbreak of the Boer War was therefore a severe strain on his administration as well as the country more broadly, which without careful handling had massive destructive potential. Laurier's response to the conflict, and the social, cultural, and imperial forces that were operating in Canada illuminates his unique brand of Canadian nationalism. The decisions he took had long lasting consequences for the imperialist and nationalist factions in the country.

Laurier's primary aim was the continued development of a unified Canada; however, this caused complexities for him and his relationship to the imperial project because of his reliance on the political backing of Quebec. The anti-war stance in Quebec was a source of serious contention in the country and without proper handling could have ended his tenure in power. As such, he made tentative and noncommittal actions in response to South Africa, such as the Transvaal Resolution. Undeniably, however, acknowledging what was happening in Transvaal was an acceptance that Canada was reacting to imperial events beyond its borders, and for imperialists, resolutions were not enough. This was forcefully demonstrated by the press of Ontario and Quebec. Further exacerbating the tensions in Canada were both the colonial secretary Joseph Chamberlain whose federalist ambitions gave cause for a conspiracy of political pressure from Whitehall. This also had further evidence in the way in which the British General Officer Commanding and Governor General appeared to be influencing Laurier's government. Despite all the pressures facing Laurier, he remained steadfast and committed to a policy of disinterest until the last possible moment. This has often led to accusations of aloofness only being remedied to save political face rather than a deliberate strategy. Ultimately, Laurier found a solution to the nationalist and imperial pressures in his facilitation of volunteer contingents of Canadians who wished to go to South Africa. Through the use of an order-in-council only after war was declared in South Africa, Laurier avoided the public and polemical parliamentary debates and the use of volunteers consequently ensured that no Canadian would be forced to fight in a conflict they saw as unjust, and yet those who wished to express their commitment to Empire could do so. So often reduced to a simple reactionary tactic, Laurier's political manoeuvring saved Canada and his administration while simultaneously thrusting Canada into the twentieth century through involvement in its first foreign and imperial conflict.

The greatest ambition of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's premiership was the continued unification of Canada and its peoples, which complicated his relationship with the imperial project. On the one hand, the Canadian involvement in the British Empire helped Canada to maintain its borders with the United States, while the Royal Navy protected its waters. Laurier saw that Canada's national growth could only be fostered within the Empire — at least until Canada could operate with a greater degree of independence. Carl Berger famously pointed out that Canadian nationalists were often imperialists and Laurier was no exception.[1] Laurier was a liberal politician and his political views on property and liberty through individual rights found a home in the British parliamentary system. He aligned himself with an idea that many imperialists were espousing: that Britain stood for good governance, liberty, and justice.[2] These were the aspects of the imperial idea that he felt suited Canada. Furthermore, this admiration of the values found in the Westminster system provided a way for the French Canadians to align with the Empire. However, this presented a quiet but obvious problem in that self-government of the colonies naturally meant to many that independence was seemingly inevitable. Laurier was firmly committed to solving internal Canadian divisions and given his belief in and high opinion of British institutions, Laurier was never going to disentangle Canada from the Empire. As H. Blair Neatby puts it "Laurier had no intention of hastening the process" that would lead to Canadian separation from the Empire.[3] Laurier's inhibition towards generating immediate Canadian independence helps to demonstrate his political philosophy and more importantly why he took so long to act on the Transvaal Crisis. Generally, Laurier was content to act only when he deemed it necessary and to an extent that was not going to challenge the status quo. A potential conflict in South Africa was thousands of miles away and not an immediate threat and therefore required no immediate action. Laurier's strategy was consequently one of avoidance.

Yet, the Transvaal Crisis remained a problem for the Prime Minister. Forced into making a show of imperial unity in face of growing pressures, in part to preempt any move by Sir Charles Tupper, leader of the conservative opposition, on the 31st of July 1899 the Transvaal Resolution

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[1] Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013, 2nd edition), 4.
[2] H. Blair Neatby, "Laurier and Imperialism", in *Imperial Relations in the Age of Laurier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 4.
[3] Neatby, *Laurier and Imperialism*, 5.

was passed through both houses of the Canadian Parliament.[4] The Transvaal Resolution enabled Laurier to address imperialist concerns but very much through the language of nationalism. His speech is a piece of political theatre which specifically aimed to dispel conservative and English Canadian concerns that Canada would not be involved in the defence of the Empire, while simultaneously not estranging the vital liberal political base in Quebec. Laurier's speech and the wording of resolution illustrate the nuances of Laurier's own imperial nationalist beliefs as well as the political dichotomy that was re-emerging in the face of growing imperial agitation. Conscious of the delicate nature that any motion of support would have to take Laurier begins the resolution by outlining that "there are many things to be admired in the career and character of Paul Kruger" (who was the leader of the Boer republics) before moving on to his criticisms of the Transvaal state.[5] Laurier placed this comment in the arguments for Canadian intervention, because many French Canadians saw in the Transvaal a South African version of Quebec, one that was being threatened by British Imperial designs.[6]

Laurier continued, proclaiming that:

"if there is any country in the world it is this country of ours, Canada, where we can proclaim this principle, that wherever men of different races, but races of equal rank are found to live together under the same government, the only policy which can give adequate justice to all… is a policy of equal rights and equal justice, a policy which will give to every citizen, without questions of birth and origin, the same rights, the same liberties, the same privileges, the same aspirations."

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[4] Carman Miller, *The Canadian Career of the Fourth Earl of Minto, the Education of a Viceroy.* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 87.
[5] Canada. House of Commons. *Transvaal Resolution*, 8th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol. 3 31st July, (1899), 8992.
[6] Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 28.

This text makes his internal politics heard, in the description of two races with equal rank living with Canada under one government. Laurier's successful campaign in the 1896 election was in no small part reliant on Israel Tarte, his vivacious minister for public works, whose work in the conservative parts of Quebec gave the liberals their electoral victory. Any political capital that Laurier possessed therefore rested on the careful balance of competing identities and concerns. The talk of conflict had brought divisions roughly along English and French Canadian lines, with Quebec providing some of the loudest anti-war sentiment.[7] Clearly, Laurier was reaffirming French Canadian concerns about being quashed under a new weight of English Canadian imperialism. However, it is more than just simply political rhetoric because through careful wording, Laurier's Transvaal Resolution was as much a reaffirmation of Canadian national unity as it was a signal of Canadian support in imperial matters.

Quebecois disillusionment was a pertinent threat to Laurier which, without a deft political touch, could have presented a far greater crisis for Canada in the face of open war in South Africa. Henri Bourassa, who was a prominent French-Canadian politician, perhaps best embodies the impacts of Laurier's handling of this aspect of the crisis. There was a very real threat that Canadian involvement in South Africa could lead to a serious widening of divisions between Ontario and Quebec, something which would be played out in the First World War with the conscription crisis. Canadian participation in the South African War presented the threat of a catastrophic fissure of Canadian unity. Bourassa was heavily outspoken both in parliament and in private against any involvement in the conflict, for as he saw Canada was gripped by a "spirit of jingoism" which entailed a deadly "extreme spirit of militarism", something that he wished to protest.[8] Following

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[7] Casey Murrow, *Henri Bourassa and French Canadian Nationalism* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1968), 21.
[8] Murrow, *Bourassa*, 24.

a cabinet debate over the issue of Canadian involvement, Israel Tarte called for a meeting of liberal leaders, to which Bourassa was also invited. In the meeting Bourassa accused Laurier of abandoning his principles, even suggesting that Laurier had not considered the opinion of Quebec.[9] This barbed cross examination demonstrated how far Quebecois feelings of disillusionment could go, and shortly after resigning his seat in parliament, Bourassa continued to espouse the same such views in the media. Although this incident could be written off as the actions of a young and irrepressible parliamentarian, the idea that Laurier was ignoring Quebec in the face of a combination of English Canadian and British imperial pressure was a very real and very dangerous one. In this context, the Transvaal Resolution and the details of the actual offer of troops were political actions of Laurier which prevented the existing crisis from spiraling further.

Laurier would have hoped that the resolution was a sufficient action from Canada that would retain the imperial connection while avoiding the "awful arbitration of war."[10] Seemingly, it had the desired effect. Following Laurier's speech, George E. Foster of the opposition claimed that the resolution was "another proof of the solidarity of the British Empire."[11] Foster continued pontificating to the house that in the form of a resolution, Canadians had "not lost our deep love for the old mother power."[12] Laurier's victory was complete - the house passed the resolution unanimously and immediately afterwards all members rose to their feet for a rousing chorus of God Save the Queen.[13] Faced with growing disunity in the country the Transvaal Resolution helped delay the impending imperial crisis - which following the outbreak of hostilities in South Africa could not be avoided. Despite being pushed into action Laurier responded with a skillful

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[9] Joseph Schull, *Laurier: The first Canadian* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1965), 383.
[10] Canada. House of Commons. *Transvaal Resolution*, 8th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol. 3 31st July, (1899), 8994.
[11] Canada. HOC. *Resolution*, 8996.
[12] Canada. HOC. *Resolution*, 8996.
[13] Canada. HOC. *Resolution*, 8999.

political move which bought Canada time and reduced the impeding emergency's potency in both Quebec and Ontario.

Despite Laurier's internal nationalist motives, the Transvaal Crisis also demonstrated Canada's willingness to become involved, or at the very least, acknowledge the events of the outside world. Laurier opened his speech to present the resolution by stating that the British Empire was now at "such a condition and degree of consolidation that no part of it can affect to be indifferent to anything that may be going on in any other part."[14] This is a clear demonstration of the developing idea that Canada had a place on the world stage and that it could no longer keep itself occupied solely with internal matters. Despite Laurier's wishes to avoid war he was at the helm of a country which was becoming engrossed in if not totally global, then certainly, imperial affairs. Canada's position in the 1890s was a complicated one in view of its attempts to maintain sovereignty against the United States through the Empire, while not allowing the imperial metropole to interfere in Canadian matters beyond what was deemed appropriate. A maelstrom of international and internal forces precipitated the outbreak of the war in South Africa.

The perceived level of autonomy with which Laurier acted at the outbreak of the South African War has differed over the twentieth century as varying historians have addressed the colonial office conspiracy theory. Laurier's official biographer, O.D. Skelton, in his second volume of Laurier's life barely covers the topic except for a few short lines. Immediately following this in 1922, *Laurier: a study of politics*, John W. Dafoe explains how Laurier was forced to commit troops through a conspiratorial combination of the Governor General and the Colonial Secretary in London. The Governor General was the Fourth Earl of Minto and is usually painted as a curious mix of a "country squire and heavy dragoon" with whom Laurier spent five years of

[14] Canada. HOC. *Resolution*, 8992.

"continuous struggle."[15] In these early post-First World War accounts, Minto is an insidious outsider, a member of the imperial clique who sought to reduce Canadian ambitions. This involvement with the overreaching imperial metropole was a necessary requirement in patriotic histories following the horrors of the trenches of France, yet it is decidedly unjust and a superficial examination of Minto and his role in the crisis. Before the Transvaal Resolution and outbreak of the conflict, Minto had been contacted by Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, who was attempting to obtain an insight into imperial sentiments and to gain offers (either symbolic or more) of troops. Minto had a thorough correspondence with both Laurier, his minister of militia Frederick Borden and the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Major General Edward T. Hutton in order to ascertain the legality of the use of Canadian troops outside of Canada. Minto told Laurier that he agreed with the principle set by Sir John A. Macdonald in 1885 that section 79 of the Militia Act constituted Canadian actions outside of the country as being directed solely towards defence against the United States and that therefore he was unconvinced that Britain would be able to command Canadian troops outside of Canada and the North American continent.[16] Clearly, this is not the conclusion of a man who was committed to a colonial conspiracy aimed at forcing Canada into British military hands.

Far from being the long arm of the Colonial or War Offices, Minto was acutely aware of the unique nature of Canadian involvement in the empire.[17] Minto had a delicate position during the Transvaal crisis. He did believe that the Canadians would support Britain in a time of need and as a friend he believed in and supported the GOC Hutton's plan for a Canadian contingent that could not be broken up and reassigned to random parts of the British Army.[18] To this end, after

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[15] John W. Dafoe, *Laurier: A Study in Politics* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1922), 77.
[16] John Buchan, *Lord Minto: a memoir* (London: T. Nelson, 1924), 133.
[17] Miller, *Minto,* 51.
[18] Buchan, *a memoir*, 133.

Laurier had committed troops Minto asked that the offer be changed from the 125 man units, to something which both resembled Hutton's plan for a Canadian army, which he felt would be a better representation of both Canada's size and imperial importance.[19] Minto's insistence on this change is both evidence of his support for Canadian autonomy in military matters, but also direct acceptance of Canadian nationalist sentiment. The Canadian contingent that left Quebec for South Africa resembled Hutton's plan for a Canadian national army contingent.[20] Minto was therefore using the Transvaal crisis to further foster and grow a distinct Canadian nationalism that suited and benefitted a broader imperial ambition.

Working against Laurier's slower nationalist plans, the GOC Major General Hutton presented a threat to stability in his push for a national army. This plan coopted the loudest aspects of Canadian imperialism with Canadian nationalism. Hutton had only been in Canada for a year and yet from very early on was able to annoy the government, ministers, and even on occasion his friend the Governor General. Hutton's mission from his arrival in Canada was fourfold. Half of these objectives were related to militia reorganisation from administration at the headquarters to training basic militia men. More problematic was Hutton's view that he could imbue within Canadians a greater martial spirit, but specifically with an eye on Canadian participation in any impending imperial conflict.[21] Norman Penlington aptly labels this aspect of Hutton's objective as propaganda. In an address at the garrison sergeant's dinner in early March 1899, the general explained his meaning of a 'national army.' Hutton proselytised that the "time has arrived for Canada not to rely so much on the strong arms of the old country [and] assume the responsibilities

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[19] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Laurier Fonds: C-769. *Papers of Sir Wilfrid Laurier* "Minto to Laurier", 12th October 1899.
[20] Miller, *Painting,* 50.
[21] Norman Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism 1896–1899* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 143.

essentially hers as a young and vigorous nation."[22] Hutton was able to tap into the growing sense of national strength perceived by Canadians regardless of their affinity to empire. This speech was part of a broader publicity campaign which was ultimately successful in that Hutton was able to galvanise public opinion and draw attention to imperial defence. Conversely, the ensuing constitutional, political and personal battles fought by Hutton with the Minister of Militia, the War Office, and Colonel Sam Hughes had severe implications for Laurier's political standings.

The conservative MP Colonel Sam Hughes and the GOC Hutton exacerbated the imperial crisis for the Laurier and the Canadian government before hostilities began. Both men shared the same ambition, to ensure Canadian involvement in the South African War. For Hughes, this was a matter of Canadian pride where its military prowess would be witnessed and respected by Britain and the other colonies in the veldt. Hughes had strong opinions of both his personal talent and Canadian imperialism.[23] He, along with Hutton, wanted to send a contingent that was distinct from the British Army and led by himself. Hughes constantly peppered Laurier with updates of his own intentions as well as any news of other colonial support. However, Hughes' ambition was to lead a troop of volunteers, as he wanted to ensure that Canada was not the last colony to send support for the empire. Hughes' taste for self-promotion led to a massive and publicised clash with Hutton. Hughes believed that he was best placed to lead a Canadian contingent of volunteers. This was unacceptable to Hutton for two reasons. As GOC and an officer in the British Army, Hutton believed that he should be in command of the contingent which he had designed, and of the Canadian 'national army' as he labelled the militia, an image which he had spent time cultivating. Hutton was outraged by the idea of a volunteer force because it would broadcast

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[22] "Canada's Militia," *Toronto Globe*, 4th March 1899.
[23] Ronald G. Haycock, *Sam Hughes: The public career of a Controversial Canadian, 1885-1916* (Waterloo: Sir Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1986), 2.

Canadian military disinterest which was the very thing that he sought to change. Furthermore, a small volunteer force was out of line with Joseph Chamberlain's imperialist ambitions to see a greater collaboration of the dominions and colonies in imperial matters, namely defence. Aside from the personal dislike of each other, Hutton and Hughes also carried out their respective campaigns in the public sphere, each giving speeches across the country to garner support. Both Hughes and Hutton earned support for their respective cases, as their positions were circulated to a growingly impatient media. Because imperialist sentiments were so closely aligned with nationalist ones for English Canadians, Hutton and Hughes' desire for Canadian participation in the war worked to consolidate the pressure on Laurier's government, making a policy of nonintervention less and less tenable.

The significance of the Hutton/Hughes melodrama lies in its reflection of imperialism for Canadians, not to mention the fact that the Canadian contingent was ultimately self-sufficient once in South Africa. Hutton had seen it his duty to totally reform and revitalise a destitute and hap-hazard Canadian militia into a fighting force that could operate inside of Canada and abroad.[24] Hutton's vision was supported by Minto and that decision would have lasting consequences for the militia and Canada itself. The autonomous fighting force was able to cultivate a unique and distinct identity that was separate from, though still connected to, the regular British Army. Furthermore, this meant that Canadian victories in the field were particular victories of Canada not just the overarching British Army. Consequently, though a headache for Laurier, Borden, the government and militia departments, Hughes and Hutton were both partly responsible for the eventual success of the Canadian contingent, though not for the irregular units that arrived in South Africa, such as the Strathcona's Horse or Canadian Mounted Regiment. The Hutton/Hughes affair

[24] Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism,* 136.

shows how the imperialist idea exerted internal and external force on the government of Canada and Laurier. Laurier was handling large personalities with Hughes and Hutton, but also the imperial idea of Canadian militarism and imperial defence that both men were embodying and inspiring.

Hughes and Hutton would not have had the reach necessary to achieve their ambitions had the pro-imperial press not taken up their cause with such great vigour. The press was a key aspect of the way that imperialists and nationalists continually put pressure on the Laurier government to act in some capacity or another. In the days leading up to the outbreak of the conflict Joseph Chamberlain circulated a memo that thanked Canada for its offer to send troops, something it had not officially done. The memo was picked up and widely shared and is the basis for the colonial conspiracy theory, because curiously on the same day of 3rd of October, the Canadian Military Gazette published a plan for the design of a Canadian contingent without authorisation.[25] Though both statements were not inherently sinister, their publication on the same day and in the context of Laurier's policy of noncommitment elicited a serious clamour in the press. Laurier was forced to respond to the rumours, declaring that the reports of a Canadian contingent were "inconsiderate and unfounded."[26] Clearly, Laurier still believed that Canadian intervention was not necessary and was attempting to calm the situation. He was reported to have argued that the government's policy was to wait and see how the war would pan out because there may not even be a need for Canadians to be sent to South Africa at all. Knowing that this would be an unsatisfactory answer, Laurier countered this claim by entering into a hypothetical discussion as to whether Canadians would ever support Britain militarily — the answer obviously being in the affirmative.[27]

[25] Miller, *Painting,* 41.
[26] "Premier Talks re Transvaal Contingent," *Ottawa Journal,* Wednesday 4th October, 1899.
[27] "Premier Talks re Transvaal Contingent," *Ottawa Journal,* Wednesday 4th October, 1899.

Consequently, this one incident demonstrates the power of the pro-war press since if Laurie had been confident in his standing or that his opinion was the popular one he would not have needed to add the caveat to his statement denying the rumours of a contingent. Evidently the press had a real power that faced the Laurier administration.

For those Canadians, primarily in Toronto, who wanted to see Canada enter the conflict in any capacity the continued inaction by the government was perceived as anti-imperial. Newspapers whipped themselves into a frenzy that unleashed a jingoistic outburst in Toronto and other imperial centres. Headed by the Montreal Star the pro-imperial Canadian press worked tirelessly to goad Laurier into action. Laurier's denouncing of the plan to send troops was met by the Montreal Star with total animosity, and in typical exaggerated fashion the paper declared that every Canadian and British subject should be "amazed and disgusted by the attitude assumed by Sir Wilfrid."[28] In a more bellicose tone the paper went on to decry the government's lack of "moral courage to do its duty."[29] This sentiment was supported by various publications of the Canadian Protestant churches, which saw the lack of action as a severe blow to Canadian pride.[30] Since the war was viewed as just the churches echoed the jingoistic support of the mainstream media inside their own numerous and influential publications adding to the pressure facing Laurier's administration. Over the following days the Star repeatedly printed out heavily edited letters from mayors and other prominent figures in order to demonstrate the readiness of Canadians across the country to join in the looming war.[31] This continued to the extent that the Star's rhetoric became threatening, as on the 9th of October, it ran a headline proclaiming "Canada's press almost

[28] "Laurier and Transvaal", *Montreal Star,* October 4th 1899, 4.
[29] "Laurier and Transvaal", *Montreal Star,* October 4th 1899, 4.
[30] Gordon L. Heath, *A War with a Silver Lining: Canadian Protestant Churches and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009) 14.
[31] "Canadians are ready", *Montreal Star,* October 5th, 1899, 1.

unanimous" and "if the government does not act, the people will."[32] Carman Miller points out that newspapers, though never entirely, are useful for gathering a broad consensus of the readership since failing to meet the readers opinions could be fatal for a paper.[33] The Montreal Star was by no means representative of every view, but it accounted for a large enough proportion of popular sentiment that it was able to print these kinds of headlines. Every day that Laurier did nothing was further proof of the paper's claims, and eventually following the declaration of war in South Africa between Britain and the Boer republics, Laurier felt secure that there was enough public support for action, relented and allowed troops to be sent.

Imperialist forces, however, were not solely found in Canada, since as a Dominion, Canada was still answerable to the corridors of power in Whitehall. Despite being a knight of the realm, Laurier was not moved by London as much as he was by what the imperialist forces could muster inside Canada itself. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain proclaimed in 1902 that Britain was "the weary titan[which] staggers under the too vast orb of its fate."[34] Chamberlain's views of empire are neatly summed up in this quote, and though uttered at the end of the South African War, it stemmed from his deep held beliefs in the need for imperial unity and colonial strength. As such he energetically operated to achieve his aims of a closer union with the Dominions through trade and other initiatives. He envisioned replication of the German Zollverein, an economic trading area through which closer unity would follow.[35] The occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee offered the opportunity for a Colonial Conference, which the newly knighted Sir

[32] "Canada Stands for the flag", *Montreal Star,* October 9th, 1899.
[33] Carman Miller, "English-Canadian Opposition to the South African War as Seen through the Press." *The Canadian Historical Review*, 55:4, (1974): 442.
[34] Papers relating to a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June to August, 1902 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1902), 4.
[35] Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the future of world order, 1860-1900*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 58.

Wilfrid Laurier attended. At this conference much was made on the need for greater unity in defence and economic cooperation, as well as the suggestion of a form of imperial council wherein colonial matters could be discussed by the Dominions.[36] Laurier was obstinate and thwarted any major attempts to disrupt the existing conditions of the empire especially in the form of any sort of specific council. Taking the initiative after Chamberlain's speech Laurier was the first Dominion representative to reply to the proposals, stating that he could not see "how it will be possible to come to terms with any political council" without the federation of Australia.[37] Laurier stressed the strength that Canada had gained through federation, and without a similar process in Australia a political union would be impossible. While he did not disagree with the idea of Canada being a part of empire, Laurier made it clear that Canada would engage with it on its own terms. This extended to military matters too, meaning that when Chamberlain's cables were leaked in the days leading up to the outbreak of the Boer War, Laurier was not moved to action by them. Thus, the decision to go to war was a reaction to the internal situation in Canada, not because of external pressure from London.

Having not been moved by imperial sentiments, or those of the ardent imperialists within Canada, Laurier's decision to send troops came only after the official declaration of war between Britain and the Boer republics. Indeed, Laurier had genuinely not believed that war was coming having been reassured days before by British sources that the republics would bow down to British pressure.[38] The Minister of Militia Frederick Borden likely leaked plans for a Canadian contingent to The Globe, thus creating a cause for great rejoicing in the pro-war press and placing yet another

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[36] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences collection: C-1366, *Report of a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June and July 1897,* 1-160.
[37] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences collection: C-1366, *Report of a Conference,* 12.
[38] John Willison, *Reminiscences, Political and Personal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1919), 303.

obstacle in the way of Laurier's anti-interventionist policy. Laurier was still denying reports of any Canadian commitment on the 11th of October when he called an emergency cabinet meeting to discuss the severity of the situation. Undoubtedly the press in Ontario provided such a great force of political pressure that Laurier had to act, something made clear to him by his friend and editor of The Globe, John Willison, who pleaded that inaction would lead to political defeat.[39] Yet the specifics of the action were yet to be outlined and Laurier faced a divided cabinet, with Isreal Tarte and Richard Scott still opposing the idea of any Canadian contingent.[40] Ultimately, Laurier relented his noninterventionist policy in the face of overwhelming public pressure and allowed for Canadians to go to South Africa.

Laurier's decision is often described as a compromise, yet this word reduces the significance of his decision as it was of vital importance. Though seemingly innocuous, the decision to have volunteers join an official contingent addressed all the problems facing Laurier. Initially, a volunteer force meant that those Canadians who wanted to serve in defence of empire could go — thus imperial nationalism in Canada had an escape valve to be released which stopped the pro-war press attacking Laurier for inaction and anti-imperial sentiments. A force of volunteers also meant that French-Canadians were not coerced or forced into a conflict that was unjustified in their eyes. By exercising an order-in-council to make this decision Laurier also avoided a potentially devastating parliamentary debate where the chasm of racial politics would have been publicly aired, thus allowing him to continue his prime goal of Canadian unity. Additionally, the volunteers being sent in an official capacity placated Chamberlain's imperial desire for a show of solidarity, while simultaneously demonstrating Canada's strength through the combined arms design of the contingent. The contingent itself would go on to be an agent of Canadian nationalism.

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[39] Willison, *Reminiscences*, 303.
[40] Miller, *Painting*, 42.

Laurier's 'compromise' was therefore less the act of cornered prime minister, and instead a masterful political move of an able and committed political mind.

Canada's decision to join the war in South Africa was as close to an imperial crisis as the young nation had ever had and were it not for the cool headedness of its Prime Minister, Wilfrid Laurier, the Dominion could have suffered dramatically. The South African War was a crisis because the Canadian government was made to act by forces beyond its control. Though Laurier was not going to be persuaded by Joseph Chamberlain and the Colonial Office, the imperial connection was strong enough to cause a massive popular uproar at Canada's official lack of commitment through the summer and into the autumn of 1899. Additionally, the GOC Edward Hutton had made it his mission to raise a national army for the purpose of ensuring Canada's entry into the imperial defence project. This imperial connection was bolstered by the jingoism in English Canadian centres, primarily Ontario and Toronto, through which the media also sought to pressure the government into action. However, Laurier could not bow down entirely to English Canadian sentiments for two major reasons: he genuinely believed in and wanted to uphold the unity of Canada, and much of his political power rested on retaining control of Quebec. To lose Quebec's support was to lose the government. Consequently, Laurier was forced to walk a tightrope of appeasing English Canadian imperial sentiment and avoiding scaremongering in Quebec.

Individually, these factors do not constitute a crisis but when taken together they clearly show a trend which increasingly put pressure on those in Ottawa. The consequences of mismanagement were real, if Laurier had not kept control of the situation, Canada's unity was threatened. Ultimately, the decision to send Canadian contingents had long lasting and demonstrable consequences for Canada and the Empire. In his handling of the crisis Laurier managed to not alienate Quebec, appease the majority of imperialists and thrust Canada into a place of significance in the context of imperial defence. The volunteers that left Canada on the 30th of October were part of a national contingent that represented the oldest and biggest of the Dominions. Laurier had avoided partisan racial conflict at home by using an order-in-council for government action, therefore through not recalling parliament, he had demonstrated Canada's willingness for the imperial project and protected those who were less willing. All of this allowed for Canadian's experiences of the Boer war to be coopted into a specific nationalist narrative that would be crucial in the years leading up to the First World War.

Canada's decision to enter the Second Anglo-Boer War was neither the result of imperial machinations, nor of a united Canada jumping to defend the Empire. It is often written that the political and social conditions in Canada meant that its involvement in the conflict was the result of compromise and acquiescence. However, this misses an underlying element in that Laurier's political strategy was one of avoidance and delay, either to a point that the crisis would blow over, or that an overwhelming majority of Canadians demanded otherwise. In this view, the decision to send Canadian troops to South Africa was less one of desperate compromise and instead one of careful consideration and political motive. Laurier managed various and often extreme competing forces in Canada, forces which could have had disastrous effects had they not been mitigated. The outbreak of the Boer War for Canada was a crisis that never was.

Chapter 2 - *Imperial Defence*

In the decade following the Boer War defence planning became a space for cooperative inter-dominion engagement.[1] Canada walked a fine line between contributing to its own defence capabilities without being drawn into unnecessary British militarism and thereby losing the autonomy that was won in the Boer War. It is in this strategic balancing act that the managing of Canadian imperial and nationalist forces is detectable. The interweaving factors during this period were therefore of Canadian security reassessments and developments which were directed by and in line with British reforms, which indirectly led to greater Canadian autonomy. Furthermore, all the Dominions led by Canada resisted repeated attempts of the British to regain political and military control which occurred through the Colonial and later Imperial Conferences and the councils they spawned. The Colonial Conferences are a useful and interesting source since it is through the exchanges, tone, and proposals that the changing nature of Canada's view of itself and the position it held in the Empire can be identified. Furthermore, the actual exchanges of the conferences are usually left out of histories for the sake of the proposals agreed on. This is a narrow appreciation of the conferences and misses the dynamic interchange of leaders as they discussed the nature of Empire and how their Dominions fitted into it, not to mention the shifting nature of British attitudes towards the Dominion premiers. Defence and defence planning is therefore a key way of understanding how the British connection was maintained and how it shifted in an a decade of rising threats to British hegemonic power globally.

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[1] Jesse Tumblin, *The Quest for Security: Sovereignty, Race, and the Defence of the British Empire, 1898-1931,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020 Ebook), p. 4.

Each of the conferences became a space for the renegotiation of Empire and each one took on its own narrative and tone. The 1902 conference was overseen by the vivacious imperial federationist Joseph Chamberlain whose proposals were designed to achieve closer imperial integration under imperial control. Laurier and the Canadian delegation used the recent Boer War experience to augment a new position in imperial standing, and this naturally meant that any proposals that infringed on that new position would be rejected. The subsequent 1907 and 1911 conferences reveal a shift in the British position to the Dominions and illuminates the renegotiation of Empire. There were several major changes that took place, particularly the renaming of the Conferences to 'Imperial' instead of 'Colonial.' While the conferences took place massive political changes in Britain shaped the strategic vision of Empire. As such military developments in both Canada and Britain became important cornerstones of imperial cooperation. For Canada military growth was tied to the growth of nationhood and was a key space where imperialism and nationalism cooperated in the development of the Dominion.

The Boer War fundamentally altered the nature of the Dominions in the Empire and led to military developments in both Britain and Canada. The war in South Africa had exposed the British military as inept. The humiliating defeats of Black Week hung over the following decade, a mark of military stupidity that would not be easily forgotten. Consequently, when Arthur Balfour became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1904, he launched a series of inquiries into the failings of the British Army in South Africa. He implemented a wide range of reforms which overhauled the War Office and remodelled it to align with the Admiralty system. He was also instrumental in the creation of the Committee of Imperial Defence, a body which would later be vital for inter-dominion partnership going into the First World War. British ineptitude, alongside the nationalist emphasis created by the experience of the Boer War enabled Borden to introduce his own massive reforms, which strengthened and improved the militia. As Carman Miller said, no one won more from South Africa than the Canadian militia.[2] The existing situation for the Canadian command, with the General Officer Commanding remaining a British Officer, was unacceptable and many Canadian officers who had served in South Africa were left embittered by the lack of career progression options. This, coupled with similar reforms in the British Military led in large part to Borden's establishment of the Militia Council in 1904 which was perhaps Borden's most influential and wide-reaching reform of the decade. Consequently, the following decade saw a shift in the nature of relations with Britain and the other Dominions as Canada worked to ensure that its newly gained advances in autonomy were solidified and not encroached upon.

As the Dominions renegotiated their position following the Boer War, the Colonial Conferences became a space where they could exert their newfound authority. Though there had been sporadic meetings before 1902, this conference was the first after the calamity of the conflict in South Africa and it was chaired by the inexhaustive imperial federationist Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain. Chamberlain was misguided in his proposals which sought economic relief without the raising of the colonial status within British decision making and thus clashed with Laurier and the other colonial leaders who were unwilling to accept any proposals which would reduce their increased autonomy. The 1902 conference therefore represented a demonstrative showing of Canadian nationalism in that Laurier was forced to ensure the new position that Canada found itself in was not lost. Therefore, nationalism in this sense required the continuation of informal bonds of empire and the rejection of direct formal agreements. Canada's commitment to

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[2] Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 438.

Empire in the form of military assistance in South Africa did not translate into blind imperial sentiment much to the chagrin of the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain.

In Chamberlain's opening address of the 1902 Colonial Conference he set the tone for the meetings while outlining the position of the British government in relation to the self-governing colonies. He stated that the primary objective of the conference was to "draw closer the bonds" which united the mother country with her colonies, and this was to be achieved through three areas: political, commercial, and defence.[3] He followed this with his infamous 'weary titan' speech wherein the titan of the metropole now looked to the colonies to relieve Britain of its fiscal responsibilities to the Empire. The weary titan speech is emblematic of the idea within British strategy of the inferiority of the colonies and the consequent burden of their defence. Chamberlain could not deny the new standing that Canada and the other colonies had attained through their actions in South Africa, and yet did his utmost to ignore the fact. The tone of his speech, and of the broader conference, remained parochial and condescending. He referenced the comments of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in an earlier conference where he declared that "if you want our aid, call us to your councils," Chamberlain was adamant though that Britain did not want their aid, but did want help in the "administration of the vast Empire which is yours as well as ours."[4] Chamberlain rejected the idea that the colonies would be equal partners in decision making, thus rendering the need for representation on councils useless. What Chamberlain wanted was closer unity through tax reform and defence proposals, which he would put to the colonial premiers. Chamberlain then,

[3] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 2.
[4] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 3.

was unable to conceive of greater equality in decision making and imperial strategy in the opening of the 1902 conference.[5]

Defiant Canadian nationalist sentiment was expressed in this conference through Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who rejected anything out of hand that would be a reversal of Canadian autonomy and political power. Laurier consequently spent large portions of the 1902 conference defending the Canadian position ensuring that it would not be drawn into greater military expenditure and rejecting various proposals from the British, Australian, and New Zealand delegates.[6] One of the more telling episodes is when Laurier rejects the idea of a naval subsidy. The Earl of Selbourne, the First Lord of the Admiralty, once again returned to the idea of Britain and the Royal Navy being the sole bearer of the "burden" of imperial defence when asking the colonies for a direct monetary subsidy to the Royal Navy.[7] In reply, Laurier dismissed this idea out of hand and began by highlighting the vast demographic discrepancy between Canada and the United Kingdom before refuting the spurious per capita tax statistics that had been brought by the Admiralty and War Office. To complete a trifecta of refusal, Laurier asked the British officials if their government had ever spent "a farthing" on railway construction. Forced to admit that their government had not paid for any railway construction, Laurier was able to point out that Canada had conversely spent "$20,000,000 at least" on various civil infrastructure projects.[8] Thus, Laurier concluded, that if they were to put "on the on side what is expended by the Government of Great Britain on military and naval expenditure, and on the other hand, what Canada is spending every year for public

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[5] Richard Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defence*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1967), 287.
[5] Preston, *Imperial Defence,* 285.
[6] Preston, *Imperial Defence,* 285.
[7] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 18.
[8] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 28.

works, I think the difference would not be, very very, great." Laurier ended his protest by declaring that "it is just as well in these matters that we should be perfectly frank" when entering discussions like these.[9] Laurier presented a demonstrative expression of colonial power and self-will in his total and complete rejection of Lord Selbourne's naval subsidy proposal. Since Canada's imperial involvement was necessarily limited to what Laurier viewed as acceptable, any defence scheme suggested therefore now had to be attuned to Canadian nationalism. Thus, any proposal which inferred a lessening of national autonomy was no longer politically viable nor desirable.

The defence of local autonomy was further reinforced by Laurier's recently knighted Minister of Militia Sir Frederick Borden, who when speaking for the Canadian militia at the conference was forced to rebuff attacks from the War Office. Borden also set up the Canadian nationalist position declaring that "the object we have in view is to make that force self-contained, self-reliant, absolutely complete within itself."[10] Clearly, Borden was effusing the Canadian nationalist desire for control over its defence, something it had learned from the experience of the war in South Africa.[11] Indeed, Borden then goes on to reject New Zealand's proposal of an "imperial force" for service across the Empire, favouring instead to make the Canadian militia more efficient and effective.[12] He then defended the conduct of the militia in the South African War pointing to the speed and efficiency at which Canada was able to recruit and field a force for service abroad. Moreover, Borden was forced to address the recent adoption of the Ross rifle in the militia, an item that was raised in contemptuous fashion by the Australian Prime Minister Sir

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[9] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 28.
[10] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 85.
[11] Carman Miller, *A Knight in Politics: A Biography of Sir Frederick Borden*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 159.
[12] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 86.

Edmund Barton, who labelled the decision as "unfortunate" for imperial integration.[13] Despite the reality that Borden had attempted to procure Lee-Enfield rifles, the Ross rifle was a useful nationalist tool for Canadians in lauding the development of a domestic Canadian armament industry, something which fed into Borden's desire for a fully autonomous force.[14] The 1902 conference was marked by Canada's defence of autonomy and the utilisation of the strength of nationalism in order to reject continued British pressure to redress the balance of power back to pre-war levels.

Despite the obvious nationalist developments in the Militia and in the position occupied by Laurier at the conference, imperialism remained a genuine factor in the process. While Borden and Laurier were not willing to concede anything that would reduce local autonomy, as Borden explained, they were working to better the internal development of the country as well as the militia for greater unity within the Empire. As part of his defence of the state of the militia, Borden argued that his reforms were designed to enable the militia to operate with a "greater efficiency" so that it can "cooperate more readily" with "still better results" than the war in South Africa.[15] Borden continued, speaking for the militia and for the "sentiment among all classes of people in Canada" reminded the British officials that "if any emergency arises, you will find the militia and country ready to do what they have done."[16] In referencing the performance of the Canadians in South Africa and suggesting that the country is ready, Borden leveraged the recent Boer War experience in order to retain the imperial connection in spite of nationalist gains. This idea is more clearly

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[13] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 83.
[14] Miller, *Knight*, 216.
[15] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 87.
[16] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 87.

elucidated in a memorandum from the Canadian Defence ministers to the War Office which outlined Borden's own comments concerning the proposals discussed at the conference. In the memorandum, they stated categorically that "Canada values highly the measure of local independence which has been granted" which has been "so productive of beneficial results, both as respects the material progress of the country and the strengthening of the ties that bind it to the Mother-land." Despite this, and the "obligation" to reject Admiralty and War Office proposals, Canada does "fully appreciate the duty of the Dominion, as it advances in population and wealth, to make more liberal outlay for those necessary preparations of self-defence."[17] Borden and Canadian defence planners clearly wanted to maintain a British connection not merely out of necessity but more generally because their aims aligned. Consequently, as much as Canada was defending its own autonomy, nationalism was operating concurrently in the views of policy makers.

The 1902 conference can therefore be seen in terms of the defence of local autonomy. Canada's involvement in the Boer War had led to irreversible changes in its position within the Empire, something which Chamberlain, the Admiralty, and War Office failed to negotiate in the conference. Ultimately, the War Office and Admiralty were left without any concrete developments for the updated defence of Canada or, for Chamberlain, a relief for the British taxpayer. Canada, conversely, was defiant in not agreeing to any naval subsidies, something that would be a constant thorn in the admiralty's side leading up to the First World War. Canada was able to defend its own defence developments through leveraging the recent experience of the Boer war to empower its position. In doing so, the nationalist vision of the betterment of Canadian military power was coalesced with the imperialist desire for greater alignment with the British

[17] Library Archives Canada, Canadiana Héritage, Colonial Conferences Collection: C-1366 1902 Colonial Conference, 261.

military and other imperial structures because its own autonomy in decision making had not been threatened through various schemes or proposals.

Following the conference, Britain had a general election which saw the arrival of Arthur Balfour to the premiership. He oversaw a radical shift in British defence thinking, planning, and how the Dominions would fit into the broader strategy. Balfour thought himself a strategist and took a great interest in defence adopting a position that allowed the Canadians to continue their policy of internal militia growth yet retain a strong link to British aims.[18] Balfour created the War Office Reconstitution Committee which oversaw the reorganisation of the department, creating the Army Council along the lines of the Admiralty.[19] This was in response to the findings of the Elgin and Escher Commissions which examined the failures of the British Army in South Africa. Importantly for Canada, Balfour also developed from the existing Colonial Defence Committee and presented a prototype of what would become the Committee for Imperial Defence to the House of Commons in 1902.[20] Balfour's interest in defence and reorganisation of the British War Office and the creation of the Committee of Imperial Defence enabled Borden to emulate these changes in Canada to strengthen the milia and to take a more active part in broader strategic thinking for the Empire.

Simultaneously Borden was introducing his own changes for the militia. The most far reaching and important of them was the 1904 Militia Bill which overhauled the militia system, and modelled on the British Army Council, introduced the Militia Council all of which was designed to cement a Canadian national army.[21] This council was to replace the politically thorny and

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[18] John P. MacKintosh, "The Role of the Committee of Imperial Defence before 1914", *The English Historical Review* 77:304, (1962), 494.
[19] Sydney H. Zebel, *Balfour; A political biography*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 114.
[20] Zebel, *Balfour*, 115.
[21] Miller, *Knight*, 161.

disliked position of General Officer Commanding (GOC) and allow for a greater degree of internal promotion for Canadian officers. The GOC was a position that had caused a headache for the War Office, Colonial Office, and the Canadian government due to the conflicting aspects of the role. It was a position held by a senior British officer designed to oversee the defence of the Dominion. However, recently the GOCs had been either forced to resign or had been recalled from service by London due to the political damage they were inflicting on imperial ties.[22] Consequently, the new council was to be constructed of six members with an equal representation of military and civilian oversight.[23] These changes removed the tricky issue of control over the militia and firmly planted the Militia into the control of Ottawa. Borden was thus consolidating Canadian control over its own defence which was a key nationalist victory. Yet a nationalist victory that was achieved from a closer alignment with British defence structures and a greater communication with London. Moreover, the creation of the Militia Council did not eradicate every British officer from Canada as it was decided they would be necessary for periodical inspections of the permanent force and because of Canada's lack of domestically produced officers, they were necessary in the short term to continue the development of the General Staff.[24] The creation of the Militia Council was a large step in Canada taking control of its own defence planning and other military matters. By removing the GOC, Borden lessened British oversight dramatically, which has often been viewed as further evidence of nationalism. However, the shift had more to do with importing British methods for reorganisation of command and control to grow the efficiency of the Canadian militia rather than from any great statement of nationalist separatism.

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[22] Eirik Brazier, "Guardians of Empire? British Imperial Officers in Canada, 1874-1914", in *Fighting with the Empire*, ed Steve Marti & William John Pratt, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 71.
[23]Desmond Morton, *Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia, 1868-1904,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 193.
[24] Morton, *Ministers and Generals*, 186.

The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) was the successor to the Colonial Defence Committee and was created to centralise defence thinking under Arthur Balfour.[25] It was a purely advisory body that was designed to aid in defence planning and was unique in its revolving membership of politicians as well as military experts. The imperial aspect was cemented by Frederick Borden who during a visit to Britain in 1903 became the first Dominion representative to sit on the committee since its recent inception, and though Balfour himself was not overly impressed by him, Borden took great pride in having taken part.[26] Though his cameo on the committee achieved little, the symbolism of dominion representation was important. It demonstrated Canada's continued commitment to the imperial project and to bettering its own defences and also reveals the changing attitudes of British policy makers in allowing dominion representation. Furthermore, Borden was able to promote himself within Canada as both a nationalist and imperialist through his work with the militia domestically coupled with a clear imperial tie owing to his visit. Borden was therefore capitalising on both imperial and nationalist sentiments for his political position but also using nationalist sentiments within Canada to further his development of Canadian military capability.

The shift in British strategic thought and defence planning highlighted by the CID was compounded in the 1907 Colonial Conference. More than that, however, Canada's position as the senior dominion was now cemented as was its commitment to defence and the imperial project. In the interceding years between the 1902 and 1907 Colonial Conferences the British political establishment had undergone massive changes in government, strategic thinking, as well as views to the dominions. The Conservatives had been removed from power by the Liberal Party headed

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[25] Donald C. Gordon, "The Colonial Defence Committee and Imperial Collaboration: 1885-1904", *Political Science Quarterly* 77:4, (1962), 535.
[26] Miller, *Knight*, 172.

by Henry Campbell-Bannerman who as Prime Minister presided over the 1907 Conference. Campbell-Bannerman's opening speech reveals as much when he blatantly begins by saying that "we do not meet you today as claimants for money" and that the premiers gathered were, like Campbell-Bannerman, "representatives of self-governing communities."[27] Campbell-Bannerman then further solidified his stance espousing to the delegates that the essence of the British imperial connection was "freedom on the part of the individual state, freedom in their negotiations with each other, and with the Mother country," though not too much independence since freedom did not "mean letting things drift."[28] From the outset then, the 1907 Conference had its foundations in a greater equality of nations from the British perspective, the Dominion representatives were no longer merely colonial representatives but heads of individual states. In this context Canada was able to act upon both its nationalist desire to continue domestic growth while also strengthening the imperial connection. Laurier confirmed as much in his reply to Prime Minister suggesting that the conference was more than just a meeting of the heads of self-governing colonies and was instead "a conference between government and governments" who all believed "in the future of the British Empire."[29] Laurier's point about the conferences being between multiple governments is a clear indication of the desire to restructure the Empire and to realise the growth in dominion autonomy by moving towards a parity within the Empire. Indeed, Laurier specified a desire to ensure that the British Prime Minister make an appearance rather than just having the Colonial Secretary host the conference to secure beyond words that the meetings be one of governments rather than Dominion heads and a subordinate of the British government.[30] This was not a rejection of empire, but it was a large step towards realignment.

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[27] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1907), 5.
[28] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 6.
[29] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 7.
[30] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 40.

This shift in standings is also identifiable through the agenda of the first meeting since one of the first topics of discussion was the name of the conference. The idea of changing the name of the conferences to 'Imperial Council' was proposed on the first day of the conference by the Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin. However, Deakin was keen to ensure that the new council was a renaming of the existing structure of the conferences without "any legislative or executive power whatever" so as to not diminish the powers of the governments of the Dominions represented.[31] Laurier expressed concern at the word council which was not met with "much favour" by his cabinet in Canada as it implied executive power — something that Canada would be unwilling to grant anybody outside of the Dominion or UK parliaments.[32] Deakin elaborated in an attempt to reassure Laurier that the proposal was not a radical departure and had more to with adding a staff to the conferences to ensure continuity and ensure subsequent meetings of the premiers of the Dominions.[33] Though a small exchange the hesitancy of Laurier and the emphatic denial of any sort of change in the present system betrays an anxiety from the Dominion leaders about any sort of encroachment on their autonomous powers. The episode was concluded by Lord Elgin who presided over the conference and declared that it would be hard for the British to agree to any "body with independent status or authority. It would be contrary to the freedom and independence of which the Prime Minister (Campbell-Bannerman) spoke."[34] This once again points to a realignment of empire, one where both Britain and the Dominions are working to ensure their respective autonomous control. Both Britain and the Dominions were therefore wary of anything that would change the current system of sovereignty and authority. This once again

[31] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 27.
[32] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 26.
[33] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 27.
[34] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 37.

points to a realignment of empire, one where both Britain and the Dominions were working to ensure their respective autonomous control.

Perhaps the most indicative example of the growth of self-assuredness of the Dominions can be found in the discussion of the official name of the colonies being represented. The preceding conferences had all used the 'colonial' to describe the relationship between Britain and the members. However, Laurier pointed out that this now seemed inappropriate for Canada, Australia, and New Zealand all of whom "passed the state when the term 'colony' could be applied."[35] Laurier requested a change in name in order to better represent the new nature of the relationship, and more specifically he wanted a single word "which may be taken to mean 'self-governing colonies.'"[36] Ultimately the title "Dominions beyond the seas" was adopted as the new nomenclature for the nations at the conference. Dominion was a word that had been used informally to mean Canada since Confederation, owing to the long history of responsible government, and as such Laurier was keen to transmit the new official designation to the press and public of Canada. Laurier's wish to update the country on this change as soon as possible, and the attention paid to the resolution by the delegates clearly shows the importance of this change. Indeed, this change of wording is a clear expression of nationalist self-assuredness from the Dominion representation in their desire to be recognised as grander parts of what the imperialist writer Richard Jebb labelled the "Britannic Alliance."[37] It was much as an expression of nationalist power as it was desire for a continuation, albeit an evolved, of involvement in Empire.

However, this is not to say that the British were yet ready to relinquish all control as the later session on imperial defence shows. Instead of direct oversight the new direction taken by the

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[35] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 81.
[36] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 81.
[37] Richard Jebb, *The Britannic Question: a survey of alternatives*, (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1913), 126.

British was to try and bring the Dominions into the fold, to utilise their resources for a "common purpose or a common end."[38] This is a major shift from the simplistic views of the 1902 Conference and Chamberlain's aims of monetary subsidies. Lord Haldane, the Secretary of State for War spoke to the conference about the recent reorganisation in the British Army and what that meant for general imperial defence. In his opening gambit he was, like Campbell-Bannerman, forced to acquiesce to the new relations within the Empire, admitting that "we know that you have all got your own difficulties and the idiosyncrasies of your own people to deal with. No rigid model is therefore of use."[39] In fact within the space of two paragraphs, Haldane reiterates the futility of a rigid system no less than three separate times, highlighting the awareness of the British that forcing any sort of system onto the Dominions would result in fractures rather than unity. Haldane also uses the word 'common' frequently to remind the premiers of the unity and takes great effort to praise the Dominion leaders for their work in upgrading their own militias and defence planning.[40] Haldane's deference is most clearly stated when he finally begins his point, which was the aim to create a centralised general staff that would take on "as much as possible an Imperial character," but this was in not "in the slightest degree to suggest that you should bow your heads to any direction from home in military matters."[41] Haldane's expressions recognising the power of the Dominions demonstrates just how much the British were now willing to properly accommodate the new idea of the Dominions as partners into defence planning while also categorically wishing not to alienate them.

Instead of subsuming imperial partners into piecemeal units within the British Army as was the case during South Africa, Haldane was now actively encouraging a form of partnership in

[38] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 95.
[39] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 95.
[40] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 96.
[41] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 96.

imperial defence, although still to a limited end. Haldane was looking for a greater alignment of defence procedures across the Empire because "the value of any assistance which the self-governing Dominions may offer in the future to the mother country will be much increased if it can be given in the form of which it can be readily fitted into the organisation of an entire army in the field."[42] Essentially, Haldane wanted a greater degree of integration through officer exchanges facilitated by the creation of a general imperial staff, as well as simplified procurement of arms, and the form of expeditionary force that could be used anywhere in the Empire, all of which would be beneficial for Britain to more effectively utilise any Dominion force. Consequently, though British planning was now involving the Dominions it was still in service of larger British strategy, something which the Dominion leaders and especially Frederick Borden recognised.

Frederick Borden in his responses indicates the levels and limits to which Canada was willing to be involved in imperial integration. Borden was the first to reply to Haldane and he immediately reminded him that the Militia Law in Canada prevented Canadian service abroad and that the Boer War was a volunteer force. Because of this Canada could not be drawn into any conflict without a summoning of parliament.[43] Borden, much like in previous conferences was cautious to agree to anything that would involve a decreasing of autonomous power and so instead utilised the progress the Militia had made to leverage against unwanted proposals. Borden was keen to not let the experience of the General Officer Commanding be repeated and consequently warned Haldane that he could "see difficulties in the war of an officer… in Canada considering himself to be answerable… to the War Office without responsibility to the Minister who has charge of such matters in Canada."[44] Furthermore, like Laurier suggested earlier in the discussion of the

[42] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 97.
[43] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 99.
[44] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 100.

imperial council, Borden was wary of any scheme that would seem too committal arguing that "there may be some of our people… who may be somewhat sensitive about being committed to, as they might think they were being committed, to something like an obligation."[45] This was an obvious reference to the Quebecois nationalists, who rejected any idea of Quebec and Canada more generally being subject to arbitrary British control for military means. In spite of this, Borden did recognize that it would be agreeable "to the idea of establishing General Staffs in each of the Dominions… and that these staffs should be interchangeable."[46] Borden himself was in favour of closer military alignment and in 1909 set up the Militia Staff Course in order to further develop Canadian officers. Though this was modelled on and as far as possible maintained the standards of the British school in Camberley, the school was there to promote Canadian officers since replacing all the missing positions with British officers was politically unviable.[47] Borden was therefore cautious about letting Canada become involved in anything that would reduce Ottawa's control, he was managing the imperial desires of Canadian imperialists through closer alignment to British military standards while retaining necessarily nationalist, both English and French Canadian, impulses for Canadian autonomy. He was operating within the confines of the competing forces to maximise Canadian internal development and maintain closer ties to the imperial project.

The 1907 Conference therefore represented a pivotal change, though incremental, in that it was one of the first recognitions by Britain of a new Canadian and larger Dominion standing within the Britannic world and the consequences that brought for imperial defence and strategic thinking. Conversely for the Canadian representatives, primarily Laurier and Borden, they worked to

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[45] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 117.
[46] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 116.
[47] Andrew L Brown, "Cutting its coat according to the cloth: The Canadian Militia and staff training before the Great War", *War and Society* 34:4, (2016), 267.

maintain Canadian autonomous control while also seeking to develop closer ties within the imperial defence project. In doing so they were forced to manage imperialist and nationalist sentiments with an objective to continuing Canadian independence through defence while also ensuring the retention of British support. A delicate balancing act needed to be maintained to not be drawn into arbitrary British control, which ran the risk of increased foreign military action, without losing British support, that was a necessary crutch supporting Canadian autonomy.

The 1911 Imperial Conference demonstrates a further development in the relationship between Westminster and the Dominions, as the new Prime Minister Herbert Asquith took the themes and tone of the 1907 Conference even further. His opening address talked about the nature of the Empire and that it was fundamentally composed of two distinct aspects. The first was the rule of law and the second was a "combination of local autonomy - absolute, unfettered, complete - with loyalty to a common head, cooperation, spontaneous and unforced, for common interests."[48] He then continued that the "political instinct of our [Anglo-Saxon] race" had saved the Empire from the spectre of the republican United States, thus meaning that now the Dominions had achieved "political manhood."[49] The use of the word 'manhood' is significant for several reasons. Firstly, in the social construction of the Edwardian period legacies of the Victorian social spheres theory were still prevalent meaning that men were perceived to be the dominant figurehead of the household. Moreover, this goes against the usual gendered rhetoric of empire which placed the Dominions in the role of a 'daughter in the mother's household' due to their young age and inexperience.[50] Manhood in this context therefore necessarily implies a command over the

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[48] *Minutes of Proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1911*, (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1911), 22.
[49] *Minutes of Proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1911*, 22.
[50] Steve Marti, "Daughter in My Mother's House, but Mistress in My Own: Questioning Canada's Imperial Relationship through Patriotic Work, 1914-18", in *Fighting with the Empire* ed. Steve Marti & William John Pratt, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 35.

respective households, or Dominions. Rhetorically then as a symbol of age and gender the use of the term signified a coming of age for Canada and the other Dominions as instead of the association with passivity or immaturity that women and children respectively represented in the popular imagination the nation was now an active agent in the imperial world. Furthermore, in the context of imperial defence, manhood and manliness were from the late Victorian period strongly associated with muscular Christianity and the idea of the martial spirit. This was an important aspect in volunteerism for the Boer War and was reinforced following the conflict by the likes of Robert Baden-Powell and his Boy Scouts.[51]

Asquith ensured that the Dominion representatives would not be concerned about encroaching British control, continued his address stating that "each of us intends to remain, master in our own household. This is, here at home and throughout the Dominions, the life-blood of our polity… We are and intend to remain, units indeed, but units in a greater unity."[52] Yet this also reveals that political alignment was becoming more difficult. In his conclusion Asquith asked the delegations to "not lose sight of the value of elasticity and flexibility in our imperial organisation."[53] Laurier himself touched upon a hitherto unspoken aspect of Dominion partnership in that the imperial conferences produced the result of countering local forces which "tend to disintegration."[54] By addressing the fears around the breakup of the Empire, Laurier had illuminated how local politics was becoming more of a driving force for the Dominions eradicating British imperial control and thus the agreements on defence were all the more important for maintaining imperial unity. The securitisation of the Empire for a common goal was both a force

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[51]Patricia Dirks, 'Canada's Boys - An Imperial or National Asset? Responses to Baden Powell's Boy Scout Movement in Pre-War Canada', in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 111.
[52] *Minutes of Proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1911*, 22.
[53] *Minutes of Proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1911*, 23.
[54] *Minutes of Proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1911*, 24.

of nationalism and imperialism and by 1911 it was clear, as Laurier alluded to, that Britain was losing control. Yet loss of control did not mean a loss of empire so much as it meant a reordering of structure in specific relation to the self-governing colonies.

The importance of the Royal Navy as cohesive agent of Empire cannot be understated, especially at the turn of the twentieth century.[55] Relations between Canada and Britain about the Royal Navy were complicated and at times frustrating and occurred during a period of renegotiation between Dominions and the motherland. However, episodes like the Dreadnought Scare of 1909 meant that the issue of a Canadian navy would have to be addressed. The Canadian government was eventually pressured into the creation of a Canadian navy, something that initially may be perceived as imperialist was, alongside the militia reforms, deeply nationalist.

Laurier's government was aware of the optics both for nationalists and imperialists about contributing to imperial defence through the navy. Through the navy and greater local defence Canada would be able to gain greater autonomous control, but this would have to be carried out on Canada's own terms.[56] As such the development of the Canadian navy was marred by imperial and nationalist rhetoric. Having rejected the naval subsidy program at the 1902 Conference, Laurier's government had by 1904 completed the takeover of the naval bases at Halifax and Esquimalt on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. This was a breakthrough in the growth of Canadian defence and was seen with a surge of nationalist pride since Canada was now taking greater control of her borders and defence. This is also found in the fact that the Royal Navy had suggested that Ottawa would have a cheaper option if they subsidised the bases instead, yet Laurier insisted that

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[55] Jan Rüger, 'Nation, Empire, and Navy: identity Politics in the United Kingdom, 1887-1914', *Past and Present* 185, (2004), 161.
[56] Tumblin, *Quest,* 21.

Canadians be the ones to operate them.[57] Britain was going to abandon these bases as by the turn of the century the Royal Navy had concluded that they held no strategic value whatsoever.[58] Moreover, the British withdrawal was part of a larger scheme of reorganisation in the face of a growing German naval threat and new naval doctrine inspired by the American Alfred T. Mahan's and the British Julian Corbett's writings.[59] Canada therefore had no real need to take on the bases in the name of imperial defence but did so both for nationalistic and imperial reasons. Borden was able to utilise the control of the bases at the 1907 Conference to demonstrate Canada's willingness for local defence in the service of Empire.[60] Similar to the contributing to the Boer War control of the bases meant that Canada could simultaneously achieve a greater position in the Empire while retaining greater sovereign control, thus placating nationalist and imperialist forces.

The question of naval defence erupted across the Empire in 1909 with the naval scare in the face of growing German naval power and imperial designs and thus the question of Canadian commitments to defence was once again raised. In this space, imperialism and nationalism operated concurrently and to similar ends. On the 29th of March, Conservative MP George Forster declared that Canada ought to do more for naval defence. In a debate about the recent resolution passed by the house, he lamented that the control of two naval bases was not enough, that Canada was "ashamed" at her failure to contribute to the defence of Empire and therefore concluded that Canada needed to create its own navy.[61] This statement overtly demonstrates how imperialism and Canadian nationalism were very much compatible since Canadians wanted to contribute to

[57] Siobhan J. McNaught, 'The Rise of Proto-nationalism: Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Founding of the Naval Service of Canada, 1902-1910', in *A nation's navy: In quest of Canadian naval identity*, ed. by F. W. Cricked, Robert Hubert, Michael L. Hadley, (Montreal: McGil-Queen's University Press, 1996), 108.
[58] McNaught, 'Proto-nationalism', 105.
[59] Tumblin, *Quest*, 78.
[60] *Minutes of proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907,* 102.
[61] Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, 11th Parliament, 1st Session: Vol. 2, 29th March, (1909), 3486-3562.

imperial defence, but through the nationalist policy of domestic naval development. Consequently, when Laurier agreed with Forster's sentiment and support for the naval bill, it was based on the understanding that it would be a Canadian contribution to Empire and not support for what Laurier termed the "vortex of militarism existing in Europe".[62] Moreover, the creation of a distinct Canadian navy meant the continuation of Laurier's policy of refusing to pay the Royal Navy a subsidy. This would be too far of a regression in nationalist and imperialist gains, to the extent that even Robert Borden, the Conservative and imperialist opposition leader, refused to pay the subsidy when in power.[63]

Both the British and the Dominions were caught between nationalism and imperialism regarding the navy. Due to the Navy being a symbolic unifier of Empire and of British global control, Admiral Fisher's new doctrine that called for one fleet which would seek out and destroy the enemy force, went directly against Dominion aims of greater input to imperial defence as well as nationalist goals of sovereign control. Consequently, the navy had to settle for the creation of localised navies in Australasia and Canada. Yet this debate was so heated and seen to be so vital to imperial and national interests, that it was a major part in the ending of Laurier's tenure in power.[64] He was unable, like at the outbreak of the Boer War, to appease to a sufficient extent the nationalist and imperialist factions of the country and as such lost to Robert Borden in the 1911 general election. Once in power, Borden rejected the aforementioned naval subsidy for the construction of dreadnaught-class battleships that he had been asking the government to commit to and instead continued the development of a Canadian navy. He also followed Laurier's precedent that the Canadian navy would not, in a time of war, come automatically under the control

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[62] Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, 11th Parliament, 1st Session: Vol. 2, 29th March, (1909), 3511.
[63] McNaught, 'Proto-nationalism', 109.
[64] Preston, *Imperial Defence*, 428.

of the Royal Navy thus ensuring autonomy from Ottawa.[65] As the head Dominion, Canada and its self-governing status was able to decide what level of support it would give Britain in the case of war and this extended to its navy.[66] The navy and its context for broader imperial defence was therefore another space wherein nationalist and imperialist forces competed and had very real political consequences.

Following the Boer War there was a restructuring of the relations between Britain and the Dominions. As political integration became more challenging and the idea of federation became untenable, defence became a key space for intra-empire cooperation. The main space for these discussions were the Colonial and later Imperial Conferences in the decade after the calamity in South Africa. It was at the various conferences where the Dominions renegotiated and reinforced their newfound grander standing in the imperial world. Each of the conferences demonstrates the changing nature of the relationship as the Dominions sought to consolidate their gains, while rejecting any British attempts to retake greater control. Joseph Chamberlain for that reason misread the initial 1902 conference and his proposal were largely rejected. The 1907 and 1911 Conferences both represent a shift away from the condescending idea of control from the imperial metropole, and therefore demonstrate the growing equity and parity of the white dominions in the British world. This renegotiation was born out of primarily nationalist sentiments in Canada to consolidate the growth of the nation; however, there was strong imperial sentiment that operated in conjunction which saw that it was Canada's duty to play a larger role in the Empire.

In the decade following the Boer War there was a substantial shift for Canada's relationship with imperial defence. The involvement in the Boer War had gained for Canada a new place in

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[65] McNaught, 'Proto-nationalism', 109.
[66] John C. Mitcham, Race And Imperial Defence In The British World, 1870-1914, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 212.

Empire, a significant nationalist development. Yet as much as engaging with imperial defence brought about increased sovereignty, there was also the risk of deeper involvement in conflict that the country would not be ready for or willing to engage in. Moreover, the growth of Canada's military capability was built from nationalist sentiment as it meant the greater development of the Canadian nation. Conversely, the growth of a domestic defence capability was imperial since there was a large portion of imperialists that wanted Canada to have a larger involvement in Empire and imperial defence. Canadian defence development was also in response to the substantial political changes in the British corridors of power which fundamentally altered the strategic view of Empire. The shadow of the Boer War and the poor performance of the British Army led to considerable structural changes. These changes were emulated by Borden in his Militia Bill, which though nationalist in its removal of British oversight from the Militia, like most of the changes implemented, was also imperial in that it sought to make Canadian military power more efficient for service within the Empire or to aid in imperial defence.

Chapter 3 - *Imperial Legacy*

As has been shown in the previous chapters, the outbreak of the conflict was a political crisis formed through the conflicting forces of imperialism and nationalism, yet after the war Canadians used their involvement in the war to augment a new position in imperial standing, utilising nationalism and imperialism to aid the development of the nation. On the home front and culturally, the Boer War was particularly significant because it gave tangible meaning to preconceived nationalist conceptions and myths about the Canadian nation. Moreover, the aftermath of the war provided the mechanisms for the development of memorialisation and national mourning that would be vital for nation building after the First World War. Canadian involvement in the Boer War was more than a dry run for the First World War, as it created, developed, and reinforced the cultural systems that were vital in Canadian nation-building. However, this outcome was primarily for English Canadians in eastern Canada who engaged with the conflict far more enthusiastically than either French Canadians or western settlers. The national development that resulted from the war was primarily received and understood through Anglo-imperial terms. Thus, imperialism remained a key force that dovetailed with nationalist sentiment in the construction of a Canadian identity and nation within the British world.

Involvement in the Boer War enabled Canadians to perceive the affirmation of nationalist rhetoric and cultural norms that predated the war, the first and most prominent of which was the idea of the supremacy of the citizen soldier. This was a legacy of the War of 1812 and meant that going into the conflict in South Africa, Canadians had an inflated view of the capability of the volunteers fuelled by the cultural understanding of how the harsh climate of the north formed naturally better soldiers. Coupled with the large connection to the North-West Mounted Police

(NWMP) who were already homegrown Canadian icons representing rugged frontiersmen, the contingents were seen to represent the strength of an Anglo-Saxon race as it contributed to the defence of Empire. The contribution was most publicly seen at the Battle of Paardeberg wherein Canadians won the first major victory of the war for the British army and accepted the surrender of the Boer General Piet Cronje. Victory at Paardeberg was the confirmation of all the pre-war expectations of the Canadian soldiers, however it did come at the cost of Canadian lives. The spilling of Canadian blood led the nationalist sentiments surrounding the victory to be transmuted into imperialist terms to give the deaths significant meaning. In doing so, the more general memorialisation drive following the war enshrined both nationalist and imperialist sentiments and thereby contributed to Canadian nation-building. The Boer War contributed to a growth in a sense of Canadian standing in the Empire and an increased belief in national autonomy. Yet the pervasiveness of imperial thought meant that even the autonomist thinkers still envisioned a future, albeit with a far more independent Canada, as a part of the British world.

The Boer War enabled specific aspects of Canadian nationalism that existed before the war to gain credence through the Canadian experience of the conflict. Sending men abroad meant that these troops became a channel to confirm pre-existing ideas and therefore cement Canadian nationalist rhetoric. There existed in Canada prior to war in South Africa a common cultural idea that the northern climate was a unique aspect of a specifically Canadian identity.[1] This idea, which coupled the Victorian glorification of the frontiersmen and other hardy masculine traits meant that any citizen taken from such a society would be viewed as a naturally good soldier. Furthermore, there was a growing idea which was born of the Victorian muscular Christianity and New Imperialist deification of the military heroes of the past, that it was a citizen's duty to defend the

[1] Carl Berger, "The True North, Strong and Free", in *Canadian Culture: An introductory reader*, eds. Elspeth Cameron, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1997), 84.

nation when called upon.[2] The amateur citizen soldier's prowess in war was the basis of the Militia myth that James Wood's excellent study has demonstrated originated in the War of 1812. This mythologised version of volunteer militia was largely untested before the outbreak of hostilities in South Africa, save for the North-West Rebellions and a brief foreign incursion from the Fenians. As Wood explains, the "dangerously faulty memory" of the War of 1812 led Canadians in the belief that there was "no military contingency so serious that it could not be met by citizen soldiers."[3] Going into the war in South Africa, despite the existence of a small permanent force of soldiers, most believed that the citizen militia would be capable of military talent on the battlefields since they had beaten the might of the United States nearly a century earlier. This idea was then amplified and reinforced through war reporting from both Canadian and later British correspondents, meaning that Canadian nationalist rhetoric was cemented in the national consciousness as a response to the war.

The north as cultural identifier was a pervasive and commonplace one in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one that still informs a large part of Canadian identity today. This was reinforced by the great poets of the age like Alfred Tennyson and especially Rudyard Kipling who wrote of the Canadian place in Empire as being that of "Our Lady of the Snows."[4] Following the war, the sheer amount of British volunteers that were rejected on health grounds fuelled fears of racial degeneracy, which meant by natural extension that the Canadian citizen soldiers who were reported to have grown up in an idealised and largely fictitious frontier society, were perceived as

[2] James Wood, *Militia Myths: ideas of the Canadian citizen soldier, 1896-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 3.
[3] Wood, *Militia Myths*, 11.
[4] Berger, "True North", 115.

naturally better than the slum dwelling old-world regulars.[5] Canadian self-reliance as an aspect of cultural identity was also a key part of the way in which the war was reported and Canadian's role in it, though as Wood points out the kind of reporting which lauded Canadian martial prowess at the expense of the British regular was not purely out of nationalist outflow, but that the British media was doing similar. The British media conversely was using the effectiveness of the Dominion troops as a foil against which to criticise British military failings.[6] The Boer War gave both Canada and Britain the means to express societal beliefs of racial supremacy in Canada and racial decline in Britain. In connecting the Canadian strength of character to British racial values Canadians legitimised their nationalist sense of superiority which was achieved through military action in the campaigns of South Africa.

This was a key theme in the way the Canadian's activities in the war, particularly in the first year, was reported back in Canada. Stanley M. Brown of the Mail and Empire in his dispatches wrote disparagingly of the British regular "if he stands in battle two yards from a rock which might save his life, he keeps on standing there." Conversely, the Canadians could think for themselves because they were "from a country whose people have an unbeaten adaptability."[7] For Brown this was more than just the idea of the country as he goes onto explain that the men of the Canadian contingent had come from all walks of life, not just the countryside, but that it was from the country of Canada that the culture of self-reliance was inculcated and gave the men their success. To this extent he discloses that an unnamed British General following the Battle at Paardeberg apparently said that the Canadians could "go into battle without a leader, they have the

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[5] Wood, *Militia Myths*, 92. 33% of British recruits who were inspected were denied in 1899, 28% and 29% in 1900 and 1901. Stephen Miller, "In support of the "Imperial mission"? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899-1902, *The Journal of Military History*, 69:3, (2005), 699.
[6] Wood, *Militia Myths*, 85.
[7] Stanley M. Brown, *With the Royal Canadians*, (Toronto: Toronto Publisher's Syndicate, 1900), 137/138.

intelligence and resourcefulness enough to lead themselves."[8] Regardless of the authenticity of the quote, the fact it required a British General to make it does betray a respect for British military opinion, and Brown goes onto caveat that in this comment is not advocating that the men of the British Army "receive their preliminary training in Canada" he instead was merely trying to point out why the "unaccustomed" Canadians were able to match the effects of "the best regiments of the Imperial Service."[9] The conclusion Brown comes to is that it was the culture of self-reliance in Canada which meant that the Canadian citizen-cum-soldier was so convincingly effective on the veldt and thus the Militia myth was undoubtedly proved.

The Militia myth was not only seen to be proved by military action but was further reinforced by the visuals and rhetoric that surrounded the contingents. These contingents of volunteers, especially the first contingent which aroused massive excitement as it departed in October 1899, were viewed to be representative of the Canadian nation with the speakers on the day of their departure remarking of the unity of French and English Canadians.[10] Thanks to the work of Hutton, Minto, and Frederick Borden, the first contingent which arrived in the veldt was an autonomous force that could not be broken up and parcelled away to other units in the British Army. Thus, it attained a distinct sense of the contingent being a Canadian national army. Canadian distinctiveness was enshrined by the Crown and Maple Leaf badges worn as part of their uniform, thereby ensuring the Canadians would be differentiated from their British counterparts.[11] Furthermore, differences were also found in Canadian irritation of the enforced British military system of rank based separations and privileges. On Canadian soil these arbitrary divisions were less of an issue than during journey to South Africa aboard the overcrowded troop transport,

[8] Brown, *With the Royal Canadians,* 138
[9] Brown, *With the Royal Canadians,* 139.
[10] Miller, *Painting*, 63.
[11] Miller, *Painting,* 54.

Sardinia, and later on the South African veldt where tensions were exacerbated.[12] Not only then were the contingents seen, by Canadians from the outside looking in, as being reflective of the Dominion, the men themselves added to this sentiment in their rejection of British stratification methods as well as their unit composition and design.

There were other aspects which gave the Canadian contingents a specific Canadian feel like for example the large connection to the NWMP that the later mounted contingents contained. The NWMP were already a key aspect of Canadian identity for their role in the opening up of western Canada and the idea that they were extolling British law and order in a vast and untamed area. Nowhere was this adherence to the Queen's Law in the face of extreme adversity more widely demonstrated for Canadians than the Klondike Gold Rush which occurred from 1895 to the end of the century. It was during the gold rush that the NWMP constructed the most northerly outpost of the British Empire as a way of disarming the influx of American miners, thus perpetuating the idea of the superiority of British law and order despite the harsh conditions atop the snowy peaks of the Yukon.[13] The NWMP became inextricably linked to the war in South Africa due to the number of NWMP men who joined the Strathcona's Horse as well as the Canadian Mounted Rifles and were typified in the media's construction by the large character of their commander Sam Steele. Steele became famous for his role in the pacification and transformation of the mining town of Dawson with William Oglivie, a surveyor and commissioner of the Yukon comparing his reputation as being as wide as the continent of America.[14] Thanks to his command of the Strathcona's Horse and their generally good performance in South Africa,

[12] Miller, *Painting*, 73.
[13] Ronald Atkin, *Maintain the Right: the early history of the North West Mounted Police, 1873-1900* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 330.
[14] Atkin, *Maintain the Right,* 355.

Steele was promoted to Colonel of the militia on his return home to Canada and received a Companion of the Order of Bath.

More significantly than Steele's personal accolades was that the Strathcona's Horse were incredibly well received in the imperial capital with plenty of dinners and a lavish banquet was given in their honour en route back to Canada.[15] Steele implicitly tied the Strathcona's Horse, and by extension the NWMP, to a larger nation building project in his farewell speech to his troops in 1901, directing them to "never forget that you are Canadians and that Canada, as a country, has no superior in the wide world." This was reinforced when he instructed the men to be "proud of being a Canadian. Remember that you are Canadians first."[16] Steele's speech firmly represents a nationalist approach to the idea of identity for his troops as well as enforcing the idea that the Strathcona's were Canadians who had been fighting for Canada rather than the Empire. The connection to the contingents of the NWMP meant that uniquely Canadian iconography could be added to the citizen soldier mythos of the contingents. Not only, were the Canadians described as effective fighters due to the culture of self-reliance, and because of the nature of the climate of the country, but domestic Canadian icons were also part of the conflict thus strengthening the nationalist rhetoric surrounding the war. The Boer War had therefore given English Canadians a way to extoll their cultural and social beliefs onto a world stage and demonstrate to the imperial metropole the advanced growth of the Canadian nation.

The war gave Canadian nationalism tangible meaning not only through the composition of the contingent and what they were seen to represent, but also in the actions of the men on the battlefield. One event became a key cornerstone around which Canadian's understanding of the war came to be viewed. The Canadians were involved in the Battle of Paardeberg between the

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[15] Ron Macleod, *Sam Steele: a Biography*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2018), 227.
[16] "We Have Done Our Duty", *Montreal Gazette*, March 9, 1901.

18th of February 1900 until its conclusion on the 27th with the surrender of the Boer General Piet Cronje. Paardeberg gave to commentators and Canadian society more generally all the elements that would later be attributed to the whole war; British military stupidity, exemplary bravery of the Canadians, and sacrifice. Most importantly, its consequences were of imperial significance. Mythmaking surrounding the battle began almost immediately and it would become the subject of poetry, songs, and many books which explained the noble sacrifice of the men who died as well as gushed over the importance of the victory achieved. The battle itself was shambolic for the Canadians, with Carman Miller pointing out astutely that the only reason the Canadians were able to accept the surrender of Cronje was the failure to receive an order of retreat or a deliberate decision to ignore it, of the Canadian G and H companies, both of which accepted Cronje's surrender the following day.[17] Despite this, the Canadians were there to accept the surrender of the Boer General in what Thomas Pakenham describes as "the first great British victory of the war."[18] To nationalists this was clear evidence of the efficacy of the Canadian militia citizen soldier, but the victory was also shared by imperialists alike who commented on the coincidental fact that the battle took place on the exact same date as the humiliating Battle of Majuba Hill, which took place during the first Anglo-Boer War in 1881. The Battle of Majuba Hill was so desperately catastrophic for the Empire that Byron Farwell goes as far as to suggest it would not be "far wrong" to point to it as a "moment in history where the mighty British Empire first began to crumble."[19] The emotional and mental weight of the overhanging shadow of Majuba Day on the minds of imperialists was severe, and informed the writing of the battle meaning that nationalism and imperialism were fused in one historical event. In the writing of Paardeberg,

[17] Miller, *Painting,* 108.
[18] Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, (Channel Islands: Guernsey Press Co. Ltd, 1988), 342.
[19] Byron Farwell, *Victoria's Little Wars*, (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 252.

Canadian nationalism had won for Canada and therefore the Empire a massive victory, not only strategically but sentimentally too through the overturning of a historic blight. Canadians had demonstrated their willingness to fight and die for the Empire and in doing so had achieved a massive success.

The battle became a symbol for Canada's military and national awakening, a moment of honour where Canada had revived a wounded empire through the gallant actions of its sons. Despite the obvious nationalism in the heroics of individual Canadian actions, there remained an overarching imperial sentiment. Plenty of material was published following the battle in the subsequent year and going into the decade, with the most popular form being soldiers' own and historic accounts of the war.[20] T. G. Marquis' *Canada's Sons on the Kopje and Veldt* was a combination of the two published in 1900, was very popular and is emblematic of a lot of the writing of the battle and of Canada's involvement in the war. Thoroughly imperialistic in nature, opening with a preface by George M. Grant, the imperialist principal of Queen's University in Ontario, it also presents a very clear nationalism. For his section on Paardeberg, Marquis goes into great detail about the humiliation of Majuba Hill, and then turns to literary narrative in order to paint the scene for the battle, diverting from a strictly factual telling.[21] When his description finally reaches the surrender, Marquis explains that it was the "splendid marksmen with the maple leaf on their helmets" who convinced Cronje of the futility of his situation.[22] In her "little book for the public" Anne Mellish takes the impact of the Canadian victory even further.[23] She explains how after the surrender, as Cronje was dining with Lord Roberts, "One Boer, in conversation, is reported to have said 'we can stand the shooting of the average British soldier, but your Canadians

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[20] Miller, *Painting,* 347.
[21] T. G. Marquis, *Canada's Sons on the Kopje and Veldt*, (1900), 280, 281.
[22] Marquis, *Canada's Sons*, 287.
[23] Anne E. Mellish, *Our Boys Under Fire*, (1900), III.

are regular fire eaters and know no fear.' Another said, 'It is easily seen now what nation is going to rule the world.'"[24] Clearly then, self-professed objective histories could not help but indulge in overt nationalist sentiment that tapped into the militia myth using the success of Paardeberg as tangible evidence to its truthfulness. The imperialism in these accounts was used and understood as giving the nationalist rhetoric greater significance. If Canada helped the Empire, then it was affecting a global order system, therefore raising its national status within the Empire. Mellish's inclusion, despite any lingering suspicions of authenticity, of the Boer declaring that he recognises Canada as the new world power, is a demonstrative expression of common sentiment of Canadian national and imperial growth.

The ascension of Canadian nationalist rhetoric into imperial realms became even more important in South Africa because while the victory at Paardeberg produced a military victory for Canada and the Empire more broadly, there was one inescapable aspect of the battle and one that brought as much tragedy as adulation. The deaths of eighteen of the Canadians was shocking and brutal and therefore required imperialism to give their deaths significant meaning. Rather than dying in an effort that brought about the surrender of Cronje, the eighteen (with 63 wounded) were killed on what was known as Bloody Sunday in what Miller calls a "suicidal charge" on the 18th of February.[25] Paardeberg, as was noted at the time, was therefore the most costly Canadian military action since the War of 1812.[26] Despite the futility of the action which caused the deaths, the idea of Canadians as having sacrificed became intertwined with the victory achieved. Canada had now not only won a great victory; it had shed its blood for the Empire. While the victory was often written in distinct nationalist tones, the loss of life attained a greater symbolism and was

[24] Mellish, *Under Fire*, 26.
[25] Miller, *Painting*, 95
[26] Miller, *Painting*, 98.

enshrined often in an imperialist tone. Margaret Yarker's poetry collection *Echoes of Empire* has a dedication at the beginning which talks of the "glorious memory" of those who "proved they were willing to die for Empire and Liberty."[27] The collection is of poems that tell the story of the Canadian contingents and their role in the conflict and is filled with imperial rhetoric. Yarker portrays the deaths as a good thing proclaiming "be proud O Canada! Such sons have bled to light the page historic with their name" and that it was a "priceless gift, O! Hearts bereaved, ye give in Freedom's cause in sacrifice divine" thus linking the deaths with a much larger conception of timeless meaning.[28] William Makeracher's poem *Canada's Eighteen* more directly ties the Canadian experience of loss with that of Britain when he wrote in 1908 "as Britain weaves the garland of her grief, we place among the leaves a blood-red maple leaf."[29] The eight years between the two poems is indicative of the enduring influence of the Boer War and especially Paardeberg in the popular consciousness. Whereas the Canadian victories are written of in nationalist terms, the Canadian losses are categorised as being in service of a greater imperial mission, Canadians died not only for Canada, but in service of the Queen and Empire. Canada and Britain are both grieving in *Canada's Eighteen,* implying a sharing of experience and therefore an equality of nationhood brought about through involvement in the Boer War.

Grief and sacrifice are important themes in how Canadians interpreted the South African conflict and moreover the way that the South African War was commemorated also helped lay the foundations for the ways in which Canadians viewed and memorialised the First World War. Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble* demonstrates how the memory of the First World War was co-opted into nation building. The narrative viewed the conflict as being in defence of western

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[27] Margaret G. Yarker, *Echoes of Empire*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1900).
[28] Yarker, *Echoes*, 19.
[29] William Mackeracher, *Canada, My Land and other compositions in verse*, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1908), 19.

civilisation and Christian values and as such the Canadian men and women who had stood by their country, many giving up their lives for it, would not be forgotten for their sacrifice.[30] Just sacrifice is a common Christian theme that formed large aspects of the glorification of the deaths of Canadians in the First World War because it reduced the futility and trauma of the losses incurred. Much like how the First World War was written of as a defence of Christianity and Western values, the Boer War was interpreted to have been in defence of imperial and British values. Values of liberty, freedom, and political representation. Indicative of this is Arthur Conan-Doyle's popular history of 1900 *The Great Boer War*. Conan-Doyle outlined across two pages eight bullet pointed reasons for the outbreak of the war, the majority of which relate to the "despotic government" of the Transvaal and how it denied British citizens of the region voting rights or rights to control their affairs.[31] In this way, the justification for sacrifice of Canadian blood is for the defence of British and therefore Canadian values. Walter Allward's Toronto South African War memorial was noted at the time as representing a Mother Canada figure sending her sons as troops to heroically defend the Empire.[32] The sacrifice the stone sons represent helped Canadians mark a new phase in the perceived evolution of the Canadian nation. Though most First World War memorials in Canada followed a glorified heroic theme, Allward's magnum opus of the Vimy memorial is far more sacrificial rather than heroic as it reflects the scale of the devastation of the First World War.[33] Consequently, Mackeracher's poetic symbolism of the British garland of grief with a maple leaf placed alongside demonstrates how the sacrifice made by Canadians in the defence of their values

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[30] Jonathon Vance, *Death So Noble*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 266.
[31] Arthur Conan-Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1900), 28.
[32] Ian McKay, *The Vimy Trap, or, how we learned to stop worrying and love the Great War,* (Toronto: Between The Lines, 2016), 110.
[33] McKay, *Vimy Trap*, 109.

was viewed as having ushered in a new perceived phase of the Canadian nation, much like how the First World War was interpreted nearly twenty years later.

The idea of a blood sacrifice was a key aspect of the Canadian sense of growth and rise to nationhood within Empire and was part of the sense of duty which was a core argument for the intervention of Canada in the first place. The sense of loss and the pride which came with that was further immortalised in the subsequent years through other aspects of popular culture and a broader push of memorialisation. One of the major impacts of the rise of the citizen soldier and their use in conflict was the erosion of the anonymity of the soldier. The men who died in Paardeberg had families and jobs, people to grieve their absence, in stark contrast to the "scum of the earth" who had fought against Napoleon under the Duke of Wellington.[34] To this end the variety of print media that was produced about the war now had various portraits of not just the commanders but of the rank and file of the contingents too. The proliferation of print media enabled Canadians to engage in the mourning of its heroes even if they were not personally connected to them, both on a broader national scale and locally within towns and cities. *Ottawa's Heroes* was published in 1900 and was a series of portraits of the men from the city who had joined the Canadian contingent and were killed in South Africa, as well as a description of their life and what they did before going to the veldt. In the preface publishers E. J. Reynolds & Son explain the reason for the book was that they believed "every Canadian is desirous of perpetuating… the memory of the brave volunteers."[35] Cynically this might be viewed as a shrewd piece of business to capitalise on current events, but it required a public willing to purchase the product, thus raising the question of which preceded which. Regardless, *Ottawa's Heroes* demonstrates the wide variety of ways that the

[34] Wood, *Myths*, 463.
[35] E. J. Reynolds & Son, *Ottawa's Heroes: Portraits and Biographies of the Ottawa Volunteers Killed in South Africa*, (Ottawa: E. J. Reynolds & Son, 1900).

Canadian soldiers were Memorialized and shows how Canadians could connect to the loss of servicemen despite not necessarily having any direct connection with them. In this sense, the book is a prime example of what Jay Winter labels "fictive kinship" the fostering of parasocial connections on an individual level and how the idea of the sacrifice made was for the entire nation.[36] Benedict Anderson uses the First World War legacy of the Unknown Soldier as his ultimate symbol of this effect as they represent the "national imaginings" of remembrance.[37] The Boer War was clearly a significant step in developing ways in which Canadians viewed loss on a national scale and how nationalist meaning was attached to imperial experiences on an individual and national scale.

The memorialisation of war is not simply the act of memory and is in fact tied to a greater regime of nation building.[38] In this context the act of memorialising Paardeberg and more generally the war in South Africa was therefore a temporal and parasocial exercise which espoused a specifically nationalist theme. While commemoration has been well documented as being something that the state took a strong interest in, it is the grassroots efforts in songs, books, poetry and other forms of media that marks the Canadian response to the war as so interesting as well as helping to explain how the nationalist rhetoric of the Canadian involvement was promulgated. Perhaps the most indicative example of this phenomenon was the wide proliferation of memorials that sprung up across the country, some even before the war had ended. The memorials are illustrative in two senses. First, that they were funded by private means, either large donations

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[36] Winter, Jay. "Forms of Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War." In *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 40.
[37] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* (London: Verso, 2016), 9.
[38] T. G. Ashplant, Michael Roper, *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: contexts, structures, and dynamics*, in The Politics of War Memory, ed. T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.

from local magnates or banks, and newspapers, or from the personal donations of citizens of a town or city attesting to their popularity.[39] Second, the design of the memorials varied in size and stature ranging from plaques to monumental pieces of iconography such as in Toronto. The overwhelming common feature, however, was the tone set by the designs of the statues — usually having a soldier stepping triumphantly forward or assuming a look of stoic heroism. These monuments and memorials were not designed to invoke mourning for the loss of life but to promote the military prowess, victories, and achievements of the Canadians who went to South Africa thus perpetuating nationalist rhetoric.

Yet, despite the decidedly nationalist and patriotic nature of the memorials, imperialism was still ever present in that the men whom the statues represent went to the veldt in aid of Empire. Indeed, the opening of such memorials gave opportunity for both imperial and nationalist engagement as speakers would lecture on the lessons of the conflict.[40] In this sense, the memorials became what Pierre Nora terms *les lieux de mémoire,* in that they became spaces where Canadians could engage in acts of memorialisation privately or publicly.[41] The popular drive for memorials, as shown through the donations towards their construction, implies that English-Canadians were willing to engage in the deliberate act of memorialisation. While the unveiling of these monuments may have been a temporary exercise in imperialist and nationalist rhetoric, they continued to serve as a tangible reminder of the past by their continuing presence in the physical space Canadians inhabited. Ever present and yet inert. As Jonathan F. Vance points out elites may have the power to force people to "live in the shadow of a monument" but they cannot "compel people to embrace

[39] Miller, *Painting,* 433.
[40] Miller, *Painting*, 436.
[41] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations*, 26 (1989), 7-24.

the intended meaning."[42] The Boer War memorials were therefore spaces that reflected the national scale of the involvement in the war, its significant social sacrifice, and imperial connection, yet the lasting masonry also meant that Canadians could engage with these overlapping identifiers in personal ways beyond what narratives the elites and speakers originally intended. In that way the memorials perpetuated the overlapping identification for Canadians of nationalism and imperialism in everyday life.

Sara Jeanette Duncan's *The Imperialist* (1904) and *Cousin Cinderella* (1908) are two novels which through their narratives tackle the legacy of the Boer War in Canada. Through these books Duncan demonstrates that the legacy of the Boer was less about the actual conflict itself and more about the ways it affected Canada's relationship with imperialism and nationalism. The main characters both espouse imperialist views, but Duncan is keen to show the limits of martial patriotism for Canada and the direction of national growth.[43] For the fictional Ontario town of Elgin the war provided a source of profit but more importantly confirmed through sacrifice a place in the broader British World.[44] However Lorne, the main character, is unable to win his objective of a parliamentary seat through using imperialist rhetoric alone thus demonstrating the limits of imperialism. In *Cousin Cinderella*, despite the protagonist's brother being a South African War veteran, he remains a believer in imperialism, he purchases a dilapidated Tudor mansion which symbolises the weakening of old England and thus leaving room in the future for Canada (which metaphorically fixes the house).[45] Duncan's complicated and shifting views on Imperialism highlight how Canadians engaged with imperialism on individual terms and consequently operated

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[42] Jonathon F. Vance, "Heroes for More Than One Day: Commemorating War", *Canadian Historical Review* 102:3, (2021), 455.
[43] Peter Webb, "The Silent Flag in the New Fallen Snow: Sara Jeannette Duncan and the Legacy of the South African War", *Journal of Canadian Studies* 44:1, (2010), 78.
[44] Webb, *Silent Flag*, 82.
[45] Webb, *Silent Flat*, 88.

with different and often overlapping identities. The statues and memorials regardless of a person's own views provided a constant reminder of imperialist values and Canada's contribution to Empire.

Memorialising the Boer War removed the distance of the conflict for Canadians on the home front and enshrined it as a key moment in the development of the Canadian nation. Even Laurier himself joined in this rhetoric proclaiming after Paardeberg in the House of Commons it "had been revealed to the world that a new power has arisen in the west."[46] Yet despite the nationalist rhetoric, there was continuity for Canadians and how their role fit into the broader Empire. As was seen in previous chapter, involvement in South Africa was held up as evidence of growing autonomy and military power, yet still in service of Empire. Similarly, the statues, books, songs, poems all contained references to or directly engaged with the conflict in the language of Empire and imperialism. The legacy of the stone memorials meant that there would be a continuous symbol of Canada's imperial engagement. Memorials then, became a key aspect of the nationalist and imperialist nation building following the Boer War.

Imperialism remained a key force in nationalist thinking, despite rhetoric surrounding independence, due to its strength as an aspect of Canadian culture. It is a common thread, particularly for Canadian scholars writing in the 1960s and 1970s, to see imperialists as proto-nationalists but this is a misleading view since it lessens the genuine affection and continued interaction with imperialism as a social force.[47] To say then that Canadian imperialists wanted the British connection is not to suggest that they wanted colonial submission. There were various views as to how to achieve parity which fed into the discussions around imperial reorganisation

[46] Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, Wilfrid Laurier, 8th Parliament, 5th Session: Vol. 1 March 13th, (1900), 1848.
[47] Simon J. Potter, "Richard Jebb, John S. Ewart and the Round Table, 1898-1926", *The English Historical Review* 122:495, (2007), 107.

following the Boer War in the years leading into the First World War.[48] Parity in this regard was an equality within the British world thus allowing for a greater level of Canadian autonomy. This was for Laurier the "principle upon which the British Empire alone can rest," that the "empire is composed of a galaxy of free nations" who had allegiance to the same sovereign but a "paramount allegiance also to their respective peoples."[49] Within that 'galaxy' identity was far more fluid as an imperial identity was constructed along British racial and cultural lines.[50] These shared cultural norms were not an enforced continuation of the British connection, but were a popular sentiment, as cultural centres and groups saw it as their purpose to maintain the connection.[51] Perhaps the most symbolic and indicative cultural demonstration of the value of the British connection is that of Empire Day, which was actually started in Canada before being exported to Britain and the other Dominions.[52] Jim English points out that Empire Day was not just forced propaganda and indoctrination but was something that was fun and enjoyable for the children and adults involved and that the act of singing patriotic songs had a genuine emotional and lasting impact.[53] In the same way that memorialisation was not just a top-down driven activity, the British connection was also maintained not just through the desires of politicians and those in authority but also through cultural engagement at a grass roots level. Empire Day, songs, books, and cultural clubs as well as the Boy Scouts and Cadets were involved in the promotion of Canadian nationalist growth and the maintenance of the British imperial connection. The Boer War was consequently not the

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[48] Potter, "Round Table", 109.
[49] Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, Wilfrid Laurier, 9th Parliament, 3rd Session: Vol. 1 March 13th, (1903), 48.
[50] Matthew P. Llewellyn, "Dominion Nationalism or Imperial Patriotism? Citizenship, Race, and the Proposed British Empire Olympic Team", *Journal of Sport History* 39:1, (2012), 51.
[51] Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian institutions and the arts before the Massey Commission*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 8.
[52] Robert M. Stamp, "Canadian Education and the National Identity", *The Journal of Educational Thought* 5:3, (1971), 137.
[53] Jim English, "Empire Day in Britain, 1904-1958", *The Historical Journal*, 49:1, (2006), 249, 251.

beginning of the end for the British connection despite the nationalist gains made through Canada's involvement in it.

Counter to the strong drive for self-professed Canadian imperialists to ensure the strength of the British connection, there was the 'autonomist' school of thinkers and writers who argued for Canadian independence. Yet so strong was the imperial connection that in the context of independence there was still the thread of some sort of British connection. John S. Ewart is the most famous of these autonomist thinkers as well as one of the most prolific. In his *Kingdom Papers*, he called for the creation of a 'Kingdom of Canada' which is totally independent in its control of foreign affairs, defence, and economic policy, yet was nevertheless still connected through a common crown and committed to maintaining its connection to Britain.[54] Taking this idea further, in an article titled *Canadian Nationalism and the Imperial Tie* in 1909 Professor George M. Wrong explains to a primarily American readership the necessity of the British connection for Canada despite its apparent submissive status, "in theory Canada is a colony; in fact it is an independent nation."[55] Wrong identified four major reasons for the continuation of the connection in spite of Canada's de facto independence: lack of revolution, mutual assistance on the world stage, economic integration, and lastly a greater role for Canada in the Empire. Wrong's vision of Canadian independence is not as assured by the Monroe Doctrine as is Ewart's and on the flip side he recognises how Canadian strength is used by Britain to offset continental powers in Europe. Wrong's imperialism does radiate at the end of the article when he explains his yearning to see Canadians helping in the share of "Britain's burdens."[56] This desire to see Canada play a

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[54] John S. Ewart, *The Kingdom of Canada, Imperial Federation, The Colonial Conferences, the Alaska Boundary and other essays*, (Toronto: Morang, 1908).
[55] G. M. Wrong, "Canadian Nationalism and the Imperial Tie", *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 6, (1909), 100.
[56] Wrong, "Imperial tie", 107.

bigger role in the Empire is a result of the nationalist growth of the Dominion following the Boer War and simultaneously, despite calls for greater independence, is not a rejection of the imperial idea.

Wrong is indicative of the autonomists who saw the Empire as the way to develop the Canadian nation and concurrently improve its standings and global significance. The experience of the war in South Africa can be seen to have developed both Canadian autonomous feeling as well as a continued investment, both political and emotional, in the Empire. Though there were some writers, politicians, or commentators that were of the opinion that Canada needed to remove itself from the Empire on the grounds that imperialism was inherently bad. Most commonly these thoughts are represented by Goldwyn Smith's writing and Henri Bourassa's political speeches, usually in discussions of Empire those ideas were not taken this far. Even those that would be labelled as nationalists were in fact still in some regard imperial in their beliefs. Canadian nationalists therefore had the desire for autonomous control, bolstered by the Boer War and the resulting catapulting of Canadian imperial standing, yet could not in their views and visions for the future decouple entirely from Empire and imperialism. The Boer War then was a paradigm shift that rejected the British connection in Canada, despite the resulting obvious and massive effects for the growth of Canadian nationalism after the conflict.

"It is a curious commentary on humanity and human affairs that war, more than any other human event, appears to be the best fertiliser for a nascent nationhood" wrote W. G. Hardy in volume four of the Canadian History series, *The Road to Nationhood*.[57] His comment describes the common view that the Boer War unlocked Canadian nationalism and set Canada on a path to independence. In fact, the conflict worked to confirm preexisting and commonly held nationalist

[57] W.G. Hardy, *From Sea Unto Sea: the Road to Nationhood, 1850-1910*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1960), 430.

views and reinforced aspects of the imperial connection for another decade into the catastrophe of 1914. As such, Canada's first foreign military conflict was less about the creation of nationalism as it was about reinforcing specifically Canadian identity and nationalist views. These views centred on the mythic northern race which bred naturally superior warriors despite their lack of martial interest. The victory at Paardeberg perhaps more than any other event in the war, gave to Canadians nationalist evidence both of the northern climate's effect on the creation of a hardy people and of the Militia myth. Moreover, Paardeberg was a significant victory for the British and Empire since it not only involved the surrender of a major Boer General, but also overturned the incredibly humiliating defeat at Majuba 29 years earlier. Furthermore, the action cost Canadian lives, so while the battle was a nationalist victory, it was also an imperial sacrifice, as the deaths of the Canadians became associated with the imperial mission. Canada had shed blood for Empire and took a larger role because of it.

As this was Canada's largest military conflict since the War of 1812, Canadians threw themselves into flurry of various forms of memorialisation ranging from books, poems, songs to large stone monuments. It was through the memorialising of the war that the Boer War took on nationalist and imperialist nation building elements since it was now a way for Canadians to connect nationally and locally through the shared trauma of national loss. Though the war did not affect every Canadian, every Canadian could connect with those for whom it had and this idea was expressed through the memorials and literature, especially the books of Sarah Jeanette Duncan. Though the war confirmed nationalist narratives it also served to reinforce the imperialist British connection to the extent that even the greater autonomy which the war afforded Canada did not translate into a total revocation of the British connection even in separatist circles. Canada's involvement in the Boer War was therefore an essential aspect of its national development, beyond limited nationalist interpretations which presented the conflict as a watershed in Canadian advancement towards total independence.

Conclusion

"The twentieth century belongs to Canada" proclaimed Wilfrid Laurier on the campaign trail in 1904 to hundreds of spectators.[1] Triumphantly in one sentence Laurier encapsulated the optimism of the turn of the century for Canadians and the belief in the role that Canada would play. The exuberant sense of power and pride was in response to Canada's involvement in the Second Anglo-Boer War, which had helped transform the nation in the eyes of Canadians from subservient Dominion to a power comparable to the motherland. The subsequent decade only strengthened this transition as it provided opportunities for Canada to ensure that this sentiment became a reality. The impact of the Boer War cannot be understated in its significance for the development of Canadian identity and nationhood, particularly for Anglo-Canadians. Being the largest military action since the War of 1812 and Canada's first foreign conflict meant that it impacted all levels of society signifying that the legacy of the war was long lasting and influential. Using the war to study this period in Canadian history enables a clearer view of how the forces of imperialism and nationalism operated to affect the development of the Canadian nation.

The first chapter explored how the Boer War was a political crisis for Canada and Laurier, in that imperialist and nationalist forces had the power to irrevocably rend the country in two along ethnic English and French Canadian lines with Anglo-Canadians being a vocal proponent of the war and Canadian participation in it. Laurier had to find a politically suitable solution to the crisis and appease both the nationalist and imperialist factions in the country. In this instance imperialism and nationalism were in competition, espoused by interventionists and isolationists

[1] "Queen City Welcomes Premier", *The Montreal Star*, Saturday, October 15, 1904, 18.

respectively. In the ensuing public debate this division became a major political challenge for Laurier. Coupled with the rumours of colonial subterfuge by Joseph Chamberlain, the indomitable Colonial Secretary, and the ambitions of the British General Officer Commanding of the Militia and the public debate exacerbated by hyperbolic press headlines, had more than enough potential to do serious damage to the country. Laurier has often been accused of following a policy of aloof avoidance up until it became necessary to act. The chapter argued that instead, Laurier pursued a deliberate policy of mitigation in order to find a suitable and politically viable middle ground. Ultimately Laurier found a solution in the use of volunteer contingents, which meant that Canadians who wanted to go to South Africa would be facilitated by the government, and conversely those not in favour of the war, primarily the Francophone Quebecois, would not be forced into contributing to a conflict they saw as unjust. Moreover, the contingent itself would not be something that could be parcelled off to be dispersed into smaller and indistinct British Army units ensuring a distinct Canadian representation. Laurier skillfully handled massive and powerful social and political forces of nationalism and imperialism in such a way that the country and his administration survived the war and went onto win the next general election. The Boer War was for Canada a major political crisis and it clearly demonstrates how the forces of imperialism and nationalism impacted the country.

The second chapter examined how the experience of the Boer War enabled Canada to have a greater involvement in the renegotiation of Empire in the decade that followed. This happened in two clear but interrelated ways: through defence and at the Colonial Conferences. Canada was able to utilise its new standing in empire, earned through a collaboration in imperial defence to consolidate its position as the senior dominion. This consolidation and renegotiation took place through the colonial conferences, where the dominion premiers and British government periodically met to enact proposals and debate the future of Empire. The conferences demonstrate how political alignment across the Dominions became trickier to maintain as local affairs became more of a significant factor to the individual growing dominions and as Britain was less able to institute empire wide policy, therefore, defence became a key space where cooperation could be preserved. It is in the individual exchanges at these conferences that the renegotiation and expression of Dominion power can be gleaned. The key figure in Laurier's cabinet in the defence arena was his ambitious and prolific Minister of Militia, Sir Frederick Borden. Borden's desires for major reforms and the continued development of the efficacy of the militia meant he clashed with the British General Officer Commanding Edward T. Hutton and worked to reduce British oversight over Canadian defences. His reforms were often perceived as nationalist as they necessarily increased Canadian military strength and capability, which while still very limited was an important factor in attaining self-determination. However, Borden was a keen imperialist and saw his reforms as working to the betterment of a larger sense of imperial defence. His nationalist reforms therefore contributed to the upkeep of the Empire.[2] Imperialism and nationalism were in the defence space working cooperatively, in that the continual improvement of the Canadian militia, the introduction of home-grown staff officers, the establishment of a local navy, were all necessarily nationalist developments, yet for an ultimate imperial aim of the defence of Empire.

Finally, the third chapter brought the locus of study to the cultural sphere inside Canada and how the Boer War influenced national identity. Similarly to the previous chapter, imperialism and nationalism were working in tandem and the utilisation of the experience of the Boer War enabled a specific construction of an Anglo-Canadian identity. There existed notions of identity that predated the war in South Africa, but it was only through participation in the conflict that these

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[2] Carman Miller, *A Knight in Politics: A Biography of Sir Frederick Borden*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010), 126.

nationalist narratives were confirmed. A major trend was the idea of the northern climate inculcating a Victorian sense of frontier masculinity and self-reliance that meant that Canadians were naturally good soldiers with proof coming from the fact that the contingent was made up of men from all walks of life, as well as Canadian icons like the North-West Mounted Police. Thus making the contingent appear representative of Canadian identity. Furthermore, this was accentuated by the apparent stupidity of the British regular, thereby confirming the prowess of the Anglo-Canadian Anglo-Saxon. Paardeberg was a major victory for the Canadians, not only was it the first real victory of the war for the British Army as a whole it also had significant imperial consequences and historical ties. However, the great victory took the lives of eighteen Canadians, success came at the price of Canadian blood. This meant that though the victory was a key nationalist success the memorialisation of the loss was imbued with imperial terms to give it a greater significance. Moreover, the memorialisation campaign that followed was remarkable for its speed and size. The Canadian soldiers were citizens first, meaning that they had loved ones, jobs, and friends back in Canada, all people to miss them and thus their sacrifice was a way that Canadians created and shared a national sense of loss, through publications, songs, poems, and later stone memorials. The way the war was memorialised meant that it became a key area for the development of a national identity. Through this memorialisation the British connection was retained thanks to the imperial rhetoric of their sacrifice. In combination with the heightened sense of the Canadian place in Empire the British connection was maintained and, in many ways, strengthened because Canada had shared the experience of loss with Britain in imperial defence. The British connection was so strong that writers and nationalists who wrote to conceive of a Canadian independent future could not do so without some sort of British connection, usually in the form of the common sovereign. Imperialism and nationalism were therefore conjoined in the memorialisation of the war, they were viewed as coexisting and played an important role in the way that memorialisation was used to develop a sense of identity.

Through placing the experience of the Boer War as the centre of study, this thesis has challenged the standard nationalist narrative that has predominated in the historiography of Canada and the development of Anglo-Canadian identity. Furthermore, it has utilised a combination of vantages to contribute to the discussion surrounding the development of Canadian identity by emphasising the experience of Anglo-Canadians in a more nuanced way that avoids the simplistic trap which labels them as monolithically imperialist. In doing so, the thesis has highlighted the ways in which nationalism and imperialism operated in synchronicity and opposition and provided greater understanding as to how through dovetailing these social and political forces affected the development of the Canadian nation. This thesis has demonstrated that the South African War was a key element in the construction of an English and more broad Canadian national identity in the early twentieth century, with Canada's involvement allowing for a greater standing in Empire to be achieved as well as a memorialisation campaign that consolidated nationalist identity narratives. The Boer War did not eradicate Canadian involvement in Empire. The reverse was true, meaning it wanted to contribute further, albeit in ways that were perceived as nationalist but were ultimately imperialist.

By examining how the Boer War impacted the development of the Canadian nation in the Laurier years this thesis has not only contributed to the literature of the British Empire and Dominion studies it has also more specifically illuminated an often overlooked aspect of the Canadian experience. As Carman Miller has pointed out, to ignore the Boer War also lessens the understanding of the Canadian involvement in the First World War, the processing of which was directly informed by the legacy of the Second Anglo-Boer War.[3] Examining the Anglo-Canadian experience also deepens our understanding of the nature of imperialism, how the British Empire operated in the white settler Dominions and how that experience shaped the larger international twentieth century. Canada is still grappling with what exactly it means to be Canadian and so finding the roots of nationalist sentiments of identity is vital to exploring its manifestations and impacts today. Finally, the Boer War is often overlooked in the history of Canada and yet it was a massively significant part of the development of the nation and was extremely pivotal in the British World more broadly. The Boer War facilitated a dramatic shift in Canadian identity in the Laurier era. It's impacts played a major role in the creation of the development of an Anglo-Canadian sense of self and most importantly, it paved the foundations for the role Canada would play in world in the twentieth century.

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[3] Miller, Carman. "Framing Canada's Great War: a Case for Including the Boer War." *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 6:1, (2008), 3–21.

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