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**A CO-OPERATIVE
SYSTEM FOR DEFENCE
OF THE EMPIRE**

By Colonel E. T. H. Hutton



THE SELECTED PAPERS

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A CO-OPERATIVE SYSTEM FOR DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

By Colonel E. T. H. Hutton, C.B., A.D.C. to the Queen¹

*"Let it be our task to keep alive the torch of Imperial patriotism, to keep warm the affection and the confidence of our kinsmen across the seas, that so in every vicissitude of fortune the British Empire may present an unbroken front to all her foes, and may carry on, even to distant ages, the glorious traditions of the British flag."*²

When I accepted the invitation of the Council of the Royal Colonial Institute to read a paper upon the Defence of the Empire, I felt that I had undertaken a task which should more appropriately have fallen to the lot of an abler advocate than myself. I only yielded because unusual opportunities have been given me as a practical soldier of becoming intimately acquainted with the instincts and ideas of some of our Colonial comrades in arms.

EXISTING POSITION OF THE DEFENCE QUESTION

It is now eleven years and a half since the late Right Hon. Edward Stanhope, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote his celebrated minute to the Governors of Colonies under responsible Government, dated November 25, 1886, in which he stated that,³ "In the opinion of Her Majesty's Government the question which is at once urgent and capable of useful consideration at the present time is that of organization for military defence." In ready response to the appeal of the Imperial Government contained in the circular letter above alluded to, representatives from all our colonies and dependencies met for the now almost forgotten Colonial Conference of 1887.

Since then the military defence of the Empire to which we are all so proud to belong has made little, if any, practical advance, and the Colonial Conference of 1887 has not been followed by the developments which were hoped for. The Conference may, however, be held to be responsible for the naval agreement between the Imperial Government and the several governments of the Australian colonies as regards the joint maintenance of a sufficient squadron for naval defence in Australian waters; which may be considered chiefly of value in that it has in itself established the principle of co-operative defence. The military defence of the Empire upon any comprehensive scale has practically remained in status quo, since it does not appear that the Colonial Defence Committee has ever been authorized to include in their labours any broad scheme for the military defence of the Empire, nor to formulate any joint system of

organized defence in which all portions of Her Majesty's dominions shall take their share.

Upon December 3, 1896, you will, however, recollect that the Duke of Devonshire on the part of the Government announced the naval policy for the defence of the Empire in perhaps one of the most momentous statements made by any British statesman of late years,⁴ as follows: "Maintenance of sea supremacy has been assumed as the basis of the system of Imperial defence against attack by sea. That is the determining factor in shaping the whole defensive policy of the Empire. That statement has been received unchallenged by the whole world, and our Colonies, resting on its assurance for the Safety of their commercial interests at sea, have ceased to disquiet themselves in, or to tax themselves with, providing ships of war for their own protection in their own waters. Several of the Australian Colonies are, for example, disposing of their ships of war, and reducing their local naval forces, upon which much money has in the past been spent.

There is a generally expressed hope that a military policy may be evolved from the existing condition of uncertainty, and that upon it may be erected some solid and satisfactory military scheme of defence. The Imperial Government have voluntarily undertaken the naval defence of the whole Empire, and the vast responsibilities involved, unaided except by the relatively insignificant contribution of the Australian Colonies.

The question which now, agitates all who are concerned with the military defence of our Colonies is, What does the Imperial Government propose to do as regards the military defences of the Empire? The Colonies have been severally warned to arrange for their own defence, and in their several ways have endeavoured to do so. The Colonial Defence Committee have in their turn given valuable advice, and brought much professional acumen to bear upon local Colonial difficulties, and there the subject is left. Surely the time has arrived when the Colonies should know whether they are to receive military protection from the Mother Country in time of war or threatened invasion, and whether they in their turn are to bear a share in the military defence of that Empire of which they form a part, and in whose existence they live and move and have their being.

Vast sums of money are yearly spent in a piece-meal defence of the various portions of the Empire, and from reasons of self-interest, expediency and economy, it is surely not too

much to urge that the time has arrived when all portions of Her Majesty's dominions, with their enormous military and other resources, should be prepared to co-operate for mutual defence, and should decide to accept one general policy - elastic it may be - upon which they are to maintain their independence as a great people.

This is a question which is pregnant with the whole future existence of the Empire. It is not long since that the Secretary of State for War defined our military requirements.⁵ Firstly, he stated, "a sufficient garrison for the defence of these islands is required," and secondly, "two army corps for offensive purposes outside the British Isles." Is it to be supposed that two army corps, numbering 60,000 men, or even three, are to be the most that the Mother Country is prepared to place at the disposal of her Colonial children, or to place in the field for offensive defensive operations in defence of the Empire when the hour of trial comes? It may safely be asserted that the true instinct of British feeling throughout the Empire would, in the hour of trial, repudiate such a totally inadequate limit to, the military resources available. The feeling of uncertainty which is caused by such a limit being placed to the military resources of the Mother Country is alone a sufficient indication of the necessity for some clear and defined military policy based upon the naval policy which has proved so reassuring to the interests of peace, and of future commercial development.

The absence of an officially declared military policy makes it difficult to deal with the subject which is now under your consideration and it is only possible to do so by assuming such postulates as are warranted by the political considerations, and by the military exigencies of a defensive system.

REQUIREMENTS OF A BRITISH MILITARY POLICY

The requirements of our British Military Policy may be taken to be as follows:

I. OUR IMPERIAL LIABILITIES:

(a.) The maintenance of our sovereign rights in all parts of our world wide dominions. (b.) The suppression of disorder. (c.) The conduct of these military obligations necessitated from time to time by the natural expansion of our trade and commercial relations.

The obligations referred to under (a) and (c) may be best understood by the following extracts: "The policy of Her Majesty's Government is not the acquisition of new territory," said the Secretary of State for the Colonies, on January 18th last, "but the maintenance of free markets even where that involves the acquisition of new territory, and the taking up of a very firm attitude in regard to any attempt which may be made to deprive

us of a territory which we already possess."

II. THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE AS A WHOLE:

It will be readily conceded ' by all observers of recent events in our history that a mutual, though unwritten, understanding exists between all portions of the Queen's dominions. The ties of sentiment and of self-interest alike render the maintenance of the Empire necessary for the commercial and political development of each and all. A study of history, especially that of our own country, demonstrates most clearly that the means by which this can best be effected is by an "offensive-defensive" system of defence.

III. THE SEPARATE DEFENCE OF EACH PORTION OF THE EMPIRE:

In other words, the local defence of each individual part of the Queen's dominions.

If we assume the foregoing as the basis of our requirements it will be seen that for the first we have our regular army. It is frequently and too readily assumed that our regular army with its attendant reserve is available for the defence of the United Kingdom as well as for the defence of our Colonies. This assumption is a misleading one, and has been ably exposed, among others, by a recent writer in the Times ("Reform," December 28, 1897.) The regular army should be more properly regarded as an Imperial constabulary, and cannot be reckoned upon as the true factor in the defence of the Empire comprised under the two last heads.

The Imperial regular army consists, in peace, of 211,867 men and 718 guns which in war will, by the addition of the reserves, be made up to 292,867 men. Of these numbers we have, in peace, as follows:

India and her Dependencies.....	75,000
Mediterranean Garrisons	10,000
Egypt	4,000
South Africa, &c.....	3,000
West Africa	
West Indies, Bermuda and Halifax.....	5,000
Straits Settlement, &c	3,000
Home Service.....	111,000

The general feeling of insecurity and of foreign pressure consequent upon the approach of such a dire event as a great national emergency would entail the strengthening of all our garrisons beyond the limits of the United Kingdom. It may be safely assumed that we should have besides, upon our hands, several minor wars and complications instigated, it may be, by our more powerful enemies, which would involve military opera-

tions in various parts of the vulnerable Portions of our Empire. It may be accepted, then, as certain that there would be a portion only of the regular army left available at home.

In face of the varied character of the probable demands for reinforcements this residuum could hardly be expected to form any complete military unit, such, for example, as the two army corps referred to. A dislocation of any system, therefore, which relies upon the Imperial army for an effective defence of the United Kingdom, much less of the Empire, must be the inevitable result. It would at most constitute the much needed stiffening to a defence force less carefully trained for war. It should be recollected that the removal of the three available army corps from the shores of the United Kingdom for any offensive defensive purposes beyond the sea, would practically leave the existing auxiliary forces of Great Britain without field artillery, without cavalry, and without administrative departments

We, therefore, arrive at the conclusion that if the integrity of the Empire is to be maintained by a military force proportionate to such weighty possibilities, it must be by some military system which shall be capable of fulfilling the conditions of the second heading.

This can only be insured by having the proportions of troops required for offensive defensive operations so organized and equipped that they can be utilized as an army in the field.

It is useless, under the conditions of Parliamentary government, to expect the establishment of an ideal system, and it becomes imperative to adapt ways to means in proposing any system which is likely to find favour. In this particular case, however, there is in existence the Militia Act of 1882, which provides for the exact force which is required to meet the circumstances. This Act has, moreover, been adopted in principle by most of our Colonies, and formed the basis of the Federal Defence Scheme recently framed for our Australian Colonies.

The Militia Act of 1882 of the United Kingdom provides for the raising and maintenance of certain quotas of militia, which shall be found by each country. These quotas can, if need arise, be enforced by ballot. The system, therefore, for providing the military defence force which shall answer our requirements is in existence, and we have merely to consider whether its developments may not be equally easy of creation.

In the United Kingdom the militia force consists of a certain number of battalions of infantry, a few engineers, and a few artillery. It is in no military sense an army or complete military organization. A military force which does not include the proportion of all arms, viz., infantry, artillery, cavalry and the administrative departments requisite, is valueless for any modern military operations.

The primary condition is, therefore, that the militia of Great Britain and Ireland shall become a distinct and complete military force charged with the defence primarily of the United Kingdom, and secondly, for offensive defensive operations in the co-operative defence of the Empire. The co-operative system of defence now advocated will be best illustrated by stating the plan adopted in framing the Federal Defence Scheme of the Australian Colonies.

THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL DEFENCE SCHEME A TYPE OF CO-OPERATIVE DEFENCE⁶

The principles were laid down, firstly, that each of the six Colonies should guarantee the "passive defence" of its own cities, towns, and harbours of commercial importance; and, secondly, that the whole of the Colonies should be so organized as to jointly guarantee the "active defence" of any portion of Australian or Tasmanian soil, by what may be called offensive-defensive military operations. It will thus be seen that the second and third requirements which were shown to be necessary for a British military policy have formed the basis of the Australian Scheme, though in this case limited only to Australian waters.

In Australia, as in the United Kingdom, the troops consist of regulars, militia, and volunteers. To the volunteers, or those serving under the Volunteer Act of 1859, the Federal Scheme assigned the "passive defence," while to the militia was assigned the "active defence," which thus formed the Federal force for active operations. It was arranged that each Colony in proportion to its population should provide a military contingent, and that such contingent should include the proportionate share of a force of all arms, with the requisite administrative departments. .

The Federal force thus created from the existing military forces in Australia comprise a complete mounted brigade of 1,738 men, and six guns on peace footing, which should be increased to 2,773 men in war, and an infantry division of 4,474 men, with 629 divisional troops, and eighteen guns on peace footing, increased in war to 7,530 and 1,084, making in all:

	Peace	War	Guns
Mounted Brigade.....	1,738	2,773	6
Infantry Division.....	4,474	7,530	
Divisional Troops.....	629	1,084	18
	-----	-----	-----
Federal Force, Grand Total.....	6,841	11,387	24

To each Colony was allotted a proportionate share of all arms and of the administrative departments, so that the Federal force of any single Colony might take the field, if necessary,

complete in all its requirements of personnel. (Vide Appendix B.)

In order to utilize the existing military forces in the manner described, a Federal Defence Agreement was drawn up, based upon the Militia Act of the Imperial Parliament, which, with some minor modifications, had already been in existence in four out of the six Colonies. This Defence Agreement contained all the provisions necessary to be included in the Bill which would be required to be passed by each Colony; in other words, the Militia Bill of 1882 was enlarged to meet the fresh requirements.

It will be observed, therefore, that it was not attempted to create anything fresh, but rather to utilize what was already in existence. It was intended only to bring the whole of the atomic and independent military systems of the six colonies concerned into one generally accepted plan.

The most serious difficulty which had to be dealt with by the Federal Defence Agreement was the creation of a central controlling authority. The plan adopted was the formation of a Council of Australian Federal Defence, whose powers in peace, and whose jurisdiction in times of war, were carefully laid down.

The Australian Federal Defence Scheme included the following:

1. A General Scheme of Defence.
2. A Federal Defence Agreement including the powers of the Council of Australian Federal Defence.
3. Allotment of Federal Troops on basis of population.
4. Tables showing the establishment and general distribution of the Federal Military Force among the several Colonies.

Military students will aver with reason that the system proposed for Australia is not new, that a similar system exists in the United States of America, and that we have in Switzerland at the present moment the highest and best form of a Federal Militia System for offensive defensive military operations.

We shall, however, be confronted by an obvious difficulty, if the plan proposed for the Australian Colonies be adapted to the requirements of the Empire, since the case of Great Britain and her Colonies presents an abnormal feature in regard to the control of the Federal Defence Force proposed to be created out of the various elements which compose the British Empire. History furnishes us with no precedent. In the case of the old Greek Republics, we find no exact parallel. In the Republics of Rome and Carthage, it was the Mother State which exacted fealty from her offspring, her colonial offshoots, and in each case the parent State stood alone in influence, and predominance. In the case of the Swiss Republic and of the great Republic of the United States

of America, one central government accepts and engrosses all central or federal control of the federal military resources of the combined States. It may be taken for granted that the only plan of co-operative defence which would be acceptable to Great Britain and to her Colonies would be one based upon a representative system. The political conditions of British Colonies existing prior to 1776, based upon the ancient precedent created by the Greeks and by the Romans in the treatment of Colonies by the parent State, can never, and will never, be attempted again. The solution, therefore, of this difficulty must lie in some system of offensive defensive alliance, or Federal Agreement, which shall include the creation of a central controlling council, having, in peace, the limited administrative powers necessary for the organization and maintenance of the federal force agreed upon, and, in war, its control and distribution.

History affords endless examples of such alliances during times of war and national upheaval; among which may be cited many where racial, religious and lingual differences might at first consideration have rendered such alliances necessarily abortive.

This did not prove to be the case in Wellington's army of the Peninsula, where British, Spanish, and Portuguese troops fought side by side. It was not the case in the Crimea when French, British, Turks, and Sardinians formed common cause against the power of Russia.

Surely in the case where the sentiment of race, of religion, of language, of political inclinations are common to all, it should not be difficult to so plan a central controlling authority which would make possible a system of co-operative defence, such as that framed in, the Australian Federal Defence Scheme.

THE CO-OPERATIVE SYSTEM OF DEFENCE FOR THE EMPIRE

A Co-operative System of Defence for the Empire would probably follow upon the lines of the Federal Scheme proposed for Australia. These fundamental principles would then be as follows:

- I. A General Scheme of Defence,
- II. A Co-operative Defence Agreement, including the powers of a Council of Defence.
- III. An Allotment of Federal Troops on basis of population.

I. A General Scheme of Defence. Its guiding principles may be taken to be:

(a.) That mutual defence be guaranteed by one and all parts alike of the Empire.

(b.) That British supremacy at sea be maintained by the Imperial Government.

(c.) That the true defence of the Empire may best be served by a vigorous offensive - that hostilities should be forced upon the enemies of the British Empire, and fought out upon other than British soil.

II. A Co-operative Defence Agreement, including the powers of a Council of Defence.

Following the lines of the agreement explained above, Great Britain and her Colonies would undertake upon given terms to mutually combine for defence and for such offensive defensive operations as might be necessitated for the effective defence and maintenance of the Empire. Great Britain would as at present, undertake with her regular army to maintain the sovereign rights of Empire, the suppression of disorder, and the conduct of those minor military operations which are a consequence upon our continually increasing commercial development.

It has been shown how the only serious difficulty of creating a central controlling authority might be met, and how the difficulties attending the institution of a Council of Defence need not be insuperable if met in the spirit of toleration, of mutual esteem, and of that national feeling so conspicuously shown upon all occasions whenever the antagonistic bearing of foreign powers has evoked it.

III. An allotment of Federal troops.

In Appendix C. is given a possible allotment of troops for Federal purposes of defence on basis of population. A separate column shows the total number of troops available for all purposes, so that it may be seen that the Federal troops bear a proportion only to those for purely local or passive defence. It will be noted in the Appendix that a force of 173,000 Federal Militia Troops, or Six Army Corps, would thus be provided. These Army Corps, if organized upon the principle proposed for Australia, would be complete in all respects, with their proportion of the three arms and of the necessary administrative departments, and would thus be ready to take the field.

As in the case of Australia, the troops for purely local or passive defence in the United Kingdom would include all the volunteers and the yeomanry of Great Britain. It has been urged recently by a leading journal⁷ that the volunteers of Great Britain are not suited by their training, organization, or discipline to face the trained soldiers of the Continent. Men in a mass are much what a system makes them, and a sound military organization which shall effectively deal with the volunteer forces of Great Britain has yet to be devised. The volunteer force sprang into

existence at the time of a national crisis, and to meet a sudden emergency; as at present constituted, it cannot be considered as an altogether satisfactory element. in the organized defence of Great Britain and the Empire.

As regards the militia forces of the United Kingdom, I have already shown the changes that will be required; they are those necessitated by a re-organization of that force into a militia army, thus forming a complete and effective military unit. The change advocated need present no serious difficulty, and could be effected with the existing numbers and at little additional cost. The difficulties would mainly consist in the creation of the proportions of the three arms, and of the necessary administrative departments. Three at least of the Australian Colonies have made their militia force into complete military units, notably the Colony of New South Wales. In this respect they have followed closely upon the militia system of the Swiss Federal Militia, and no reason whatever exists to prevent the Militia of Great Britain also from becoming as complete and as effective an organization as that of Switzerland.

In Great Britain we may rest assured that no Militia system can be satisfactory or complete which is dependent for its recruits and for its maintenance upon a centralized system at the War Office. A primary factor is for the county system of maintaining the militia to be enforced, and for those counties which are unable or unwilling to find the necessary quota of their militia to be compelled to resort to the ballot. It may be accepted that the fear alone of the enforcement of the ballot for militia will in itself be sufficient to cause the county and local authorities to exert themselves into providing the requisite troops.

The late Sir Henry Parkes correctly expressed the opinion of all thinking men in Australia when, in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, in the course of a memorable speech on November 13, 1894, he said: " Unless our military forces are federated, it would be better to abolish them. . . . The first question, and one of the most prominent in men's minds, is that of military defence."

The present may rightly be regarded as a favourable moment for preparing) in peace a co-operative system of defence upon broad and comprehensive lines, which shall not only prove effective but cheap. Effective in that the Empire would be provided with one general system of defence, capable of indefinite expansion, which would give a feeling of security of untold value to our national and commercial institutions; cheap in that the vast sums now expended by Great Britain and her Colonies upon no connected plan would be expended upon an organization which would be sound and effective.

An apology is due to the audience for the imperfect manner in which I have presented this vexed question of British Defence to your consideration. It is a subject of regret that a complete

draft of the Australian Federal Defence Scheme has never been published, as it would in itself have provided an example and a complete illustration of the co-operative system, which it has been the intention of the present paper to explain. For reasons which are doubtless considered sound, the whole question of Australian Federal Defence has been dealt with confidentially, and I have, therefore, been unable to state more with reference to it than what has already transpired in the Australian press.

You will allow me to rewind you of the striking peroration to the speech of the First Lord of the Admiralty upon March 10th last, when submitting the Naval Estimates for 1898-99 to Parliament.⁸ "The nation," he concluded, by saying in allusion to the increased naval armaments, "may look forward with ever increasing confidence to this prospect; that if there be peace, which God grant, it may be peace crowned with honour; and if there be war, which God forbid, it may be war crowned with victory."

It will be universally agreed that a similarly reassuring statement as regards the Military Defence of the Empire is only possible by adopting the dictum of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that⁹ "the sons of Britain throughout the world shall stand shoulder to shoulder to defend our mutual interests and our common rights."

You will, I trust, forgive me if I have wearied you, but you will hold me justified if, by explaining a system which has been officially recognized as sound, I have even in a small degree shown how the words of the Secretary of State for the Colonies may be brought into practice, and how the varied streams of our National and Colonial existence may be conducted into one channel, where their mingled waters call flow on together with regenerating strength and grandeur to the end of time. ■

Notes:

1. Now Major General commanding Canadian Militia.
2. Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, Annual Dinner, Royal Colonial Institute, March 31, 1897.
3. Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887, presented to Parliament July 1887.
4. Speech of Duke of Devonshire, President of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, at the Guild Hall, December 3, 1896.
5. Speech of the Marquis of Lansdowne, Secretary of State for War, Edinburgh, December 17, 1897.
6. For a short account of the history of the Australian Federal Defence Scheme, see Appendix A.
7. Leading article Morning Post, Dec. 23, 1897.

8. Speech of the Right Hon. G. J. Goschen, First Lord of the Admiralty, House of Commons, March 10, 1898.

9. Speech of the Right Hon. J. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Liverpool, January 18, 1898.

Colonel Hutton, an imperial officer with significant experience commanding colonial troops, ended his career as Major-General Hutton, CB, ADC.

During the course of his exemplary career, MGen Hutton commanded the First Mounted Infantry Brigade, alongside the Canadian Mounted Rifles, during the Boer War in South Africa; and was one of the last British officers to serve as the General Officer Commanding, Canadian Militia (1898-1899), where he found the existing militia "unsatisfactory in the extreme," and set about creating a "militia-army".

In 1902, he was appointed as the Australian Army's first, and only, General Officer Commanding, and had previously served as the Commander of the New South Wales military forces from 1893-1896.



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