Teach as They Fight

Why Preparing Students for America's Future Operational Environment Requires Studying Britain's Military Past

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In any future non-nuclear large-scale combat operation (LSCO) against a near-peer threat, the U.S. military will face significant challenges before it can begin to contemplate taking the initiative in the decisive theater. The path toward understanding and mitigating these challenges may not lie in the history of the campaigns of Napoleon, the Franco-Prussian War, the U.S. Civil War, Normandy, Barbarossa, or the 1973 War. Rather, to anticipate and overcome the challenges of a future war, we should gear our curricula and studies to focus on those who have successfully faced and overcome similar problems—the British Empire.

Regardless of the precise location or cause of the next LSCO-style war against a peer or near-peer adversary, it is possible to make some assumptions about the future operating environment for the United States. Barring any drastic changes in the world, these assumptions will continue to hold true for the foreseeable future. The first among these assumptions is that the United States will not abandon its strategic commitments and continuing operations in the face of escalation elsewhere. The U.S. military currently deploys globally to provide strategic advantages to the United States and its allies. Many of these deployments result from commitments the United States made to allies and partners. Such deployments include maintaining a presence in Europe in support of NATO, a significant presence in South Korea to deter North Korean aggression, and a force in Sinai as a condition of Israeli-Egyptian peace, to name but a few of many.[1]

In the event of a war against a near-peer adversary, the alliances and partnerships that U.S. forces support will become even more important. Deciding to abandon preexisting commitments could hurt the U.S. strategic position during the war and would certainly hurt its position postwar. Therefore, it is unlikely that the United States would abandon these in the face of LSCO and certainly not much beforehand. Among other things, this means that one of the challenges of LSCO will be concentrating a globally dispersed U.S. military in the region of concern without abandoning its critical commitments.

This also leads to several subordinate assumptions: the first is that the U.S. military will, as it prepares for and potentially conducts LSCO, continue to engage in a wide variety of operations including counterinsurgency, building partner capacity, domestic response, humanitarian response, and perhaps most critically during LSCO, deterring other threats. In short, the U.S. military cannot afford to prepare for just one thing. Another key assumption about the future operating environment is that while the war may have effects that
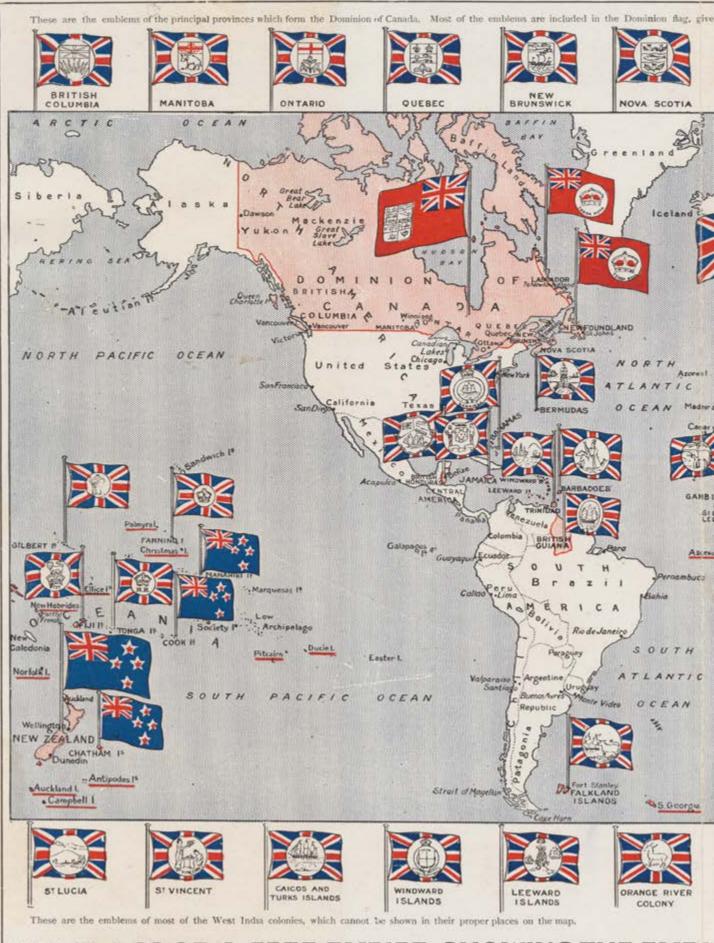
Seven representatives of the Commonwealth Armed Forces (*from left to right*)—soldiers from India, East Africa, South Africa, and New Zealand; a Canadian airman; an Australian soldier; and a Royal Navy sailor—march alongside of a Union Jack flag. (Attributed to Lucas, *The British Commonwealth of Nations-Together*, lithograph, 1017 mm x 1520 mm; courtesy of the Imperial War Museums)
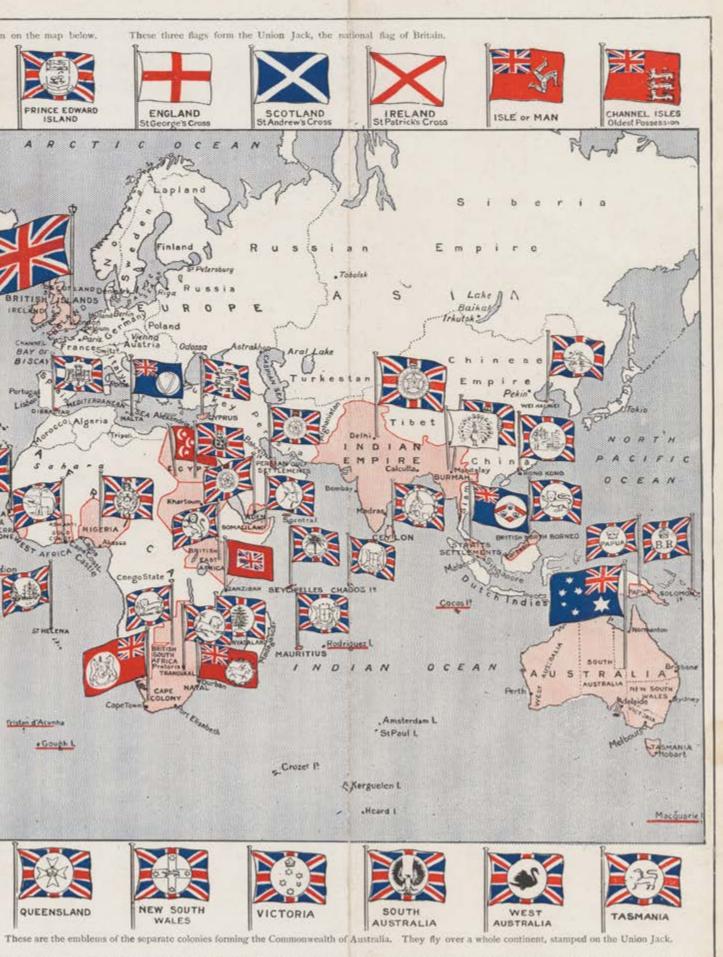
reach the U.S. population, the primary locus of combat will be at a great distance from the continental United States. This will have dramatic effects on the capabilities available to commanders as well as the timing and tempo of operations. Additionally, the critical requirement for such a war lies in the maritime domain. The United States will have to move large tonnages of supplies, materiel, and of course people along extended sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and will have to ensure their safety during transit. The scale of such an endeavor along with the increased lethality of the modern battlespace leads to one further conclusion: the current strength of the all-volunteer force (AVF) is unlikely to prove sufficient to win a LSCO war against a peer enemy, especially if such a war becomes a protracted conflict. This in turn means that should such a conflict occur, it will require the United States to rapidly expand the scale of the AVF and possibly reintroduce the draft without making significant sacrifices in the quality of the force. The factors are almost identical to

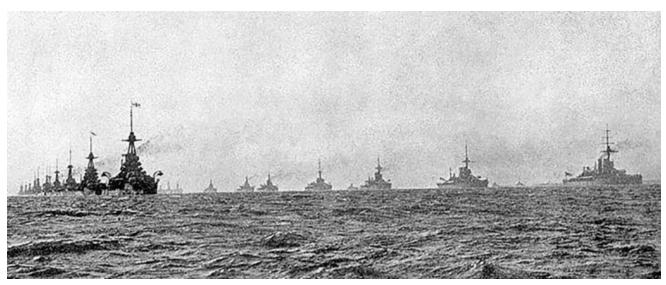those that drove British campaigns through most of the history of the British Empire.

This set of challenges is largely though not entirely alien to the cases of France, Germany (or Prussia), Russia, and the United States during the Civil War often studied in Army professional military education (PME). While some of these countries, such as France, did at times find themselves facing similar dilemmas to those faced by future U.S. military planners, for the most part, the cases studied such as those of the Franco-Prussian War, the Western Front of the First World War, the Eastern Front of the Second World War, and any of the myriad campaigns of the American Civil War existed in context absent some or all of these key considerations. For the most part, the campaigns studied are those of fully mobilized nations, with some form of conscription, fighting close to home. Even the inclusion of cases such as the United States in the Second World War, while more useful, is still a case in the context of a mobilized

These are the emblems of the principal provinces which form the Dominion of Canada. Most of the emblems are included in the Dominion flag, give...

BRITISH COLUMBIA **MANITOBA** **ONTARIO** **QUEBEC** **NEW BRUNSWICK** **NOVA SCOTIA**

ARCTIC OCEAN

Siberia

Alaska

BERING SEA

Aleutian

NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN

BAFFIN BAY

Baffin Land

Greenland

Iceland

Dawson
Yukon
Great Bear Lake
Mackenzie
Great Slave Lake

DOMINION OF CANADA
BRITISH COLUMBIA
Queen Charlotte I.
Vancouver
Victoria

HUDSON BAY

Labrador

MANITOBA
Winnipeg
ONTARIO
Quebec
Ottawa
QUEBEC
NEW BRUNSWICK
NOVA SCOTIA
NEWFOUNDLAND
St. Johns

United States
San Francisco
California
San Diego
Chicago
Texas
Mexico
Acapulco

NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
Azores
Madeira
Canaries

New York
BERMUDAS

Sandwich I.

Palmyra I.
FANNING I.
Christmas I.

GILBERT I.

Ellice I.

New Hebrides
partly French
FIJI I.
TONGA I.

MANAHIKI I.

Marquesas I.
Society I.
Low Archipelago
COOK II.

OCEAN

New Caledonia
Norfolk I.

Auckland
Wellington
NEW ZEALAND
CHATHAM I.
Dunedin

Antipodes I.
Auckland I.
Campbell I.

SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

Pitcairn
Ducie I.
Easter I.

British Honduras
CENTRAL AMERICA
Panama
JAMAICA
WINDWARD I.
LEEWARD I.
BARBADOES
TRINIDAD
Venezuela
Colombia
BRITISH GUIANA
Galapagos I.
Guayaquil
Ecuador
Para
SOUTH AMERICA
Brazil
Pernambuco
Bahia
Callao
Peru
Lima
Bolivia
Rio de Janeiro

GAMBIA
SIERRA LEONE
Ascension

SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN

Paraguay
Valparaiso
Santiago
Argentine
Buenos Ayres
Republic
Uruguay
Monte Video

Patagonia
Strait of Magellan
Fort Stanley
FALKLAND ISLANDS
Cape Horn
S. George

St LUCIA **St VINCENT** **CAICOS AND TURKS ISLANDS** **WINDWARD ISLANDS** **LEEWARD ISLANDS** **ORANGE RIVER COLONY**

These are the emblems of most of the West India colonies, which cannot be shown in their proper places on the map.

THE FLAGS OF A FREE EMPIRE, SHOWING THE EMB[LEMS]

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

ENGLAND
St George's Cross

SCOTLAND
St Andrew's Cross

IRELAND
St Patrick's Cross

ISLE of MAN

CHANNEL ISLES
Oldest Possession

ARCTIC OCEAN

Lapland

Siberia

Sweden

Norway

Finland

St Petersburg

Russian Empire

Russia

Riga

Tobolsk

EUROPE

ASIA

Lake Baikal

Irkutsk

Denmark

Berlin

Germany

Poland

Vienna

Austria

Odessa

Astrakhan

Aral Lake

Turkestan

Chinese

Empire

Pekin

WEI HAIWEI

Tokio

SCOTLAND

BRITISH ISLANDS

IRELAND

London

Holland

Belgium

Paris

Frances

switz

Italy

CHANNEL

BAY of BISCAY

Liverpool

Spain

Portugal

Lisbon

GIBRALTAR

MEDITERRANEAN

MALTA

SEA

Morocco

Algeria

Tripoli

CYPRUS

Alexandria

EGYPT

Delhi

INDIAN

EMPIRE

Calcutta

Tibet

China

NORTH

PACIFIC

OCEAN

Sahara

Asia

PERSIAN GULF

SETTLEMENTS

Bombay

Madras

BURMAH

Mandalay

HONG KONG

Khartoum

ADEN

SOMALILAND

Socotra

CEYLON

STRAITS

SETTLEMENTS

BRITISH NORTH BORNEO

ASHANTI

GOLD COAST

NIGERIA

Abassa

BRITISH EAST AFRICA

Malacca

Singapore

PAPUA

B.R.

WEST AFRICA

Cape Coast

Castle

Congo State

ZANZIBAR

SEYCHELLES

CHAGOS I?

Cocos I?

Dutch Indies

PAPUA

SOLOMON

ST HELENA

BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA

Pretoria

TRANSVAAL

NYASALAND

Durban

NATAL

MAURITIUS

Rodriguez I.

Normanton

AUSTRALIA

Brisbane

CAPE COLONY

Cape Town

Port Elizabeth

INDIAN   OCEAN

WEST AUSTRALIA

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES

Perth

Tristan d'Acunha

Gough I.

Amsterdam I.

St Paul I.

Adelaide

Sydney

VICTORIA

Melbourne

Crozet I?

TASMANIA

Hobart

Kerguelen I.

Heard I

Macquarie I.

QUEENSLAND

NEW SOUTH WALES

VICTORIA

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

WEST AUSTRALIA

TASMANIA

These are the emblems of the separate colonies forming the Commonwealth of Australia. They fly over a whole continent, stamped on the Union Jack.

EMS OF BRITISH POWER THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

The British Royal Navy's Grand Fleet sails for Scapa Flow in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. (Photo courtesy of Great War Primary Documents Archive via Wikimedia Commons)

nation with a conscript military. While studying Napoleon's campaigns in Europe or Ulysses Grant's campaigns in the American Civil War teaches valuable lessons on operational art, they do so in a vacuum from the realities that American planners will face. These factors alone change the practice of war and the requirements on planners.

One of the reasons for the focus on continental powers may be to align with theorists such as Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri Jomini with whom the Army is comfortable. It is true that Britain lacks any such theorists in the immediate post-Napoleonic period, but there is a good reason for this. In the British view, their military system won. While the resurgent French state may have threatened Britain, the wars between 1789 and 1815 proved that the British model of relying on a strong navy and a small professional expeditionary force, which they augmented by mass recruitment and a shifting system of alliances, worked. There was no crisis with the paradigm and no feeling of defeat, which required the balm of explanatory theorists. In the same way the continental theorists of the post-Napoleonic period ignored the experience of Britain, they also failed to incorporate those

features of its global strategy and the significance of the maritime domain in their work. In their absolute neglect of global perspective on the wars of the period, such thinkers fail to explain the efficacy of the British military during that period, and in doing so, limit their applicability to the future of the operations of the United States and Britain.

As a survey of some of the cases from British history will show, the need to prioritize SLOCs, the requirement to bring resources to the fight, the global nature of Britain's commitments, and the need to maintain while at times expanding the AVF shaped every aspect of the conduct of campaigns and the practice of operational art. Moreover, the valuable lessons on tactics, logistics, planning, and operational art that these cases may teach can also be taught through the study of their military, which better reflects the challenges ahead for the United States.

Between 1815 and 1914, Britain fought only one war against a European opponent: the Crimean War against Russia. The war began in 1853 as one of a series of Ottoman-Russian conflicts, with Britain and France joining on the side of the Ottoman Empire in 1854. Britain's objectives were to prevent Russian expansion

Previous page: The image depicts the range of the British Empire throughout the world in 1910. However, by displaying oversized flags of British possessions, this map artificially increases the apparent size and scope of the Empire. (Map by Arthur Mees, *The Flags of a Free Empire*, 1910, 14 cm x 28 cm, Persuasive Cartography: The PJ Mode Collection, Cornell University via Wikimedia Commons)

at Ottoman expense and to reduce Russian naval power.[2] It was this latter consideration that encouraged policy makers to decide to target the Black Sea naval base at Sevastopol in a "grand raid," following the Russian evacuation of the Ottoman territories of Wallachia and Moldavia.[3] The Anglo-French attack on Sevastopol led to a long and costly siege (1854–1855), but ultimately the city fell. Despite the name by which the war is now known, it was a far wider conflict, with British attacks on Russia on other fronts, especially in the Baltic.[4]

The British military system did not show itself at its best in the Crimean War. The conflict is perhaps most famous for the Charge of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaclava on 25 October 1854 and for Florence Nightingale's nursing work in the hospital at Scutari (Üsküdar in modern-day Istanbul). However, it makes for a useful case study for PME for several reasons. Britain's war was fundamentally based on sea power. It involved a combination of blockade, amphibious operations (the Sevastopol campaign was based on British SLOCs), and threats against targets vulnerable to attack from the sea. By so doing, the British and French avoided repeating Napoleon's disastrous land invasion of Russia in 1812. Britain's ability to fight the war at a distance allowed it to wage war on a relatively more limited footing than Russia was able to do.[5]

Britain's achievement of its objectives can only be properly understood by appreciating the wider coalition, diplomatic, and imperial contexts. French manpower grew increasingly important as the conflict wore on, and by 1855 most of the troops in the trenches around Sevastopol were French. Furthermore, the Russians were isolated diplomatically. The threat of intervention by Austria helped force Russia to the conference table, and the Treaty of Paris was signed in March 1856. The Crimean War also needs to be understood in relation to Britain's global commitments. The war occurred in a decade in which Britain fought a series of major conflicts against non-European opponents. To wage these campaigns, Britain drew on several strengths, including the resources of an industrial economy, and the manpower it could draw from India. The end of the war with Russia was followed by the Anglo-Persian War (1856–1857) before British rule in India was rocked by the mutiny of an estimated seventy thousand soldiers of the Bengal Army in the Revolt of 1857.[6] The

insurrection took two years to suppress. Meanwhile, Britain also fought against China in the Arrow War (1856–1860), again with French support. That Britain was able to sustain so many military commitments conflicts across the globe, some of which overlapped with each other, offers an instructive parallel for the U.S. armed forces today.

The largest war fought by Britain between 1856 and 1914 was the South African War (1899–1902). Although better known as the Boer War, the term "South African War" better encapsulates the conflict's geographical scope and its impact on the regional population. Britain went to war against the two Boer states, the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, to maintain its paramount position on the subcontinent of South Africa. The war can best be understood as having three phases. In the first phase, the Boers laid siege to the towns of Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking. British attempts to relieve the sieges led to a series of notable battlefield failures: Modder River (28 November 1899), the battles of "black week" (Stormberg, Magersfontein, Colenso) in December, and Spion Kop (24 January 1900). In the second phase, the British gained the upper hand: Kimberley was relieved, and four thousand Boers forced to surrender at Paardeberg on 27 February.[7] The British also relieved the sieges of Ladysmith and Mafeking. These successes allowed the British to take the war into Boer territory, and they occupied the Boer capitals at Bloemfontein (March) and Pretoria (June). The last set-piece battle took place at Bergendal (27 August).[8] The second phase overlapped with the third phase at Kroonstad on 17 March 1900, a Boer war council decided to change tactics. Thereafter, the Boers waged a guerrilla effort, forcing the British to adapt to fight a protracted counterguerrilla campaign.[9] The British annexed the Orange Free State and South African Republic in 1900, but two further years of attrition were required before the Boers who remained in the field agreed to terms.

Once again, the South African War did not show the British military system at its best, especially in the first phase. The war administered a profound shock, which encouraged several sweeping reforms; among these was the creation of a British General Staff, which was officially constituted in September 1906.[10] The South African War therefore offers an example of a

global superpower fighting a conflict that developed into a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign far from home, followed by an extensive effort by a number of British officers to examine what they saw as its main lessons. It also provides a useful comparison to the United States' own war in the Philippines, which was fought across the same three-year span.

As with the Crimean War, the South African War can only be properly understood in a wider context. First, although Britain was diplomatically isolated, no Great Power came to the aid of the Boers, despite its hopes for external support. There was plenty of Anglophobia, especially in France and Germany. France had been forced to climb down in the Fashoda Crisis (1898) but was wary of a possible Anglo-German rapprochement.[11] Germany, as politician Friedrich von Holstein put it, acted in a friendly manner even though it spoke in an unfriendly one.[12] The Russians made no effort to threaten India, in spite of the Tsar's hostility.[13]

The imperial context is also fundamental to understanding the conflict. The British Empire was a maritime empire, and again it was British sea power that allowed the prosecution of a major colonial conflict six thousand miles from home. The Boers were unable to attack Britain's SLOCs and therefore could not stop the buildup of troops. The Boers might have pressed their attacks home at the war's outset and attacked British infrastructure rather than halting to besiege the three towns, but they did not do this.[14] Britain made good use of its imperial resources. In addition to 50,000 men from South Africa, the imperial war effort included 16,415 Australians and 6,500 each from New Zealand and Canada in what was a precursor to the mobilization of imperial manpower seen in the First World War.[15] The backbone of the British force was provided by the regular army. However, this was buttressed by recruitment into the Volunteers and Imperial Yeomanry: 108,849 were recruited in this way during the war. In total, Britain was able to use 448,435 men in South Africa, with a peak of 240,000 deployed there in May 1901.[16] Although Britain itself was largely denuded of troops, India remained garrisoned by the Indian army, and Britain was able to sustain simultaneous operations elsewhere using local forces. An example is West Africa: during the years 1899–1902, imperial forces launched several expeditions to defend or extend British imperial interests. One such interest was the Anglo-Ashanti War of the Golden Stool in 1900, which resulted in the annexation of Ashanti (in modern day Ghana).[17] The South African War therefore shows several of the features relevant to the United States: the importance of SLOCs, the mobilization and deployment of resources over vast distances, and the expansion of the army (including use of local forces).

For Britain, as for many of the other belligerents, the First World War required an unprecedented effort. Britain drew on the resources of the empire to increase rapidly the size of its army; by the end of the war, some 5.7 million men had served.[18] What had begun as a Balkan War in July 1914 became a world war from the moment the global powers joined the struggle. Moreover, the conflict

British infantrymen engage the enemy with rifle fire during the Second Boer War (1899–1902) in southern Africa. (Photo by William Skeoch Cumming, courtesy of the Imperial War Museum)

spread from Europe across the world to new theaters, which involved British imperial interests. Britain relied on sea power to pursue its global strategy. However, it is also vital to bear in mind the coalition context: Britain relied on French manpower on the Western Front, especially in the first two years of the war, and the infusion of American manpower in 1918 also made a crucial impact.

The British army was committed to a continental war in August 1914, but it was small compared with the French and German armies. The regular army comprised 247,432 officers and soldiers in August 1914, with reservists (340,303) and the Territorial Force (245,779) taking its total strength to 733,514.[19] Yet, by the end of the war, some five million more had served.[20] Until 1916, the army stuck to voluntary recruiting. Only when the numbers volunteering dropped in 1915 did the British government turn to conscription (and only then after extensive debate). Lord Herbert Kitchener, the secretary of state for war, had hoped that the expanded British army could be the decisive element in the contest.[21] However, the pressures of war forced the British

Boer guerrillas during the South African War circa 1900. The Boer Commandos were volunteer military units of guerrilla militia organized by the Boer people of South Africa. (Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

to play their part much sooner than he had expected. 1915 was the bloodiest year for the French army, and the British stepped up to fulfil their obligations as a coalition partner. The British army launched major offensives on the Western Front in concert with its French allies: Loos (September 1915), the Somme (July–November 1916), and Third Ypres (July–November 1917). The German Spring Offensive, launched on 21 March 1918, pushed the Entente powers back, but the coalition's counter-offensive—now with U.S. troops involved—forced the Germans to seek an armistice.

The western front was undoubtedly the main theater for Britain; the war's outcome ultimately

hinged on what happened against the German army there. However, Britain's status as a global power made the war a global one from the very beginning. The Royal Navy cleared German surface vessels from the world's oceans, though this did not occur without some early problems (such as the defeat at Coronel on 1 November 1914). By early 1915, it was clear that the biggest threat to Britain's control of SLOCs would come from German U-boats. The German waging of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1915 famously included the sinking of the *Lusitania* on 7 May, while the campaign of 1917 helped to precipitate the entry of the United States. The German High Seas

Fleet remained confined to port for most of the war. Although the Battle of Jutland (31 May 1916) proved disappointing to the British (spawning an acrimonious postwar debate), there can be no doubt as to the outcome: the German navy had assaulted its jailer but was still in jail.

Britain was therefore able to use sea power to maintain campaigns in new theaters as the war expanded in geographical scope. In so doing, it was able to defend vital interests, especially those relating to its SLOCs. The first and last shots of the war (for the British) were in fact fired in Africa, where Britain waged several campaigns against German colonies; most notably, in German East Africa. Although operations in East Africa developed a momentum of their own, the initial rationale behind the African campaigns was fundamentally maritime. As Julian Corbett wrote in the official history of naval operations, all "were to be regarded primarily as designed for the defense of our maritime communications and not for territorial conquest. The single object was to deprive the enemy of his distant coaling and telegraphic stations."[22]

The Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers at the end of October 1914, opening the Middle East theaters of war. Here again SLOCs were vital: British Empire troops held the Suez Canal against an Ottoman attack in early 1915, though Entente forces tried and failed to capture the Dardanelles Straits (February 1915–January 1916).[23] Britain's offensives against the Ottoman Empire were ultimately successful in capturing the cities of Baghdad and Jerusalem in 1917. These operations involved extensive land campaigns, and here the British made use of their imperial resources.[24] Australian and New Zealander troops underwent their baptism of fire on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915.[25] The Egyptian Expeditionary Force, which took the offensive from Egypt into Palestine in 1917 and on to Syria in 1918, consisted of British and imperial troops. Manpower pressures on the Western Front in 1918 meant that Indian soldiers replaced British troops in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, and these were gradually integrated during the year.[26] Britain's imperial resources were also deployed on the Western Front, along with the bulk of the British divisions; Canada, Australia, India, and New Zealand all provided formations to reinforce the British Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders. Overall, the First World War was, for Britain, an imperial and coalition war *par excellence*.

As with the First World War, the United Kingdom entered the Second World War with a relatively small volunteer army and global commitments. From Africa to the Pacific, the British army was actively engaged in stability and counterinsurgency. There were significant combat deployments in the Palestine Mandate, Somaliland, India, and Iraq, among others. The bulk of the armies of the British Empire were in India. As the war dawned, the British had to increase greatly the size of their army while at the same time not sacrificing the combat efficiency of the force developed during the all-volunteer period. They knew they could never match the numbers of their European adversaries, so they had to continue to develop a high-quality force. Additionally, early on, the British Empire embraced the integration of special operations, by-with-through methods, and information operations to create asymmetric advantages where possible.[27] In every campaign in the war, the British Empire had to play an "away game" reliant on SLOCs, and committed to fighting a global war. In some campaigns, Britain fought LSCO at the end of extended SLOCs while in others, it turned its global presence and maritime nature into strengths to win the global fight and shape the decisive theater.

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The Fall of France in 1940 is an often-studied campaign, at least as far as studying the French and German perspectives are concerned. The campaign serves as an example to talk about the changes in tactics, armor, and air power brought to the battlefield, as well as the number of elements of operational art. Unlike the French, the British army retained its combat power and successfully leveraged its professionally honed forces to execute a rear passage of lines retrograde to ports of embarkation. Through it all, the commanders and officers of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) had to consider preservation of the force as they knew replacements might be delayed and that the global force would need time to concentrate. They also had to consider their ability to maintain contact with the ports on which they relied. The need to coordinate with the naval element not only shaped their tactics but the entire campaign as well. The planning considerations that determined the activities of the BEF are the same that will prove critical for the United States in the future. By changing the focus of any campaign studies of the early phase of the Second World War to consider the BEF, PME institutions can achieve the same goals as before but with the added benefit of considering the very circumstances that U.S. officers will face in a future LSCO.

Soldiers of the Indian Expeditionary Force, a component of the World War 1-era British Expeditionary Force (BEF), dig trenches on 9 August 1915 near Fauquissart, France. The BEF was originally a six-division force under command of the British army. In addition to British homeland forces, it would ultimately include Commonwealth expeditionary forces from India, South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Newfoundland (not yet part of Canada), and also included the non-Commonwealth Portuguese Expeditionary Corps. (Photo by H. D. Girdwood via the British Library/Wikimedia Commons)

From the fall of France in 1940 through the entry of the United States into the war, the British Empire stood alone. On the strategic level, it had to leverage its global position, irregular warfare experience, and maritime capabilities to shape the global fight to win the LSCO in which it engaged. Any number of campaigns would serve to help PME students think about the future fight. For example, in the Middle Eastern theater, before the British could prevail in the decisive campaign in North Africa, they first had to engage in several campaigns elsewhere in the theater.[28] A focus on the operational level of decision-making

British troops of the 11th East Africa Division march on the road to Kalewa crossing near Sagaing, Burma, circa November 1941 in the early stages of the Burma Campaign. (Photo courtesy of the Imperial War Museums via Wikimedia Commons)

and planning that went into these is more relevant to considerations students from war colleges and schools will face than a study of any given campaign on the eastern front fought between to large conscript-based land powers near their home soil. These "peripheral campaigns" were in themselves decisive as they secured the global lines of supply and SLOCs to the British army in the Western Desert while denying global resources to the Axis.[29] This allowed the British Empire to bring its global power to bear in North Africa at the same time as the Axis resources stretched to their breaking point. At the strategic and

operational levels, this ability to think creatively about how to leverage regional positions and global maneuver space to achieve effects in a "decisive" theater in this manner are the skills that the future operational requirement will require of U.S. planners.

In campaigns in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Somaliland, and Ethiopia, the British Empire benefitted from the local relationships built during the ongoing stability missions to leverage indigenous forces, which meant that not only could they readily defeat the Axis force present but could do it while maintaining these as economy of force campaigns.[30] In all these campaigns,

A soldier with U.S. Army's 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, goes over the specifications of the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon with a soldier from Indian army's 99th Mountain Brigade 24 September 2018 at Chaubattia Military Station, India. The activity was part of Exercise Yudh Abhyas 18, a bilateral training exercise designed to foster a shared tactical and technical understanding between the partnered military organizations. (Photo by Sgt. Jeff Hibbard, U.S. Army)

they had to integrate special operations forces (SOF) at every level. For most of the duration of the campaign in Ethiopia, SOF and indigenous forces were the primary effort with conventional forces in support. Small teams of SOF worked with tens to hundreds of thousands of indigenous fighters to shape the environment and win decisive engagements.[31] Eventually, British conventional forces were able to enter the theater en masse, and the campaign switched to the integration of indigenous and SOF forces in support of the conventional LSCO fight.[32] This is far from the only British campaign in the Second World War in which this occurred.

Despite the importance of SOF capabilities to the United States, force structure and the future operating environment, few if any of the campaigns that students encounter provide examples of planning for large-scale SOF operations and integrating them with conventional forces. Even fewer address campaigns in which conventional forces are not the main effort.

The British campaigns in places such as Ethiopia still have all the elements such as considering mechanized maneuver, air-land integration, and deep operations, all at large scales that make the Second World War a useful case for PME. However, they have the added benefit of providing examples not only of the planning considerations caused by expeditionary warfare and global position but also the integration of SOF and the successful employment of by-with-through operations. They offer lessons on how to turn global positions, dispersed deployment, and relationships built during the prewar period and counterinsurgency from a potential weakness to powerful advantage.

Following the Second World War, the relevance of cases from the British Empire declines as the United States replaced it as the main global expeditionary power. Even then, there is still much that the cases of the end of British Empire can provide. One of the challenges the United States repeatedly faces is how

to organize the end of its involvement in each conflict or region. There are significant planning challenges to such operations at every level, especially if conducted in the face of hostile forces or burgeoning civil war. There are number cases in in the post-Second World War period from the Palestine Mandate to India, Kenya, and Malaya that are worthy of inclusion in a curriculum that will help students in PME understand the critical planning considerations they may face in Iraq, Afghanistan, or following the next major conflict.

From the U.S. Marine Corps' expeditionary advanced base operations concept to the renewal of Army major combat capabilities, the entire U.S. military establishment is in the process of reorienting to the complexities and challenges of the future operational environment. Preparing students for this uncertain future requires teaching more history and not less, but at the same time, it requires a renewed look at the historical cases employed. By moving away from the wars of continental powers to the wars of global expeditionary powers like the British Empire and the contemporary United States, faculty can keep the good that currently exists in teaching cases from each period of warfare while adding to the ability of students to understand and prevail in the environment that they will face.

While the phrase "those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it" may seem trite, by providing students with cases to consider replete with a full range of the complex challenges they might face as part of an expeditionary all-volunteer force, faculty can help students avoid some of the mistakes of the past. The purpose of PME is not just to teach history for its own sake or choose cases that are familiar and comfortable. The purpose of PME is to equip students to handle the operational challenges of the future and prevail in future wars. Substituting in cases such as those of the history of the British Empire that incorporate some of key hallmarks of the future operational environment will be an important step in fulfilling that most critical mission. ■

Notes

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Military Review Recommends

The March-April 2022 *InterAgency Journal* highlights the complex relationship of diplomacy to branches of the U.S. government with a collective interest in national security as well as the need for increased sophistication and experience in dealing foreign nations. It can be found at https://thesimonscenter.org/publications-post/interagency-journal-12-1-2022/.