

“Send the Mild Hindoo:” The Simultaneous Expansion of British Suffrage and Empire*

Jonathan D. Caverley

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Abstract

If, as many political scientists maintain, democracy results in moderate foreign policy, and if, as many historians assert, British defense spending in the nineteenth century amounted to an “imperial subsidy” for the Victorian upper class, why did the British Empire grow so aggressively even as its franchise expanded? This paper offers an alternative explanation for democratic imperial expansion by taking a political economic approach to the production of defense. As the British public became more aware of the growing threat of great power war on the European continent, the Empire was viewed as a means of reducing the risk of conscription in the British Islands. Thus as European great power conflict grew increasingly heated, and the average voter increasingly poorer, Britain pursued a capital-intensive form of empire-building, parlaying taxes on the relatively wealthy to maintain the necessary military labor required for balance of power politics, security of the homeland and maintenance of great power status.

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When in 1867 the future Lord Salisbury infamously referred to India as an “English Barrack in the Oriental seas” he was not suggesting this arrangement’s desirability.¹ Indeed, the less well-known portion of his speech proved as pessimistic as it was prophetic, “it is bad for us to not to have a check upon the temptation to engage in little wars which can only be controlled by the necessity of paying for them” (UK 1867, col. 406). Taking its cue from Salisbury, this paper seeks to apply a new theory of the distribution of defense costs in democracies to shed light on a number of historical puzzles associated with the late nineteenth-century British Empire. By doing so, it seeks to challenge both the conventional wisdom in political science regarding the relatively benign nature of democratic foreign policy, and the conclusion of an important strand of historiography that regards British imperialism as an economic subsidy for elites.

The paper ties together two historical developments that cannot be explained by existing theory: the expansion of the British franchise deep into the middle class in 1867 and into the working class in 1884, and the explosion of imperial military campaigns (often against the better judgment of the Government) during the same period of time. More specifically, the theory sheds light on the links between a number of important developments occurring during this period, including:

1. Massive increases in suffrage and a corresponding decrease in the wealth of the average voter in Britain
2. The growing obsession with the defense of India even as it developed into a strategic liability
3. The lack of conscription in Britain, unique among the European great powers
4. Increased great power competition on the European continent
5. The simultaneous reduced defense commitments to the White Dominions and increased territorial expansion in Africa and Asia.

This simultaneous expansion of the British Empire and the British franchise can be explained neither by what I call democratic exceptionalism nor by the imperial subsidy argument. Instead I argue that in a time when warfare required massive amounts of labor, the British middle class voter looked abroad, particularly to India, to obtain the bodies necessary for a small, conscription-free island to engage in aggressive international politics and European great power competition. Even as the cost of defending India grew in terms of British expenditure, the reduction in the likelihood of conscription justified its expense

¹The full quotation begins, “I do not like India to be looked upon as an English barrack. . .”

to the average person. Only upon India's Commander-in-Chief Herbert Kitchener's 1904 estimate that it would take over 100,000 *British* soldiers to defend the approaches to India via Afghanistan did the British Government finally seek to appease Russia (Friedberg 1988, Gooch 1981). Thus ended one of the simultaneously most aggressive and unprofitable bursts of territorial conquest in history.

The paper will proceed as follows. After a brief review of the democratic exceptionalist research program in International Relations (IR), I lay out my alternate theory. I then introduce the empirical puzzle of the simultaneous increase in suffrage and in militarized imperial expansion and the shortcomings of the imperial subsidy claim. The paper then focuses on the gradual evolution in the use of Native troops to achieve British strategic objectives that were often thought unwise by elites but were popular among voters.² The paper concludes with an exploration of some implications for the links between domestic and international politics.

1 Who Pays for Grand Strategy?

This paper focuses on the distribution of costs within a democracy, arguing that the average voter will find the aggressive use of the military more appealing if the costs can be turned into a fiscal rather than a mobilization problem, shifting the costs to a wealthy minority by developing heavily capitalized armed forces. In short, I develop a theory of rational democratic grand strategy in which the median voter supports the building of an excessively strong military, believes in its efficacy as a tool for international politics, and shows a heightened willingness to employ it. The median voter is as happy to go to war as any unitary actor or despot (indeed perhaps even more so) as long as she can get someone else to pick up the tab. In doing so I offer an explanation for persistently poor democratic war choices whose theoretical roots stem from an IR tradition that claims such mistakes *should rarely happen*.

1.1 Democratic exceptionalism

A near-general consensus exists within political science that democracies advance unique grand strategies: risk-averse in the wars they fight, less threatening to other states and rarely engaging in overexpansion. Most scholars explain this exceptionalism as a function of *cost internalization*: the people who pay the costs of war are also the holders of political

²To avoid confusion I will take my cues from the records of the time and refer to white soldiers originating from the British Isles as "European," white soldiers originating from the Dominions as "colonial," and non-white soldiers originating from Imperial territories as "Natives." The Indian Army consisted of European and Native soldiers, however when I use the term "Indian troops," I am referring to Natives only.

power. “Populations who must bear the costs of war may be unwilling to do so if the costs are high or the policy fails” argues Randolph Siverson (1995, 483), “Because political leaders recognize the possibility of ex post punishment in the loss of office, ex ante they select policies they believe will be successful and hence lengthen their tenure.”

Many findings of democratic exceptionalism rest on this assumption that “the people who must bear the costs of war, are usually unwilling to fight” (Morgan & Campbell 1991). Other research has revealed a public more sophisticated at weighing costs and benefits of war, that casualties only erode public support when it appears unlikely that the state will accomplish its goals. That is, if the expected value of the war declines, the public becomes more sensitive to costs (Feaver & Gelpi 2004, Gelpi, Feaver, & Reifler 2006).

Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, & Morrow (2003) incorporate the public’s cost-benefit analysis into an elegant theory of the “selectorate,” the group of people within a state that have a role in choosing its leadership. Office-seeking executives requiring the support of a considerable portion of a large selectorate cannot bribe a small elite with private goods but must instead provide goods enjoyed by all. Therefore democratic (or large selectorate) leaders “survive on the basis of their public goods performance” including military victory (Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, & Smith 1999). The selectorate theory helps explain many of democratic exceptionalism’s empirical findings: democracies generally win wars they initiate, pay fewer costs in terms of human life, fight shorter wars compared to non-democratic states, and most importantly are generally risk averse in their decisions to go to war (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, 219).³

1.2 Grand Strategy Provides the Public Good of Security

Economists have long ranked national defense among the purest of public goods (Kapstein 1992) because it is both nonrival—one’s enjoyment of it does not diminish the value for another—and nonexcludable—everyone within the state enjoys it regardless of their contribution to it (Samuelson 1954, Snidal 1979). In this sense the government’s provision of security is as much a public program as unemployment insurance or a health care system.⁴ Indeed security is necessary for the enjoyment of any other public good since “if it is not satisfied, all other objectives are placed in jeopardy” (Gilpin 1981, 19).

³The democratic peace literature has many competing causal mechanisms. Not only am I not addressing more norm-based arguments (Maoz & Russett 1993, Dixon 1994, Owen 1994, Farnham 2003), I am also not examining other institutional arguments such as the role of democratic transparency (Schultz 2001, Schultz & Weingast 2003, Lipson 2003). Nonetheless, even these arguments rest on the electorate weighing the merits of the case and making their opinion known, and surely the price of war must be a crucial factor.

⁴Like these programs, security may not be an entirely pure good, but rather may be best described as meeting the needs of the politically powerful middle class (Moene & Wallerstein 2001).

I assume that security is valuable, scarce and costly.⁵ While the demand for security varies with the perceived threat, it is never zero. A state or voter will always prefer more security to less; as its cost drops, the consumer will demand more. Finite means limit the amount of security obtainable; Eric Nordlinger (1995, 2) describes the tradeoff process, “whenever policymakers are faced with the task of reconciling foreign policy goals with limited national resources, they are engaging in grand strategy.”

Posen (1984, 13) describes grand strategy as a means-ends chain. It is more helpful for the paper’s purposes to describe grand strategy as a calculus of means, ends, and *costs*.⁶ A state-actor will choose military means to achieve the most political ends at the lowest cost to itself. The cost of a grand strategy therefore helps determines its ambition.⁷ The strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must, but all states acquire what they can afford.

Similarly, John Lewis Gaddis (1982, 355) claims that the “perception of means available” in the Cold War United States “appears to be the single most decisive determinant of national strategy.” This perception helped determine whether an administration pursued a symmetrical or asymmetrical form of containment. Whereas the asymmetrical version opposed the Soviet military menace through American strengths in economic power and technological ability, the symmetrical approach was less discriminating in how and where to counter a threat. Asymmetric containment required taking on “calculated risks,” recognizing that the costs of reducing them further were not worthwhile (Gaddis 1982, 62). If limited means force a state to accept risk—an attack on the homeland, a challenge to vital interests, or the slim possibility of “losing” Southeast Asia to communism—by this same logic an increase in resources (or a decrease in costs) pushes administrations towards the symmetrical approach.

Military coercion is always a potential means of enhancing a state’s security, and therefore changes in its costs remain relevant regardless of grand strategy.⁸ Consider isolationism, a feasible even desirable strategy when threats to vital interests are so low that little need exists to invest in the military much less use it. Nonetheless, this grand strategy entails a calculated risk—“isolationism is cheap but there is no fallback position should it fail” (Art 2003, 86)—as long as another state possesses some offensive capability (Mearsheimer 2001, 30). When the cost of using the military is reduced for the median voter, she will support using it more

⁵The condition of scarcity implies that people want, but can never achieve, perfect or unlimited security and that large amounts of security cannot be obtained without making tradeoffs against other goods.

⁶In economics, the minimization of costs is generally collapsed as one of the actor’s several ends, but I break it out in order to highlight the importance as an explanatory variable.

⁷I use the term “state-actor” to describe the agent in charge of the foreign policy of the state. In a structural realist theory (or Merom) the state-actor is the state itself. In a democracy, I assume the state-actor is the median voter.

⁸Security dilemma logic implies that some steps a state takes to make itself more safe will make other states feel unsafe, thus triggering security competition. This may well be, and I assume that the median voter will consider this as much as any other actor.

often in pursuit of more security.

1.3 The Median Voter's Means-End-Costs calculation

Like Bueno de Mesquita et al, I assume that citizens take a cost-benefit approach in determining the type of military built, the way it fights, and the conflicts it enters; weighing her personal costs against her gains from the public good of security. In their discussion of wartime resource extraction Dan Reiter and Alan Stam (2002 121) claim that “the public prefers not to spend on military ventures at the expense of individual consumption”, but in the case of economic inequality and the potential to redistribute wealth, many voters will sacrifice little consumption to gain increased security through military coercion.

1.3.1 Median Voter Theory Assumptions

As a theoretical approximation of democracy, I assume that the median voter gets her way. Policy is executed by a directly elected representative that has made binding policy pledges during a two party campaign (Downs 1957). Voter preferences for a given policy are ordered along a spectrum, from those who despise the policy through to its passionate supporters. Electoral competition will drive both candidates towards adopting the preferred policy of the voter with the median preference. The median voter therefore sets indirectly all policy for the state, since no other platform exists that will make a majority of voters better off.⁹

Assume that every voter values the consumption of her personal wealth, the enjoyment of any given public good, and the income loss from taxation in the same way. The distribution of wealth varies, an empirically defensible proposition, and therefore a given state population's median wealth is less than the mean. Assuming that all citizens vote in the majority rule elections specified above, the decisive voter will be the one with the median amount of wealth. This is the “median voter.”

1.3.2 The Importance of Inequality

Using this model, political economists have argued that if the median voter can set a tax rate and spend the government revenue on a service available to all citizens, she will take advantage of the potential for redistribution (Meltzer & Richard 1981, Persson & Tabellini 2000). Even with a flat tax on income, the wealthy will pay a larger portion of the costs for a public good enjoyed by all. Thus as the median voter grows poorer, she will support

⁹Both candidates will converge on the median voter's preferred policy, so long as the electorate's preference is single-peaked, and issues are placed along one dimension. The model can be simplified even further if one assumes that every policy is simply set by a majority-rules plebiscite.

a higher tax rate since the benefit she enjoys from the public good outweighs the relatively small amount lost to taxes.¹⁰ By the same logic, Persson & Tabellini (2000) have shown that, given the option of taxing both capital and labor income, the median voter will prefer to tax capital since labor income is likely to be more evenly distributed. As the median voter's relative income from labor increases, she will support a heavier tax on capital.

In both of these cases, the resulting level of public good provided exceeds that of a utilitarian benchmark that sums up and maximizes the welfare of every individual citizen (Persson & Tabellini 2000, 49). Median voter theory predicts that if—as many democratic exceptionalists claim—the security provided by the use of the military is a public good, then democracies should be prone to “overprovide” this as well. What is more *As the median voter grows relatively poorer, she will demand more of the public good.*

1.4 Producing and Employing the Military to Provide Security

Facing an environment of varying threats, risks and insecurity; the state-actor first decides how much to spend on the military (i.e. the tax rate), then what form this military should take, and finally whether to use it for coercion.¹¹ A forward thinking individual, she will anticipate these subsequent decisions when setting the tax rate. She will consider the sorts of hostilities her state may encounter and construct a military to be as effective as possible for the lowest cost.

1.4.1 Making War A Fiscal Enterprise

Military power can be stylized as the output from a production function consisting of the inputs of capital, labor and technology. One production factor can serve as an alternate for the other; for example a heavily capitalized military can make up for a small population. However, capital and labor are imperfect substitutes and show diminishing returns; given a hundred tanks and ten soldiers, adding another tank will not produce as much military power as another soldier.¹²

Tax revenue can pay for both the capital and labor inputs. Labor can also be supplied from an alternate type of taxation: conscription. Assuming a fair draft, the logic of Persson & Tabellini (2000) should apply. The median voter will demand that a larger amount of the military budget goes toward capital or external labor sources, reducing the risk of

¹⁰For example, according to the Congressional Budget Office, in the United States, which is not known for its progressive tax code, the fifth of the population with the highest incomes were responsible for 69% of all federal tax revenue, and the top 1% paid 27%. The middle fifth on the other hand, paid only 9%.

¹¹Even status quo powers can use a military for coercive gains through extended deterrence.

¹²In economic terms these factors exhibit a declining marginal rate of technical substitution.

conscription.¹³ Casualties are also a public bad (nobody wants fellow citizens to die), and substituting capital for labor reduces their likelihood as well.¹⁴ The median voter should therefore accept a higher tax, what the British socialist Sidney Webb called “the conscription of riches,” to build highly capitalized militaries in both peace and in war, since such militaries redistribute money and skills through jobs and training as well as reduce the risk of conscription and casualties. Relative to the utilitarian normative baseline, for any given threat environment, the median voter will prefer a larger and more capital-intensive military, in turn finding more instances of military coercion attractive.

However, the median voter’s ability to substitute capital for labor is limited by technology. In periods when labor-intensive warfare dominates, such as the nineteenth century, we are thus likely to see relatively small democratic militaries, *unless the wealthy’s tax money can be used to fund alternate sources of labor*. Thus a military can be “capitalized” even in a labor-intensive environment by hiring mercenaries or acquiring new sources of labor through imperialism. Additionally, the state can spend money to make each individual soldier more effective, as well as choose military operations that will cost more in terms of treasure than lives. Given this stylized theory, when alternate sources of labor are available, the average voter will be more willing to employ military force as a tool for international politics. As the median voter becomes poorer and/or the threat to the state rises, the state will expend more resources to guarantee alternate sources of military labor. The average voter will demand more campaigns of lower expected value for the state, and thus the preferences of the government leadership and that of public opinion will diverge. The easier it is to turn warmaking into a problem of tax collection rather than labor mobilization, the more attractive military coercion becomes for the average voter.

¹³In cases where the level of threat does not currently justify resorting to conscription, the level of capitalization will still to a large degree determine a draft’s future likelihood. Margaret Levi (1997) usefully distinguishes between small and large demand military scenarios, concluding that in the former, the public will prefer an all-volunteer military, whereas in the latter the public will prefer conscription without elite exemptions. A capitalized military results in more scenarios meeting the small demand category, as well as reduces the risks to the median voter in a large demand scenario. The median voter normally will be happy with an expensive, all-volunteer military; but once the level of threat creates a demand for labor that reaches into the middle class, the voter will demand a military staffed through a fair draft whose conscripts are protected by large amounts of capital.

¹⁴Additionally, the less wealthy are more likely to be drafted, are more likely to join an all-volunteer force, gain jobs from domestic weapons manufacturing, and often regard military service as a means of acquiring human capital. For a discussion of military service as a source of material and social advancement for non-elites, see Levi (2007).

1.5 Capitalization, Suboptimality and Moral Hazard

This paper argues that under some circumstances the state’s resources are not employed in a way designed to maximize its likelihood of achieving political goals given the blood and treasure invested in military effort. In a democracy such a military is built by design, and the resulting doctrine actually encourages risky and aggressive attempts at achieving political gains through coercion. By doing so, the median voter overrides the cost internalization underpinning democratic exceptionalism, creating a condition of moral hazard.

Many normative standards of efficiency exist to evaluate domestic policies.¹⁵ In the competitive world of international politics there is only one.¹⁶ To maximize its effectiveness at providing security while keeping as many resources as possible for economically productive activities, a state should invest in military capital and labor, given the international environment, in a way that minimizes the marginal cost of a given output of security. It will avoid defense spending and conflicts in which the likely benefits are outweighed by the bite it takes out of the nation’s consumption. This is the inherent assumption of democratic exceptionalism—democracies are successful because, by giving political power to every citizen, of all regime types it most closely approximates the behavior of a unitary state.

1.5.1 Moral Hazard and International Conflict

Cost internalization implies that no externality exists in a cost-benefit decision. Externalities arise when decision-makers do not bear all of the costs inherent in the decision, shifting some of them to third parties outside the transaction. This can lead to moral hazard, a perverse incentive most closely associated with insurance describing the “tendency of people with insurance to change their behavior in a way that increases claims against the insurance company” (Rauchhaus 2006).¹⁷ For example, drivers insured against theft are more likely to park on the street than pay for secure parking. Many domestic programs merge the Meltzer-Richard effect of overproviding a public good with moral hazard.¹⁸ Federal deposit insurance ensures that every individual’s bank deposits are safe up to a certain limit (a redistributive policy). Because the insurance applies regardless of bank, an individual has little motivation

¹⁵The median voter’s preferred policy outcome is Pareto efficient—no other citizen can be made better off by another policy without making the median voter worse off.

¹⁶Although see Narizny (2007).

¹⁷Rauchhaus claims that moral hazard only applies when the insured’s risky behavior cannot be observed by the insurer, and thus cannot be factored into the price of the policy. This is not germane to the cases in this paper. In the economic consideration of insurance, the insurer enters into the contract voluntarily. In the case of the median voter, the insurer (i.e. the wealthy) has little choice in the matter.

¹⁸Moral hazard arguments have been used in International Relations theory before. Extended deterrence may result in more aggressive behavior on the part of the “protégé because the sponsor will come to its aid (Fearon 1997, Crawford & Kuperman 2006).

to consider the bank's solvency. Indeed, she is likely to choose the higher interest provided by a bank making risky investments. I simply extend these concepts to defense.

This is not to say that the voter supports conflicts with a vanishing chance of victory. No public good can be gained from such military interventions and conflict remains costly for the median voter who still pays some taxes and may be conscripted (a deductible of sorts). Rather, moral hazard increases the likelihood of entering conflicts whose expected value in increased security is outweighed by the likely total costs for the state, which are inordinately borne by the wealthy. The median voter's risky behavior is in effect being subsidized.¹⁹

Of course, the choice of military doctrine is not exogenous. I assume that in addition to deciding *whether* the state fights, in a democracy the median voter has an important say in *how* the state fights. Capitalization is a dependent variable as well. I therefore look at the conduct of the war over time as well as its initiation. Examining decisions on military doctrine made in the midst of fighting makes sense because they are less likely to be based on wealth, population age, and maritime strategy and therefore controls for the overdetermined nature of military capitalization.

1.6 Hypotheses

Before laying out hypotheses allowing for competitive testing against alternatives of democratic exceptionalism and imperial subsidization, two necessary prerequisites must be established. First, the public will support limited political goals when costs are limited. My theory requires voters to make marginal means-ends-costs calculations, pursuing riskier goals if their personal cost declines. Second, a democratic government will feel constrained by public preferences in choosing an optimal policy. The theory also requires government members to be strongly responsive, whether in anticipation or in reaction, to voter opinion, pursuing the public's preferred military doctrine even if they believe it is a poor use of the state's resources. Given these empirical prerequisites, I propose the paper's central claims:

H₁ *If military coercion can provide a public good, an increase in suffrage will produce an increase in coercion attempts.*

H₂ *As capital-intensive coercion attempts become more feasible, a democracy will pursue more coercion attempts for lower stakes.*

¹⁹In the case of the moral hazard by third party intervention in civil war (Crawford & Kuperman 2006), my theory suggests that there can be resulting knock-on effect. Domestic moral hazard may lead to more offers of extended deterrence by a powerful democracy, which in turn may result in increased international instability due to more moral hazard situations for protégés.

2 Why Late Victorian Britain?

Several aspects of the theory lend itself to testing via case study. First, the theory makes predictions of suboptimal behavior under certain conditions. Because war is a probabilistic enterprise, it is difficult to label a conflict suboptimal based on outcome alone. A case study can show that important actors *believed* the state was fighting in a less-than-efficient way, but plowed on regardless. Second, the theory is relatively complex, and showing causality requires establishing a link between the public, executive and military over a significant period of time and feedback. Finally, the theory helps understand an important historical case in novel ways. Britain in the nineteenth century is a crucial case for the theory because the franchise was expanded by reducing the personal wealth requirements of voters in two discrete Acts of Parliament.

2.1 The Essential Test: The Second and Third Reform Acts

The Second Reform Act of 1867 doubled the electorate to about 1.5 million men, including most urban male householders and lodgers paying 10 pounds a year. The Second Reform Act ended the so-called Age of Equipose between the upper and middle economic classes, bringing the middle economic classes firmly into the median of the electorate in large numbers for the first time. Thus we see a divergence in the amount of wealth within the electorate, rather than in the type of wealth (land or trade) in the electorate after the 1832 Reform Act, necessary for redistribution to take place. The 1867 Act made the median voter fairly representative of the population. The 1884 Act, while less dramatic in its reduction of average voter wealth, essentially introduced universal household suffrage; roughly 60% of the adult male population, about 5.5 million men, formed the electorate by then.

Provisions such as multiple votes for the wealthy, the continued importance of the House of Lords, and the tremendous foreign policy power of the Crown mitigated the influence of the relatively poor voter. Nonetheless, the change in the median voter is large enough to change domestic policies. After the Reform Acts, income inequality was reduced by successive acts of legislation which provided free public education; strengthened the legal standing of the trade unions; aided the aged, the sick, and the unemployed without abridging their political rights; and replaced regressive indirect taxes with progressive taxes on income, land, and inherited wealth (Justman & Gradstein 1999). I argue that the increased provision of imperialism was another public good designed to please the newly empowered masses.

The three theories discussed in this paper produce contrasting predictions following a suffrage increase. The imperial subsidy argument would expect some reduction in imperialism as the economic distance between the elite and the masses grew. Both cost internalization

and imperial subsidy theories would expect a more measured and conservative foreign policy in order to maximize individual consumption. The paper's own cost distribution theory predicts relatively less concern with the controlling of military spending and relatively more concern with the source of military labor. Additionally, as long as the median voter pays little of the costs, a more democratic state will act increasingly aggressively. Recognizing the demand for military labor adds a crucial middle class credit to the "balance sheet of empire" (Porter 1988). I will show why the cost internalization theory of democratic exceptionalism fails to explain this case, while my more fine-grained theory of cost distribution does better.

2.2 The Empirical Puzzle and Imperial Subsidy Theory

The conventional wisdom regarding Victorian imperialism is that the Second Empire served as a subsidy paid by the middle class in the defense and administration costs to allow the elite to gain high investment return. Yet the metastasizing Empire was very popular; indeed "the majority of English people cheerfully and even proudly shouldered a tax bill for an empire from which they derived very little in the form of tangible pecuniary gains" (O'Brien 1988). Accounting for economic gains and losses in taxation, Davis & Huttenback (1988, 279) "The elites and the colonies with responsible government were clear winners; the middle class certainly, and the dependent empire, probably, were losers."

While many historians have explored the role of increased suffrage and imperialism, to date their focus has been on the elites as the prime mover rather than the voters themselves. That the electorate did little to stop this elite-driven expansionism has been chalked up to ignorance on the part of the public or explained away by painting the newly enfranchised as passive recipients of imperial propaganda concocted by elite.²⁰ But much of the new territorial expansion appeared a waste of money, even for the elite. Enormous resources were spent on small colonies. Governments authorized military expeditions on the flimsiest of security pretexts. Often these ministers knew that the operations had little strategic value, but pursued them anyway as marginal improvements for the security of India (Robinson & Gallagher 1968).

This is not to say that India was unimportant. Many reasons behind the obsession with India. Without it, Britain was a "third class military power" (Williams 1991). India made up 85 percent of the Empire's territory and more importantly 78 percent of its population (Mahajan 2002, 5). Every person in the United Kingdom, and indeed Europe, understood that Britain would be another Denmark or Sweden without the jewel in its crown. What is curious is the lengths Britain went to defend it. Historian Sneh Mahajan (2002, 201) ob-

²⁰The elites in Government found themselves increasingly squeezed by the twin pressures of great power politics and the demands of the voters for security at little.

serves that “when any threat was perceived to the Indian Empire, irrespective of remoteness, triviality or irrationality, the reaction in favour of retaining the Indian Empire was instantaneous and vociferous.” Political scientist Aaron Friedberg (1988) is even more blunt, “The British attachment to India seems to have transcended reason and to have become an article of faith that most concerned citizens shared.” India appeared to be an increasing strategic liability even as the Government grew increasingly obsessed with its defense against Russia. Keith Jeffrey (1982) sums up the puzzle, “It might be possible to regard India and Indian resources generally as an ‘insurance policy’ undersetting the British position and prestige throughout the East, but it is a fine sort of policy where the premium cost more than the value of the property itself.”

This puzzle becomes comprehensible when we consider that the costs and benefits of security were not distributed evenly within Great Britain. Given the large financial outlays required to paint the map pink, expansion may not have been a “good deal” for the state as a whole, but by finding alternate sources of military labor the median voter was better off. As Britain became increasingly successful at employing these Native soldiers, the temptation for the median voter to initiate conflicts grew, just as Salisbury predicted.

The public was aware of the rising threat of Russia, France, and Germany, and understood that the American Civil War made it clear that prevailing military technologies required massive amounts of labor. Tax money underwrote expeditions to remote corners of the earth by Native soldiers as a means of balancing against the European powers, and most importantly to keep the English barrack of India safe. The occupations of Cyprus, Egypt, Sudan and the Transvaal were all justified by the defense of India. It was a rather neat trick, using Indian soldiers to conquer territory in an effort to protect the source of Indian soldiers for a future war.

2.3 What Constitutes Evidence?

The most important piece of evidence should be an increase in military aggression in pursuit of trivial stakes as a function of the extension of the franchise. Not finding this would seriously challenge my theory.

However, finding a correlation does not mean my theory is correct either, as there are many potential reasons for expanding the empire as great power competition on the European Continent heated up. I therefore must show that the form of expansion was inefficient in that the gains did not outweigh the costs for the state. Demonstrating inefficiency is of course a challenge; just as a lost war is not sufficient evidence of a poor grand strategy, won wars are not sufficient evidence of a smart one. I therefore must show that elites felt public pressure to pursue these aims (or anticipated electoral rewards), despite their personal belief

that such expansion was unnecessary and even counterproductive.

3 The Rise in Imperialism and Militarism

A remarkable shift in Britain's foreign policy occurred at roughly the same time as this expansion of the franchise. During the first half of the nineteenth century, "no sensible politician cared to stake his future upon the issue of overseas expansion" (Morris 1974). Over the course of the century, the British Empire became both more salient and more popular in political life.²¹ However, with few exceptions, most scholars find something unique about the brand of imperialism practiced by the late Victorians. Some scholars argue that little had changed over the course of the nineteenth century (Robinson & Gallagher 1968, Rodgers 1984). Yet even defenders of the continuity of elite-driven British imperialism in the face of public apathy acknowledge the "burst of jingoism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century" if only to dismiss it as "aberrant" (MacKenzie 1984). Most acknowledge that the state's "freedom abroad had its conditions," and that these conditions changed as the result of increased suffrage (Robinson & Gallagher 1968).

The turn towards a far more aggressive military policy following the 1867 Reform Act was significant and the result of a combination of two important forces: the rise of great power competition on the European continent, and the increased importance of public opinion in the creation of foreign policy. The result was an increase in a certain type of militarized imperial expansion. While there were many motivations behind the popular support for Empire, and they changed depending on which party was in power, in general an important shift occurred in the main driving force behind British imperialism from the concern of Canning and Palmerston with national prosperity as the means to international political power to a concern with territory, lines of communication, the preservation of India, and above all military manpower in the second half-of the century.

A relatively high consensus in terms of foreign policy existed *during* this period of reform, despite the fierceness of partisan politics at the time. Both parties fought to win over this newly empowered middle class, which tended to support the maintenance of the Empire, to their side through their imperial policy (Thompson 2005). While the two great political figures of the time, Disraeli and Gladstone, appeared to be polar opposites, the foreign policy of the United Kingdom did not change much regardless of who held power during this period. The annexation of Fiji and the establishment of the Gold Coast protectorate were initiated by a Gladstone cabinet and executed by its Conservative successor in 1874 (McIntyre 1967). For all the anti-imperialist rhetoric of Gladstone's Midlothian campaign,

²¹Indeed the word "imperialism" only entered the language around 1870.

his Liberal colleagues generally supported the maintenance and even extension of the British Empire (Durrans 1982). The Liberals may have won the 1880 election on an anti-imperialist ticket, but promptly invaded Egypt in 1882. Any party interested in remaining in government could not underestimate the public's desire for imperial success.

The electorate showed a newfound willingness to spend money. The once-hated income tax inexorably rose even during times of ostensible peace, from twopence on the pound in 1867 to eight by the mid-1880s (Swartz 1985). The admittedly partisan Conservative Lord Hamilton (1917) makes the link between Reform and military expenditure explicit in his memoirs:

The great additions made to the electorate by the Reform Bill of 1884 had, to a large extent, swamped the old niggardly and skinflint policy of the Manchester School. It is true that the mass of the recently enfranchised escape direct taxation out of which new burdens of expenditure were mainly defrayed; but, independently of this personal consideration, the wage-earning classes are very proud of the Navy.

3.1 Focus on the Army

The Navy of course did very well in terms of increased funds during this time period.²² While the cost distribution theory predicts middle class enthusiasm for the capital-intensive Royal Navy over a labor-intensive Army, the turn towards navalism in the late nineteenth century was overdetermined.²³ After all, Britain was a wealthy island with a massive trading economy, and there were sound strategic reasons for maintaining the centuries-old policy of naval superiority. In terms of military expenditure, the Navy continued to be the preeminent source of home and Imperial defence.

Because of the overdetermined nature of naval spending in Britain, the better test of the theory comes from examining the employment of ground forces. First, an increase in their use would represent a more profound change in British grand strategy. Second, the link between additional expense and a ground war is more direct; it is one thing to send a gunboat or even a fleet of them to a conflict as the costs of building, manning and coaling these ships were generally already sunk in the annual naval estimates. It is quite another to send a significant number of soldiers to distant places, which requires taking on large additional expenses on top of a peacetime Army budget.

²²For the new voters' willingness to flood the Admiralty with resources, see Paul Smith (1996).

²³Although see Avner Offer (1985) for the argument that increased naval expenditure was a large subsidy designed to keep food cheap for the newly empowered masses, compared to the tariffs against foreign grain that kept prices high and landowners wealthy.

What is striking about this period is the increased reliance on the use of ground forces as the tool of choice for foreign policy. Interestingly, this heightened interest in Empire was accompanied by a celebration of the average British soldier, once dismissed by Wellington as “the scum of the earth” (Peck 1998). The welfare of the troops, starting with the Crimean War, became increasingly important to the public. This newfound concern for Tommy was coupled with increased attention to the support structure that underpinned his well-being. Popular assessment of a successful campaign extended beyond a simple victory; as Sidney Herbert wrote to Lord Elgin, the leader of the British expedition of the Third China War of 1863, “a first rate general, a capital staff, an excellent commissariat, and a good medical department are four things the English public are especially pleased to see” (Bond 1967). The logistics of generating these tidy little expeditions were quite awesome, and consequently very expensive, as the subsequent sections will show. The Maxim gun might be a very economical killing machine in terms of both capital and labor, but it took a tremendous amount of both resources to get it in front of the enemy in desolate places such as Omdurman.

The increased use of ground forces is all the more remarkable given that conscription was never a possibility in Great Britain despite the growing concern over the growth of the mass armies of European nation-states. By 1871, Britain was the only major power without some sort of universal service (Barnett 1970, Friedberg 1988). So unpopular was the idea of a draft that Britain did not institute one until two years into the First World War (Adams & Poirier 1987). Yet the need to develop a strong, labor-intensive military was amply demonstrated to any observer of the American Civil War. As Salisbury observed in 1878, “to ask us to pursue a bold policy towards the military powers of Europe, when we have no conscription, is to ask us to make bricks without straw. Diplomacy which does not rest on force is the most feeble and futile of weapons, and except for bare self defence we have not the force.” Salisbury went elsewhere for his straw.

4 The Empire as a Source of Military Labor

The solution to Salisbury’s conundrum was quite clear to voter and minister alike; many of the soldiers doing the fighting for British interests did not come from the British Islands. The use of indigenous forces to fight colonial wars was certainly not new, but the scale and the aim changed dramatically. In turn this ready availability of Native labor enabled the use of the military instrument to a degree not possible previously. As the Government hesitated over the purchase of Dutch outposts on the Gold Coast of Africa in 1872, the editor of *The Times* counseled the Colonial Secretary that “the British Public will not excuse you from the task of civilizing the Ashantis and will point out that in Houssas and other tribes you

have the means of raising an army of natives sufficient with a few European Officers for all contingencies” (Swartz 1985).

All parts of the “dependent” empire were potential sources of labor.²⁴ The African Wars required drafting large numbers of indigenous peoples to not only fight but to transport the massive amounts of materiel necessary for a successful Victorian military campaign. The British employed an enormous Egyptian Army with European officers to informally control Egypt from 1883 onwards. And most importantly, the Indian Army, its support infrastructure of porters and drivers, and the latent reserve of its vast population loomed as an unmistakable threat to the other European powers. Indeed Indian soldiers were deployed to Africa to form the initial nuclei of other Native military units such as the King’s African Rifles and the West African Frontier Force, which were then filled with indigenous forces recruited as voluntary, long term recruits with an “obligation to serve abroad” (Gutteridge 1970, 289).

The use of tax revenue to fund non-British fighters was quite explicit and the lengths the Government would go to buy Native and colonial labor striking. The British Government would pay lavish sums to have colonials and Natives fight in a European’s stead. During the Zulu War of 1879, basic pay for a British soldier was a shilling a day, while a South African volunteer received *twelve times* that amount (Killingray 1989).

Natives were considered most appropriate for garrison duties in the tropics specifically because they were more resistant to disease rather than because their lives were considered intrinsically less valuable than a European soldier’s. There are certainly wartime instances when the native soldier was used to explicitly preserve lives of British soldiers. The deputy adjutant general for South Africa in 1878 wrote the following directive, “When a body of Natives is attached it should invariably be employed in examining bush or rugged ground offering concealment to an enemy, before any European body is ordered to advance in the country to be passed over” (Bailes 1980). However, while in some operations such as Abyssinia, Indian soldiers bore the brunt of the casualties, this was far from the rule. European soldiers did much of the fighting, mostly because the commanders on the spot, more concerned with victory than with the political consequences of casualties at home, considered them to be vastly superior fighters.²⁵

Even when Europeans did much of the actual fighting, Native labor helped make the European soldier a much more effective fighting force. As one observer noted of the 1883 Egyptian campaign, “When employed under the Indian Government every effort is made to

²⁴The “white” Dominions such as Canada and Australia, where military labor could not be used with impunity, were gradually left to fend for themselves militarily at the same time.

²⁵Future research to test this theory will examine if the employment of European and Native soldiers in combat varied depending on how involved the Government was in laying out campaign plans.

render [the British soldier] a mere fighting machine, by relieving him as far as possible of the cares and routine duties generally incident on camp life” (Goodrich 1885). It is important to acknowledge, as many accounts of imperial warfighting fail to do, the amount of labor that was required to get a single soldier, European or Native, into the fight. The relatively small Zulu War of 1879 required 6,639 European and colonial soldiers, 9,300 local native soldiers, and about 30,000 laborers (Featherstone 1973, Killingray 1989). While conscription of British subjects was out of the question, impressment into service was standard practice for Bantu and Basuto drivers in the Zulu Wars (Bailes 1980). Death tolls from disease always swamped the more glamorous losses from combat, and thus employing native support personnel reduced the number of European deaths for an expedition precipitously.

Of all the sources of Native labor, by far the most important was the Raj. In 1880 the standing Indian Army consisted of 66,000 British soldiers, 130,000 Natives, and 350,000 soldiers in the so-called “princely armies” (Robinson & Gallagher 1968). It would see action in at least twenty-seven conflicts outside of its home territory from 1867-1904 (Godley 1900, Godley 1905).²⁶ Tables 1 and 2 show the increase in the number deployments and the number of Indian soldiers deployed in military operations outside of British India from the year after the Mutiny (1849) and the end of the century, with the average levels for the period before the Second Reform Act, after the Third and between. The average number of annual engagements doubled from 2.1 to 4.2 over the course of these two suffrage increases, while the annual average number of Indian soldiers deployed abroad rose from 9,400 to 14,000 to 25,000 after 1884.²⁷

While the 1858 Act for the Better Government of India supposedly prevented the use of India as an English barrack, even such enthusiastic a celebrant of “Imperial co-operation in war time” as the official historian of the Royal Colonial Institute admits that “the Parliament of the United Kingdom represents primarily the taxpayers of the United Kingdom, and India in the past necessarily stood in a less advantageous position as a contributing unity of the Empire than the self-governing Dominions, free to contribute or not at their own will” (Lucas 1921).²⁸

An 1867 Parliamentary Select Committee convened (on the eve of the Reform Bill) to consider the use of Native troops outside their home states, and its lengthy report—considering everything from cost-benefit analysis to the role of caste to the strictures of racial sensitivities

²⁶HOUSE OF COMMONS PAPERS; ACCOUNTS AND PAPERS footnote

²⁷The contrast becomes even more striking when one considers that many of the earlier operations outside of British India were devoted to conquest of new territory that became part of the Raj. This process was largely complete by 1867.

²⁸Sources: Godley, “East India (Employment of Troops out of India).”, Godley, “Return of Wars and Military Operations on or beyond Borders of British India in which Government of India has been engaged since 1849.”

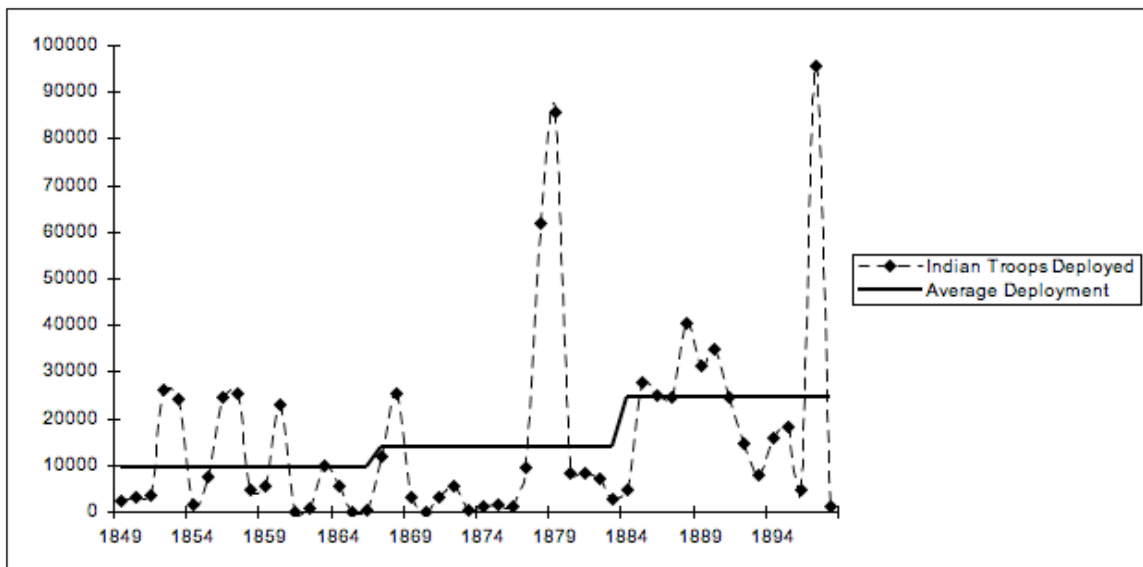


Figure 1: Indian Troops

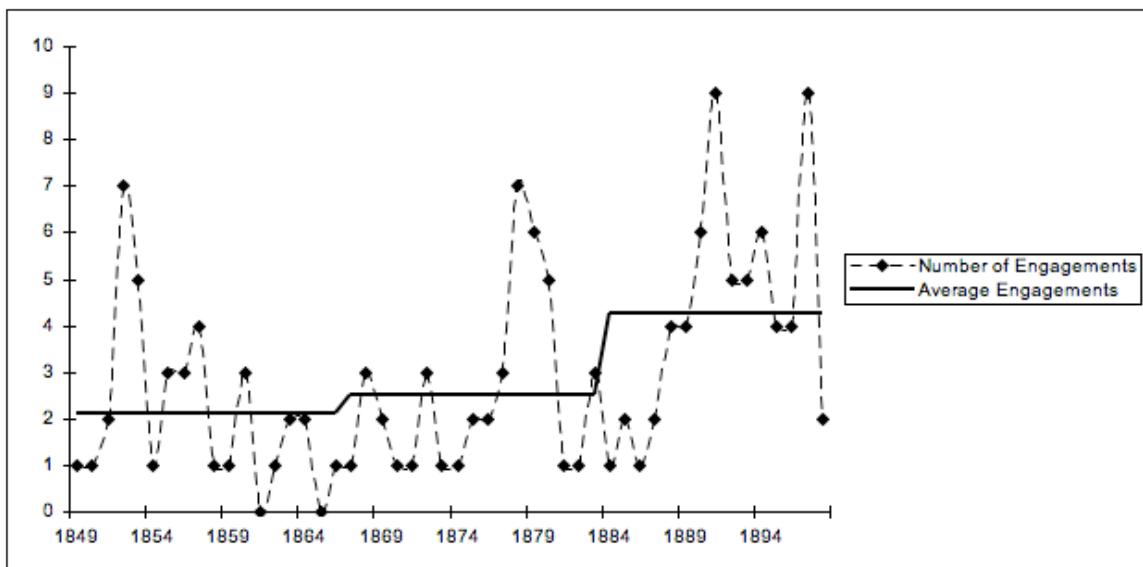


Figure 2: Indian Engagements

(“in purely English Colonies [natives] would be wholly out of place”)—is fascinating for its dispassionate assessment of the pros and cons of native military labor. The report provides valuable insight on official thinking. The overall consensus of the Commission was of the extreme value of the sepoy in a more dangerous world, “more especially in these days of rapid concentration and movement of troops in the event of war.” Deploying Indian soldiers abroad would:

Improve the discipline of the [Indian] army, strengthening our military hold in India. It would also be a great assistance to the British Army, and would relieve it of many of its duties in time of peace; while in time of war we should have a system in working order which could be expanded to meet any exigency of requirement.”

This positive assessment had little to do with financial consideration, “the superior cheapness of the native soldier disappears in a great degree when he is employed out of India,” once one factored the cost of their transport as well as their perceived fighting ability relative to a white soldier.²⁹

The Committee report’s most compelling piece of evidence for the potential of Native soldiers as substitutes for British labor is the British military’s testimony *against* the deployment of sepoys for bureaucratic reasons. The generals objected because “partially relieving the British Army of some of its colonial duties, would tempt the House of Commons to reduce the European force of the British Army” (Gascoyne-Cecil & Salisbury 1867, viii). The next three sections trace the development of a doctrine regarding the use of Indian labor as an substitute for European military labor and as an instrument of great power politics; and of its popularity with the voters.

4.1 Abyssinian Campaign (1867-68)

The 1867 British military expedition to rescue seven European hostages from the Abyssinian emperor Theodore was almost too fantastic to be true. Rarely has so much been done for so few. The nine-month expedition cost the rough equivalent of 2% of Britain’s GNP.³⁰ It necessitated the construction of an artificial harbor replete with floating lighthouses, twelve miles of rail track were laid down for the two steam locomotives brought over from England

²⁹Indeed British tax money was useful for overcoming other obstacles. One of the Committee’s principal concerns was the role of caste in restricting overseas service; it was determined not to be a problem, “if sufficient pecuniary advantages were held out to them as an inducement” (Gascoyne-Cecil & Salisbury 1867).

³⁰Some of the capital requirements were quite literal. Preparations for the campaign included an order of 500,000 1780 Maria Theresa dollars from the Austrian mint, as this was apparently the only acceptable currency in Abyssinia.

and the march to the mountain fortress of Magdala required the construction of eight bridges and 110 miles of new road. To carry the materiel required the importation of 22,000 horses and mules as well as forty-four elephants. The campaign required 13,000 troops and roughly 40,000 support personnel, but only 4,000 of these were British (or Irish), the vast majority of soldiers and attendants being taken from India. Indians too suffered the brunt of the admittedly light casualties, 30 out of 37 (Stanley 1874, Ashcroft 2001). The campaign was an aggressive entry into large-scale land warfare the likes of which Britain's previous gunboat diplomacy never approached.

Significantly, the event that supposedly triggered this punitive expedition, Emperor Theodore's detention of the British consul, occurred four years before the expedition was initiated. Sound strategic reasons existed for this reluctance by British defense and foreign policy elites. To invade a landlocked country in the middle of a very inhospitable continent was an extraordinarily risky undertaking, and it was hard to justify the effort for the sake of British honor and seven hostages. Freda Harcourt (1980) argues that it is only the imminence of the Second Reform Act that forced the Government's hand; Harcourt views the invasion as an elite-driven phenomenon, the search for a "national" cause to keep the Tories in power, creating a "vicarious release from tension for the classes to whom honor and prestige mattered." Nini Rodgers (1984, 147) disagrees, and sees the confluence of domestic and international forces as "coincidental." Noting the profound unease the Cabinet felt regarding the task, Rodgers chalks up the campaign as the "the triumph of the [Civil Service] under-secretaries over [Government ministers] the Palmerstonian Russell and the pacific Stanley."

My cost distribution theory reverses Harcourt's top-down story and reconciles the two views. Most Government ministers never wanted to invade Abyssinia, but popular pressure from a newly-empowered electorate made it an imperative, so long as the Indian Army did the fighting. Rodgers herself acknowledges the important new roles of the "Ottoman and Bombay lobbies" and the press in forcing a change in policy, which surely cannot be the result of an aggressive foreign civil service going off the reservation.

Money was no object. Despite the fact that the 8.6 million pound price tag raised the income tax from fourpence on the pound to five, the operation was wildly popular. In response to the criticism of profligacy, Disraeli famously retorted that "money is not to be considered in such matters: success alone is to be thought of." (Harcourt 1980, 266). For this investment, the public got a nearly costless war in return, while sending a message to other powers that "Britain was no longer timid about everything but India" (Harcourt 1980, 102).

4.2 The Eastern Question of 1878

While the extensive use of Indian forces to fight in Africa was certainly an important development, the power of Native troops to restore the popular acceptability of military aggressiveness is perhaps best illustrated by Disraeli's *coup de tête* in the 1878 flare-up of the "Eastern Question," the perennial debate on how to manage the Ottoman Empire's gradual collapse and the territorial ambition of a rising Russia.

During the period following the revelation of Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria in 1876 through the resounding defeat of the Conservatives in the election of 1880, the public generally supported, if not a pro-Russia policy, then certainly an anti-Turkish policy. One notable exception exists: the run-up to the Congress in Berlin when war against Russia in defense of Turkey became both possible and popular. The rapidity of this reversal of opinion, albeit a temporary one, may be largely due to the shifting of 7,000 Indian Native soldiers to the island of Malta, the first introduction of Indian soldiers into a European theater. Disraeli and his Foreign Minister returned home from Berlin to celebratory crowds delivering "peace with honor," a partial rollback of Russian conquest, and the island of Cyprus in British hands.

The personal correspondence of the Government ministers gives clear indication of the popular pressure they felt to do something against their better judgment. According to the decidedly dovish Foreign Secretary Lord Derby:

The Premier sincerely & really believes that it will be better for us to risk a great war, & to spend 10,000,000 upon it, than not to appear to have had a large share in the decision to come to when peace is made. Most continental statesmen would agree with him, & a considerable section of the English public. (Swartz 1985, 66).

Indeed many of the ministers thought Disraeli's course of action so unwise that two resigned and several others threatened to do so (Robinson & Gallagher 1968).

One liberal Member of Parliament remarked that, "The bringing of the Indian troops upon the stage produced a movement of surprise and admiration among all classes, except the section of the liberals who own the leadership of [Gladstone]" (Durrans 1982, 281). The fact that Disraeli called the troops up without consulting Parliament represented a grave constitutional crisis and a possible precursor to "personal rule," but this disturbed the members of Parliament far more than the public. Even George Thompson, whose massive book argues that Disraeli systematically ignored "Public Opinion" on the Eastern Question at almost every point during this period, acknowledges that the use of Native troops was immensely popular, and that "technical discussions on the Bill of Rights seem to nineteen

Englishmen out of twenty as idle as subtle pleas for this or that view of the Thirty-Nine Articles” (Thompson 1886, 444).

The liberal *Daily News* wrote despondently that the operation could not be explained by the traditional instigators of imperialism—financial interests and ambitious politicians—but that, “Undoubtedly, too, there is a strong and senseless impulse in favour of war stirring among many classes in this country, who are as far out of the range of political ambition as they are innocent of financial enterprise.” The more conservative *Times*, while expressing reservations about the policy’s wisdom also noted that, “It has been abundantly shown that the Government are, on the whole, acting with the support of the country” (Thompson 1886, 421). A popular parody of a patriotic song emerged:

We don’t want to fight
But by Jingo if we do
We’ll stay at home and sing our songs
And leave it to the mild Hindoo.³¹

Disraeli and Salisbury returned from the Congress of Berlin to immense popular acclaim, and could report to their Queen that, “After all the sneers of not having any great military force, the imagination of the Continent will be much affected by the first appearance of what they will believe to be an inexhaustible supply of men” (Durrans 1982, 281). The important precedent of sending Native troops to Europe was recognized quickly. From the Opposition benches in the House of Commons, William Forster acknowledged the revolutionary nature of the deployment, “Is it no change to rely not upon the patriotism and spirit of our own people, but upon the power of our money bags, to get the Gurkgas and Sikhs and Mussulmen to fight for us?” (Lucas 1921, 54).

4.3 The Egypt Campaign (1882)

The election of 1880, a landslide victory by the Liberals on a largely anti-imperialist campaign, would challenge this paper’s thesis were it not for the consistency of British foreign policy by the new Gladstone cabinet.³² Within two years, under considerable public pressure, Britain was mounting an expensive campaign with Indian soldiers in Egypt. The irony

³¹Like Salisbury’s English barrack remark, some version of these lines makes perennial appearances in work on the British Empire (cf. Ferguson 2003); a contemporary journalist notes that it was circulating Parliament during the debate over the movement of Indian forces to Malta (Lucy 1885, 418).

³²In truth the depression (an unemployment rate of 11.4% and the use of the army to put down worker unrest in Lancashire) probably did more damage to the Conservative cause than Gladstone’s Midlothian campaign (Swartz 1985).

was not lost on the Conservatives; “Poor Lord Beaconsfield [Disraeli]!” wrote Salisbury, “If he could have lived to see Gladstone suing the Turk for assistance in maintaining British interests—sending for Indian troops—& using Cyprus as a place of arms” (Swartz 1985, 208).

4.3.1 The Liberal Party in Power

The temptation to use the military with the popular approval of the people can be found in Gladstone’s speeches even before he took office in 1880. Gladstone’s Midlothian Speech placed great stock on “whatever is done in defending and governing must done by the force derived from you and from your children, derived from you and from your fellow-electors, throughout the land, and from you and from the citizens and people of this country” (Gladstone 1879, 64-65). But in the same speech, he criticized the conservative government for not taking an active role in the emancipation of European Christians from the Turk, instead allowing for the other European powers to do the work for her:

A great work of liberation has been done, in which we have had no part whatever. With the traditions of liberty which we think we cherish. . . a great work of emancipation has been going on in the world, and you have been prevented by your Government from any share in it whatever.

Indeed Gladstone claims that the government took three years to come to the liberal policy of “coercing the Turk” by sailing the fleet through the Dardanelles (Gladstone 1879). Gladstone disagreed regarding who the military should be used against, not whether it should be used. Gladstone, something of an outlier among his Liberal colleagues, would feel compelled to reverse even this policy difference. Determined to hand Cyprus to Greece, Heligoland to Germany and hastening the resolution of Egypt’s Suez Canal debt, he found himself stymied by public opinion and Parliament (? , 23).

Rather than the use of soldiers for foolish ends, Opposition criticism of Gladstone focused on incompetence in the deployment of British military power, and the resultant waste of British lives. In a famous speech following word of the siege of Khartoum, Sudan in 1884 by the Mahdi Army, Randolph Churchill, one of the founders of “Tory Democracy,” did not challenge the need to use troops, but rather the Liberals’ ability to do so. Churchill first linked the operations directly to continental great power politics, “It is perilous for a country to permit its foreign interests to be in such a condiciton that any morning we may awake to hear Europe demanding reparation and even vengeance,” and then noted the irony that:

Once again, for the fourth time in four years, does the ministry, whose programme was peace, and whose component parts were Quakers, call upon you to give them

authority to wage a bloody war. Of their former wars the results have been either infamous or futile. . .

Churchill then confirmed Britain's expansive interests, but put limits on the blood she would be willing to sacrifice:

We have to provide for the safety of the hero Gordon; for the safety of the 4,000 British soldiers sent to Suakim; for the safety of the garrisons of the Soudan, 30,000 souls in all, whose one and only hope is now reposed in you. Above all, we have to provide for the safety of our position in the Delta of the Nile.

Shall labors such as these, interests so tremendous and so vital, be committed to the hands of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues, men who on their souls the blood of the massacre of Maiwand, the blood of the massacre of Laing's Nek, the blood of Sir George Colley, the blood of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke, and many other true and loyal subjects of the Crown in Ireland, the blood of Kicks Pasha and his 10,000 soldiers, the blood of the army of General Baker, the blood of Tefik Bay and his 5000 heroes? . . . How many more of England's best and bravest, are to be sacrificed to the Moloch of Midlothian? (Churchill 1903)³³

4.3.2 The Occupation of Egypt

The operation commenced in response to rioting in Alexandria with a naval bombardment of Alexandria, which "like all butchery is popular" according to one unhappy Liberal minister. "At last," the Home Secretary noted sardonically, "we have done something popular" (Shannon 1982). A Parliamentary vote of credit and the shifting of Native troops to Egypt quickly followed this attack. The Income Tax, which Gladstone had tried so hard to abolish in 1874, was raised by 30% to 6 pence on the pound (Swartz 1985). While only 15% of the expedition's costs came from Indian revenues, 10,300 Native soldiers from the Indian Army supplemented the 23,582 British, making up almost a third of the expeditionary force (Swartz 1985, 142).

That there was an explicit link between the deployment of troops to Malta and the Egyptian campaign was clear to foreign observers, just as Disraeli had reported to Victoria. According to a U.S. intelligence officer observing the Egyptian campaign:

Taking the Continent on its record, one is forced to the conclusions that Lord Beaconsfield's so-called '*coup de theatre*' in 1878, when Indian troops were brought

³³Churchill would later be forced to resign as Chancellor of the Exchequer when he refused to support a politically popular increase in defense spending in 1886 (Porter 1987).

to Malta as a reserve in the event of hostilities with Russia, was a real menace, whose complete meaning was only made clear four years later. These oriental soldiers of the British Empire can be brought on any field of action by the scores of thousands (there were about 17,000 cavalry and 100,000 infantry habitually under arms); indeed, the number has hardly any limit. That the practice, once begun, of drawing upon this reserve will ever be abandoned, should future complications require a sudden reinforcement of her military strength, cannot be hoped for by any possible enemy of England. It must, on the contrary, be taken into account in the problem as a factor capable of almost indefinite expansion (Goodrich 1885).

Significantly, the Indian garrison only stood down when a large Egyptian army, under European officers and commanded by a British general with the colorful title of *sirdar*, stood up, solidifying Britain's "temporary" occupation of Egypt.

4.4 Accelerating Great Power Politics and Native Military Use

In all three of these crises Native troops were used to conduct operations that were generally against the better judgment of the governing elite absent concern for public opinion and election results. These are not isolated cases; Indian soldiers were deployed outside of British India seventy-eight times from 1867 through 1898 (Godley 1900).

While the ratio of Native to British troops had been maintained at two-to-one to prevent another Mutiny, the British circumvented the requirement in 1887 by creating the "Imperial Service Troops," controlled by the leaders of the Independent Indian States, autonomous entities within the Raj, but equipped to modern standards and available for deployment on imperial service. Lord Roberts, the Indian Commander-in-Chief, admitted that "Holding India under the circumstances we do [i.e. through the threat of force], some risk is inevitable" by this policy. However, this was outweighed by the contribution to internal order and defense, the a fragmenting of the Indian Army into autonomous groups, as well as another source for deployment abroad (Stern 1988, 211). By 1914 they were 19,000 in number, deploying to the Northwest Frontier, China and Somaliland.

Although Indian Native troops were specifically excluded from directly fighting in the South African theater due to racial tension concerns, the Indian Army nonetheless played an essential role in the Boer War. For the first time, the Indian Army became permanently garrisoned abroad, while sending 14,000 Native soldiers to put down the Boxer Rebellion in China, as well as to Somaliland and East Africa. What is more, the costs of these deployments were assumed entirely by the British Treasury to the tune of 3 million pounds from 1899 through 1904 (Godley 1905).

Over the next few decades, the use of Native troops accelerated even as the concern for the safety of the subcontinent from Russian invasion grew to be an obsession. Given the usefulness of this garrison, it is small wonder that India was considered the preeminent strategic interest of the British military. British Treasury funds were thrown at the defense of India; in 1904 the Prime Minister Arthur Balfour noted, “were India successfully invaded, the moral loss would be incalculable, the material loss would be important—but the burden of British taxation would undergo a most notable diminution!” (Friedberg 1988). It was only once the cost of defending the English barrack in an oriental sea began to be calculated in terms of British soldiers rather than sterling and likely would necessitate conscription (over 100,000 according to Kitchener in 1904), that accommodation with Russia became an imperative (Friedberg 1988, 265). Accord with Russia allowed the continued use of the now safe Imperial reserve for great power politics against a rising Germany, and this paid off amply in the Great War, in which 1.3 million Indians fought (Porter 1996).³⁴

5 Conclusion: Democratic Militarism

This essay has attempted to show that the extension of the British Empire through military conquest and of the British franchise through the Second and Third Reform Acts are intimately connected in a way that cannot be explained by conventional political science theories or historiography. Victorian military campaigns were lavishly expensive logistical affairs, costly to the Exchequer and to the local populations from which labor was drawn (often through coercion), but requiring little sacrifice from newly empowered middle and working class voters. When the world seems more dangerous but war seems less costly to a majority of its citizens (if not to the state), it should not surprise that a democracy will act very aggressively indeed.

In short, this paper presents a theory of democratic militarism, demonstrating that the median voter is as happy to act aggressively as any unitary actor or despot as long as she can get someone else to pick up the tab. My use of the term “militarism” to describe Britain may strike some as strange, as it is most often used to describe states such as nineteenth-century Prussia or twentieth-century Imperial Japan. Militarism is often thought to be most likely in authoritarian states in which not only do the armed forces play an active role in domestic government, but the military also pervades most aspects of society. In this paper I argue that in democracies the essential prerequisite for militarism is the *absence* of the military and the costs of war from the lives of the majority of its enfranchised citizens.

³⁴Following the war, 185,000 Indian Army troops remained deployed outside of India in places such as Iraq, Egypt and the Black Sea (Tinker 1988, 220).

The process leading to militarism in democracies is qualitatively different, but the outcome—a large military and international aggression—remains the same. Inspecting the historical record in Britain confirms the theoretical prediction that when the expected public good value for war is large, or if the burden of providing it can be shifted sufficiently, voters may be as willing (perhaps even more so) to build large militaries and initiate disputes as authoritarian states, because arming and war are, in the minds of the voters, cheap.

This relationship between imperial aggression and increased suffrage may appear ironic, given that militarism has often been considered the antithesis of liberalism. Samuel Huntington (1957) quotes Walter Lippman describing a consensus that, “money spent on battleships would better be spent on schoolhouses, and that was an affair that ‘militarists’ talked about and not something that seriously-minded progressive democrats paid attention to.” Such contrasts are common not only in political science but in the historiography of the British Empire:

Imperial visions injected a powerful strain of hierarchy, militarism, ‘frontier mentality’, administrative rationality and masculine civic virtue into British culture, at a time when domestic political forces were running in quite the opposite direction towards egalitarianism, ‘progressivism’, consumerism, popular democracy, feminism, and women’s rights.(Harris 1993, 6)

This was a common radical criticism throughout the nineteenth century. Hobson wrote in 1902 that it is the “nemesis of Imperialism that the arts and crafts of tyranny, acquired and exercised in our unfree Empire, should be turned against our liberties at home.”³⁵ One conservative leader claimed that Britain would “sooner throw over imperialism than accept the military system of foreign countries [i.e. conscription].” But the British case suggests an equally intriguing corollary to the theory of cost distribution presented here: the militarized expansion of the Empire using Native soldiers may have helped *preserve* important liberal aspects of political life in Britain. In fact the Imperial system, until the beginning of the twentieth century was fundamental element of maintaining a draft-free Britain.

To date some scholars have suggested that Britain’s imperialism abroad may have contributed to a steady, measured increase of liberalism at home whether from exposure to progressive examples in the White Dominions or by providing “an outlet for the vicarious adventures for an otherwise well-ordered society.”³⁶ However the true effect of the Empire may only become clear upon comparison to the other contemporary European states’ movement along a liberal-authoritarian axis in response to the increase in security competition. While France, Italy, Germany and other states created large standing armies, maintained

³⁵Also see Taylor (1991)

³⁶Respectively Thompson (2005, 149) and McIntyre (1967, 4)

universal military service and extended conscription terms, strengthened the autonomy of the executive, and generally centralized political power; the average voter in Britain may have well avoided the development of such a garrison state by using the wealthy's capital and the Empire's labor to engage in international politics for him.

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