

Australia and New Zealand in the Great War: revisited reactions

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Abstract

Even though it is often neglected, the effort of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (referred to as ANZACS) in the First World War was in fact decisive – not only for the British Empire, but also for the nation-building process of the two countries. It was generally believed that the war would be welcomed with enthusiasm by all Dominions, however, there is some evidence that there were dissenting voices in the antipodean islands during the war period. This research analyses the first years of the war from the Australian and New Zealand points of view: how it was dealt with at the political level at home, how it was perceived by the soldiers and how it was reported on by newspapers and war correspondents. Firstly, the paper will present the ANZACS' role in the war and in the countries' culture; secondly, it will focus on the first years of the war and the related reactions (with particular attention to the Gallipoli mission); thirdly it will describe the internal assessment of war politics. To conclude, this dissertation will argue that there have been a great deal of censorship and manipulation that have influenced the perception we have today of the ANZACS.

Table of contents

Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1: ANZAC historiography.....	7
1.1. Who were the ANZACS?	7
1.2. ANZAC efforts in the Great War	9
1.3. The spirit of the ANZACS	11
Chapter 2: The years of the struggle: local reactions.....	15
2.1. The outbreak of the war.....	15
2.2 Gallipoli	18
2.3. Post-Gallipoli.....	21
Chapter 3: Internal impact	25
3.1. Australian war governments	25
3.2. New Zealand political forces	28
3.3. Public opinion.....	31
Conclusion	35
Bibliography	37

Introduction

It is often assumed that World War I was positively embraced everywhere, not only in Europe, but also in the Allied colonial territories. While there has been a huge revisionist strain challenging the view of war enthusiasm on the old continent, the outbreak of the Great War in Australia and New Zealand has been analysed to a much lesser extent. Moreover, the war is deeply embedded in the two countries' history, and it has marked the birth of these nations. Why was the European-based war so defining for the antipodean people and how did they perceive it? This brief dissertation argues that the position of the two afore-mentioned islands, at the beginning of the conflict, was most likely to be different from what is generally believed, and that by the end of their biggest effort (namely the Dardanelles' mission), they were undoubtedly facing a recruitment issue due to lack of will to enrol.

The present paper will mainly focus on the first years of the conflict, considering Australia's and New Zealand's actions and reactions from the crisis of the August days in 1914 until the end of the Gallipoli mission in 1916, with brief references to their subsequent efforts. The main aim of the analysis is to shed a light on a topic that has been largely overlooked, at least in Europe. Moreover, as the centenary of the landings in Gallipoli was celebrated on April 25th of the current year, it is worth remembering the struggle of the Pacific soldiers who helped reshape the future of our continent. Not only was their effort significant for the British Empire and for all Allies in the war, but it was also a way for these countries to get international recognition and to get rid of the reputation of simply being former colonies: they fought to prove the independence they had recently acquired.

Moreover, this paper seeks to solicit a debate on the actual perception of the war in the two countries, by challenging the common beliefs of enthusiasm and acceptance. As will be discussed later in the analysis, there are evidences of censorship that has affected the way Australians and New Zealanders consider their ancestors. The first official war reports glorify the soldiers and

their commanders, and these accounts have been considered so accurate in the description that they have hardly been questioned, at least not until more recent reviews.

The research is based on a comparative analysis between the two countries, drawing from a large array of sources, since the recurrence of the anniversary has led to a large amount of publications on this topic. The paper mainly draws on recent literature; there is a considerable amount of books, dating from the 1960s onwards, concerning the history of the two countries (even if the number is noticeably larger for what concerns Australia). Nevertheless, these war reports tend to be quite general in the presentation of the countries' steps towards reaching their nationhood. The largest source of information is given by scholar review articles, that vary in type and topics, but nevertheless constitute a very relevant starting point for future enquiries. Among these, the majority appear to be book reviews, historical journal articles, historic encyclopaedia entries and university papers.

Primary sources have been widely used too to present the topic in a better way, e.g. the main documents that were consulted were official regulatory acts (e.g. War precautions act, Covenant of the League of Nations), journals, memoirs and letters (from soldiers, officials, and war correspondents), and newspapers. Given the extensive amount of information that can be extracted from these sources, the use has been limited to two newspapers for each country, namely *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Advertiser* for Australia, and the *Auckland Star* and the *Evening Post* for what concerns New Zealand.

For relevance to the specificity of the topic and for space issues, it is not within the scope of this paper to argue about the historiography of World War I, except for the actions concerning the ANZACS. Moreover, this brief dissertation will not present a deep analysis of the relationship that Australia and New Zealand had with Great Britain at the time of the war, mainly because there seems to be a gap in the literature in that specific area, especially from the political point of view (there are in fact some economic accounts and trade agreements from the period, which will be mentioned in the following chapters). It is however worth mentioning one interwar

publication on the matter, namely the book *"The ANZAC illusion: Anglo-Australian relations during World War I"*, written in 1933 by Eric Montgomery Andrews. What appears to be overflowing, is the huge amount of publications on the Gallipoli battle, not considering review articles and even movies on the mission: yet, few of these refer to Britain or its role in the ANZAC fighting. Another aspect that might be relevant to consider, but which, for the same reasons cited above, will not be analysed in the present dissertation, is the role and relationship the other two main ex-colonies (South Africa and Canada) had with the ANZACS and with the mother country. Indeed, the British Expeditionary Force, of which the Australian and New Zealand soldiers were members, comprised also these other countries, yet there are not many records that take the inter-colonial relations into consideration.

The outline of the dissertation will be as follows: a first part, dedicated to the ANZAC myth, will present who the soldiers were, how they were considered then and now, what conflicts they participated in and what is meant by 'spirit of the ANZAC'. The second chapter of the paper will analyse the reactions at the local level more deeply (i.e. with accounts of soldiers memories, newspapers, and war reports) of the outbreak of the war, of the Gallipoli mission and of what happened after Gallipoli. Finally, an assessment of the internal impact of the war will be described individually for the two countries in terms of governmental actions and public opinion.

Chapter 1: ANZAC historiography

1.1. Who were the ANZACS?

The ANZACS, namely Australia and New Zealand Army Corps, were the army division that served in the first (and later second) World War: the militaries and their stories are deeply embedded in Australian and New Zealand cultures. With the recurrence of the 100th anniversary of the efforts of these soldiers, special attention and commemorations were granted on them in their homelands. However, outside the Pacific, very few people seem to remember them and their struggles. The commonly overlooked (but nonetheless hugely relevant) efforts and main characteristics of these soldiers in the conflict that changed Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, has been the subject of several historical accounts throughout the years, but mainly by local authors, due to the immense impact they had on the antipodean islands. Already since the 1920s, the name “had passed beyond an acronym”¹ to become a bi-national symbol. ANZAC altogether embodied masculinity, imperial loyalty and selfless virtues, as the Dominions had no national interest of their own in the war.

From a structural point of view, the ANZACS were the first army corps of the Mediterranean Expeditionary force (MEF) and the division was composed of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF). More specifically, the original army consisted of the first Australian Division and the New Zealand Australian Mounted Division, with the two being made up of seven Australian and one New Zealand brigades².

The Dominion armies (comprising also Canada, Newfoundland and South Africa) were distinct forces in the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and collectively they were thought to be efficient and dependable units, especially by the end of 1916. Their legacy has been transmitted by notorious historian-propagandists: in the case of the ANZACS, Captain Charles Edwin

¹ Lyons and Russell, *Australia's History. Themes and debates*, p. 137.

² Roberts, Mary and Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of World War I*, p. 112.

Woodrow (CEW) Bean is the most prominent figure of ANZAC exaltation. He was the official war correspondent for Australia and he collected his memories and personal records in a twelve-volume work called *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*. Bean has been considered one of the most influential writers to have influenced the way Australians regard themselves and their land. Moreover, he is one the 'disinterested patriots' that served and admired their fellow nationals without fear. Here is how the scholar Inglis remembers his works: "he reported with care and pride the Australian experience of European war, commemorated the men who died in it, and worked quietly to enhance the lives of another generation".³ The colonial armies were remembered as being more aggressive than British troops, with an initial lack of discipline and a great sense of comradeship: they were regarded as "the spearhead of the BEF" by the Germans and British, and also by themselves.⁴

As Richard Van Emden reminds us in his latest work on the Gallipoli battle, the ANZAC men came from different backgrounds, and they had come to war for various reason, but nonetheless they had their British roots in common: "patriotism drew them to fight"⁵. However, these years were going to change the self-perception of the two countries: indeed, the day of the first landing on the Turkish peninsula, April 25th 1915, known as 'ANZAC Day', is still commemorated today and has become 'inextricably entwined with both countries' perception of national identity'.⁶ In fact, the identity of the soldiers reflected the countries' culture: the original name of the army was indeed supposed to be 'Australasian Army Corps', as in sporting events the two countries used to compete together under the Australasian label. Yet, in order to maintain their distinguished identities (with protests coming especially from New Zealand), the name was changed into the commonly used ANZAC, which became popular after the Gallipoli mission.

³ Inglis, *C.E.W. Bean, Australian Historian*, p. 60.

⁴ Roberts, Mary and Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of World War I*, p. 113.

⁵ Emden and Chambers, *Gallipoli. The Dardanelles disaster in soldiers' words and photographs*, p. 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

However, as regards the soldiers, it is necessary to bear in mind a clear distinction of each of the ANZAC efforts and a realistic account of the undeniably remarkable actions of the down-under armies. Indeed, Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds in their almost daring work *What's wrong with Anzac?*, argue about the excessive militarisation of Australian history due to the attention devoted to the Army Corps. The country remembers the 'ANZAC spirit'⁷, namely the heroic selfless virtues, and attributes them to every effort of the corps: the battles have all become one and all alike in an ahistorical process.⁸

1.2. ANZAC efforts in the Great War

That which the Australian and New Zealand divisions are sadly most remembered for is the unsuccessful offensive in the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey between 1915-1916. However, the two countries were involved in the war even before: the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary force intervened in German occupied New Guinea after a landing in Rabaul in September 1914, and the New Zealand Expeditionary force sailed to German occupied Samoa even before, on August 12th, 1914.⁹

The troops then deployed to the Middle East and later to Europe, with the help of the Imperial Japanese Navy; the latter escorted the ANZACS on their journey and even transported some New Zealand troops. The Japanese protected the ANZAC troops and provisions in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea; moreover, during the convoy, the Australian ship *Sydney* sank the German *Emden*. The Nipponese also protected the Oceania waters; however, their effort is often disregarded due to the threat of the 'Yellow Peril'.¹⁰

⁷ See also 1.3. The spirit of the ANZACS, p. 11.

⁸ Lake and Reynolds, *What's wrong with Anzac?*, p. 15.

⁹ Pfeiffer, *Exercises in loyalty and trouble making: Anglo-New Zealand friction at the time of the Great War 1914-1918*, p. 179.

¹⁰ Roberts, Mary, Tucker, p. 114.

The ANZACS started their training in Egypt practicing assaults and organising in trenches; however they were said to be “*by British standards woefully lacking in discipline and respect for authority*”¹¹, and often got involved in brawls. The most intense fight is remembered as the Battle of the Wozzer, which was more of a riot involving civilians, soldiers and many local brothels in one of the liveliest streets of El Cairo.¹² Indeed, the British Private Watkins dearly remembers the ANZAC soldiers “*hobnobbing together, discipline and military etiquette being quite unknown to them. [...] But still we had a great affection for the Cobbers*”.¹³

From here the troops would be deployed in the battle which saw their greatest involvement in the war, that is the Dardanelles mission – commonly remembered as Gallipoli, from the name of the peninsula in which they landed. The assault was planned for April 25th 1915, when the troops arrived a mile north of the site in which they were supposed to attack, which henceforth has been known as ANZAC Cove. From this mission also the appellation ‘Diggers’ coined, as the soldiers were told to “dig and hold on” in the inhospitable weather and location.¹⁴ The mission cost the lives of innumerable soldiers but it is remembered as their greatest effort: it symbolises the birth of the nations and it reflects the bravery and tenacity of the ANZAC men. A more in-depth description of the mission is presented in the following chapter.¹⁵

After Gallipoli, the ANZACS regrouped in Egypt where more volunteers joined them and new troops were formed. They fought in France in the Somme offensive of 1916, one of the highest-casualty battles of the conflict. This was no exception for the ANZACS: indeed, this was the occasion in which most Australians were lost during World War I.¹⁶ Later, the majority of the Australia and New Zealand mounted troops were sent to the Middle East, in

¹¹ Roberts, Mary and Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of World War I*, p. 112.

¹² Emden and Chambers, p. 20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁴ Roberts, Mary, Tucker, p. 113.

¹⁵ See also 2.2 Gallipoli, pp. 18.

¹⁶ Sir Morris, *Lest we forget the ANZACS*, p. 250-251.

two operations which proved to be a great success. The mounted infantry served under the leadership of General Allenby in Sinai, Palestine, and in Syria. They distinguished themselves and the result was the final defeat of the Turkish army in Jerusalem on December 9th 1917.¹⁷

Following the Somme battle, the ANZACS took part in other major conflicts of the Western Front: among others, they fought at Pozières, Arras and Messines. One of the most tragic events for the troops took place in the Third battle of Ypres at Passchendaele, where many ANZAC, British and Canadian soldiers confronted the Germans. October 4th 1917, the main day of the battle, is remembered as 'the blackest day in New Zealand history': as many as 845 New Zealand soldiers died and 3,700 were wounded that day alone.¹⁸ In April of the following year the ANZACS staged a serious offensive in Villers-Bretonneux, recapturing the strategic village; to this date, the Primary School of the town displays a sign reporting 'Never Forget Australia' to commemorate the immense contribution they provided.¹⁹ After the latter offensive, the ANZACS participated in the battles of the Aisne-Marne in the summer of 1918, the conclusion of which re-designated the army as Australian Corps, abandoning the previous common appellation ANZAC. Nonetheless, the values that ANZAC embodied would live on for a very long time.

1.3. The spirit of the ANZACS

The so-called spirit of the ANZACS encompasses the afore-mentioned qualities the down-under soldiers were believed to have: the phrase is commonly used today by Australians and New Zealanders to remember their fallen ancestors. The first traces of the expression can be found as early as December 1915, when the New Zealand newspaper 'Auckland Star' reports on the 'spirit of the ANZAC breed' for being heroic and not reckless, as usually

¹⁷ Roberts, Mary, Tucker, p. 114.

¹⁸ Heslin, *Over there! 1915 to 1919 WWI service*, p. 16.

¹⁹ <http://www.anzacbattlefields.com/somme.htm>. Web access date: 17/06/2015.

described.²⁰ The spirit of the ANZAC has inspired ancient and recent books, articles, poems, songs: the praise of the soldiers has helped the modelling of future generations, which shall always measure themselves with their forfathers' bravery.

In addition to the previously mentioned CEW Bean, another prominent figure in the creation of the ANZAC myth was the English war correspondent Ellis Ashmead Bartlett: he remembers and underlines the comradeship of the Colonial armies. In his work "*Some of my experiences in the great war*", he describes the ANZACS as being: "*not so much an army, but as an independent community who have come together for a certain job and who have formed their own code of laws to ensure it is being carried out*".²¹ He wrote directly from the Turkish peninsula, and reviews of that time believed that in telling the story of the first landing, "*he has told it well, as it appeared from the ships and the views of higher officers*".²²

What is fundamental in considering the relevance of the soldiers in Australian and New Zealand history is that they introduced the two new-born countries in the international community. These were no longer distant Dominions home of former convicts: "*the blood of Australian soldiers had redeemed the blood of their convict relatives*".²³ The historian Manning Clark writes about ANZAC day: "*for some it symbolised the noblest aspiration of the people. For some others it was the bond of those who had been through the fiery furnace and been uplifted by it, not beyond good and evil, but beyond the mean, the petty, the trivial and the unworthy*".²⁴

However, the defining of the Australian and New Zealand culture through the war has been argued to have some drawbacks, especially by professor Stephen Garton: he believes that the "*ANZACS may have been the flower of Australian manhood, but they also posed dilemmas for Australian culture*".²⁵

²⁰ *Heroic spirit of the ANZAC breed*. In 'Auckland Star', 14th December 1915, p. 5.

²¹ Ashmead-Bartlett, *Some of my experiences in the great war*, p. 83.

²² 'West Australian', *Anzac*, p.1.

²³ West, *A brief history of Australia*, p. 108.

²⁴ Clark, *A short history of Australia*, p. 246.

²⁵ Garton, *War and masculinity in twentieth century Australia*, p. 86.

This because after Gallipoli, the ANZACS had proved their heroic virtues in a fulfilment of colonial potential, but they were now claiming rights and rewards reserved exclusively for them: they were representing a regressive masculinity. While, on the one hand, Australia and New Zealand were among the most progressive combatant countries being the only ones with universal suffrage, on the other hand the glorification of the soldiers created a sort of 'welfare apartheid' in the two countries.

Indeed, the ANZAC myth marginalised women and indigenous Australians, by attributing the birth of nation exclusively to the soldiers. ANZAC should have a wider scope: it should represent the sum of every effort in the building of Australia and New Zealand, not only on the battlefield or in the hospitals (a great deal of literature has been devoted to ANZAC nurses)²⁶, but also in the support from home.

While ANZAC day has always been celebrated as a national recurrence in both Australia and New Zealand, the perception of the commemoration has not always been the same. In fact, Geoff Webb has noted that there had been different tendencies on how to consider the celebration. During the first years of the post-war era the recurrence seemed to be reserved to the soldiers to commemorate their comrades, but the population always felt a close connection to the fighters and thus respectfully valued ANZAC day. However, during the years of the Vietnam War (in which both countries were involved), the majority of the population regarded the day 'at best irrelevant, and at worst a perpetuation of militarism'²⁷, in view of the recent tragedies of the A-bomb and of the on-going intervention in Vietnam. That which changed the Australian and New Zealand relation to the celebration was the fact that the Great War veterans were passing away and the WWII veterans were coming of age. The scholar goes even further and compares ANZAC Day to a religion: he states that the commemoration has not assumed this connotation

²⁶ For further readings: *ANZAC nurses* - by Gadd, J. In *Australian Nursing and Midwifery Journal*, 04/2015, Volume 22, Issue 9; *Commemorating the Anzac nurses* - by Ashton Kai Tiaki, C. In *Nursing New Zealand*, 04/2015, Volume 21, Issue 3; *The other Anzacs: nurses at war, 1914-1918* - by Rees, Peter, 1948.

²⁷ Webb, *The spirit of Anzac*, pp. 18-22.

exactly, as it is lacking 'a developed and consistent doctrine, regular worship and [...] a clearly defined lifestyle reflecting the demands of the deity that is worshipped'²⁸. Nevertheless, it has a great spiritual significance in the two countries, as can be noted in the many war memorials, present in almost every city.

However, a distinction should be made between the perception of the ANZAC day and myth in the two countries: as Kynan Gentry argues, New Zealand has had a "less enthusiastic embrace of the Gallipoli narrative"²⁹, the main reason being its investment in biculturalism. Indeed, the Australian myth of colonial masculinity was not present in the same way in New Zealand, as the country had started a process of integration, and the initial exclusion of the Maoris from Gallipoli made the post-war reality more complex. Additionally, in New Zealand, the Gallipoli mission was associated with sacrifice rather than heroic efforts; as the scholar reminds us, the commander Sir Ian Hamilton, in the preface of Fred Waite's *New Zealanders at Gallipoli*, reports on the casualty rate of the New Zealanders in the Dardanelles mission being of 87%: of the 8,556 soldiers, 7,447 were killed or wounded (excluding sickness)³⁰. Nevertheless, there has always been a general support for the men of the army in the two countries and their legacy has hardly ever been challenged. On the contrary, the acceptance of the war has had a different configuration. The next section is dedicated to an analysis of the historical facts between the end of July/the beginning of August 1914 and December 1915, with particular attention paid to the reactions of the public opinion and of the first-line fighters and reporters.

²⁸ Webb, *The spirit of Anzac*, pp. 18-22.

²⁹ Gentry, *New Zealand*, pp. 49-55.

³⁰ Waite, *New Zealanders at Gallipoli*, p. 7.

Chapter 2: The years of the struggle: local reactions

2.1. The outbreak of the war

While the episode that triggered the start of WWI occurred at the end of June 1914, Britain declared war on Germany (and by extent on the whole Triple Alliance) on August 4th of the same year. The July crisis that preceded the declaration of the war reached also Oceania, and the continent was in much debate on how to react. It was clear that as part of the British Empire, both Australia and New Zealand would have been involved in the war if Great Britain would participate.

However, from the end of July, just before the English declaration of war, slightly divergent opinions appeared in the New Zealand press concerning the country's position. For example, the issue of August 1st 1914 of the *Auckland Star* reports on the enthusiasm of the House of Representatives and their strong patriotism, which was manifest in a willingness to send an expeditionary force in case of war. On the contrary, the issue of the previous day of the Wellington based newspaper *Evening Post*, sends a more pacific message, informing the readers that some mobilisation action was being taken, but that this in no way '*suggests that Great Britain is likely to be involved in hostilities*'.

The Australian press of the same days appears to be a little different. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of August 1st barely mentions its country's position on the issue. While there are several articles on the British internal situation and on Canada's or New Zealand's preparations, there is just a very brief reference to 'unusual activities' of warships ordered to Sydney and a short article on the Governor Sir Galway's opinion about the situation being 'worse than they thought it would be'³¹, which was also reported on the *Advertiser* of the same day.

Nonetheless, obvious efforts were made to dispatch an army of volunteers and both countries' representatives made very clear statements about their

³¹ *Australia alert*. In 'The Sydney Morning Herald, 1st August 1914, p. 21.

lands position. The New Zealand Governor Lord Liverpool declared the country's willingness to '*make any sacrifice for the Empire*'³², and the Australian Premier Andrew Fisher famously proclaimed that the nation would support Great Britain "to the last man and the last shilling"³³. The question is if the two countries announced their support just out of colonial loyalty.

A positive answer to that question could use the fact that the impact of the war on the Dominions would not in any case concern territoriality, as a favourable argument. Indeed, on the one hand, Australia and New Zealand did not fight to get any land, and on the other hand, they would not be incorporated in a German/Austrian Empire, had the outcome of the conflict been reversed. This would then justify the reasoning that proposes that the ANZACS fought for an ideal.

However, a practical approach to the issue would suggest that the support of the two governments arose from political common sense: a defeat of Great Britain or a trade isolation from the mother country, would have meant the collapse of the Dominions, which were still very much dependent on the Empire from an economic standpoint (for instance, New Zealand's economy was entirely based on British credits). Thus, the contribution of men and resources was the result of convenience and not unconditional devotion. In explaining this position, Rolf Pfeiffer states that: '*even a less loyal Dominion, on considering its own long term interests, would not have been able to come to any other conclusion*'.³⁴

Additionally, as Germaine Greer noted in his latest research on the birth of Australia '*on the battlefield*', on the part of the soldiers, one should take the money factor into account. Indeed, the British soldiers, who also were volunteers – at least those serving in Gallipoli – fought for a shilling a day, while the Australians and New Zealanders were paid six and five shillings daily respectively. Greer thus reasons that: '*it is no easy matter to work out*

³² Pfeiffer, p. 178.

³³ Curtis, *To the last man—Australia's entry to war in 1914*, pp. 49-55.

³⁴ Pfeiffer, p. 178.

*what the rate of pay actually meant for Australian volunteers but one suspects that it was more important than any highfalutin notion of nationhood*³⁵.

Furthermore, the scholar John Moses underlines the exposure all the Dominions (with the exception of Canada) had to a naval attack. Indeed, power rivalries in a few European countries turned out to spread out across the world, and the Pacific was no exception to the process. To quote Moses: *“the Australasian Dominions were thus involved from the start, both as direct objects of predatory German naval plans in the Pacific, and as well, indirectly, confronting the possibility of the destruction of British naval power which would have allowed Germany a free hand to realise their dreams of world domination”*.³⁶

Finally, the support, which appeared to be universally shared in the Pacific Dominions, may have been an exaggeration of the press. Indeed, in 1914 a War Precaution's Act was passed in Australia, which had, among its provisions, the prevention of the *“spread of reports likely to cause disaffection or alarm”*³⁷. The scholar Kerry McCallum believed that the legislation *“established the system of press censorship for the duration of the war”*.³⁸ However, this disposition was not just vertically imposed from the government: indeed, the author goes on, *“Australian newspaper editors were enthusiastic supporters of the principles of censorship and the major newspaper groups supported the need to censor sensitive military information that might threaten the Imperial cause”*.³⁹

One journalist in particular stands out in the process of war promotion and opposition, namely Keith Murdoch. More than just a reporter, he was a semi-official war correspondent and the London manager of the United Cable service. He thus provided articles and cable services to Australian newspapers. His first writings were very much oriented in favour of the war

³⁵ Greer, *Was Australia born on the battlefield?*, pp. 64-65.

³⁶ Moses, *Gallipoli or other peoples' wars revisited* [...], p. 437.

³⁷ *War Precaution's Act*, Paragraph 2.c, , 1914.

³⁸ McCallum and Putnis, *Media management in the war*, p. 20.

³⁹ See note 36.

effort⁴⁰; however, the meeting with the already mentioned British writer Ellis Ashmead Bartlett⁴¹ in Gallipoli changed his perspective. Indeed, the English war correspondent foresaw the likelihood of a defeat in Gallipoli; with help from Murdoch, this information reached the British Cabinet and provided for the evacuation of the site⁴². The following paragraphs provide an account of the Gallipoli mission, an analysis of what happened after the battle, and the related official and unofficial opinions about the happenings, with particular reference to Murdoch's *Gallipoli letter*.

2.2 Gallipoli

Had the unfortunate circumstances that led to the tragic defeat at Gallipoli been avoided, then the attack could probably have become a 'strategic victory'⁴³ for the Allied powers, saving many lives and probably some months of conflict. The historian Philip J. Haythornthwaite even goes as far as saying that a successful Dardanelles mission would have forestalled the collapse of Imperial Russia⁴⁴ - the protection of the tsarist Empire was indeed among the main aims of the Allied mission. However, the optimism towards the battle has been challenged by deep analyses of the strategy, which in fact proved to be doomed from the beginning. The rough plan was developed by the then First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, who enthusiastically proposed his scheme when Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, accepted to give their assistance to the Russians⁴⁵. The idea was to send a fleet to the Sea of Marmara in order to reach and threaten Constantinople out of the war, using old British battleships (as they were sparing the new ones to combat the German fleet). What went wrong?

⁴⁰ Putnis, *Keith Murdoch: Wartime journalist*, pp. 61-70.

⁴¹ See 1.3. The spirit of the ANZACS, p. 12.

⁴² Knightley, *The First Casualty – From Crimea to Vietnam [...]*, pp. 100-103.

⁴³ Emden and Chambers, p 1.

⁴⁴ Haythornthwaite, *Gallipoli 1915: frontal assault on Turkey*, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Emden and Chambers, p 17.

First of all, the landing was planned for the night between the 24th and 25th April 1915 on a coast named Brighton Beach; however the ANZACS landed a mile north of the selected coastline, in a place which would henceforth be called ANZAC Cove, as already mentioned.⁴⁶ The soldiers found themselves hindered by steep cliffs, unfavourable vegetation and darkness. Indeed, Van Emden states that “*making a landing at night against an enemy whose numbers were unknown and whose defensive positions were ill-defined was an immediate and obvious hazard*”⁴⁷. This confusing situation caused that neither front (ANZACS or Turks) was sure on which side the enemy was going to attack from. The planned naval attacks proved to be unsuccessful, and the ANZAC commander Birdwood immediately wanted the troops to retreat, but Sir Ian Hamilton, commander of the expedition, refused to.

From the first landing until August 6th, the fighting was in line with the ones in the rest of Europe: no force prevailed on the other and the front was afflicted by a stalemate status quo. The only successful actions of the Allies were a few raids on the Turkish fleet in the Sea of Marmara. Hence, Hamilton planned an assault on Sulva Bay: the attack was met by minimum Turkish resistance, but the late arrival of the troops commanded by the British General Stopford cost the attack, as the Turkish reinforcement reached the rest of the army before an Allied attack could begin.

In September came the realisation that the low morale and the upcoming winter would have made it impossible to defeat the Turks. Moreover, an Anglo-French offensive had been initiated on the Western front, so no more French divisions would be deployed to Gallipoli. Thus, in October the overoptimistic Commander Hamilton was dismissed, as he would never have accepted an evacuation, and was replaced by Sir Charles Monro – “*a man who believed in the primary importance of the Western front*”⁴⁸ as Van Emden describes him. Indeed, Hamilton’s accounts, lately published in his *Gallipoli Diary*, were usually exaggerated, and consequently Monro was advised to

⁴⁶ See 1.2. ANZAC efforts in the Great War, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Emden and Chambers, p. 65.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

report the truth, 'however discomfoting'⁴⁹. Nevertheless, for the following months the troops remained in the unwelcoming Turkish peninsula, while the British Cabinet concerned itself on how to proceed. A decision to eventually evacuate the area would be taken only in December, establishing the evacuation date for the 19th for ANZAC Cove and Sulva Bay, and a few days later for the Helles stationing. In addition to the now former commander of the troops, Winston Churchill also opposed the retreat: he famously commented on the new chief Monro: "*he came, he saw, he capitulated*".⁵⁰

That which made a significant contribution to the decision to retreat was Murdoch's *Gallipoli letter*: on Ashmead Bartlett's suggestion, he managed to describe the situation thoroughly with the future consequences that would occur if the offensive continued. In a 30-page letter, which he skilfully managed to pass through the heavy scrutinised war barriers, and that he addressed to the Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, he wrote on the conditions of the troops. Below follows a passage from the letter:

*"Winter is on us, and it brings grave danger. [...] Nowhere are we protected from Turkish shell. Our holdings are so small and narrow that we cannot hide from the Turks the position of our guns, and repeatedly damage is done to them."*⁵¹

When the troops left Gallipoli, soldiers and commanders were struck by a bittersweet feeling. This perception was perfectly described by Lieutenant Charles Black (as reported in Van Emden's *Gallipoli*):

'Cape Helles had no happy memories for us; not one wanted to see the place again. But what of the men we were to leave behind us there? The good comrades, who had come so gaily with us to the wars, who had fought so gallantly by our side and who would now lie for ever among the barren rocks

⁴⁹ Putnis, pp. 61-70.

⁵⁰ Emden and Chambers, p. 301.

⁵¹ Murdoch. *Gallipoli letter*, p 9.

*where they had died... No man was sorry to leave Gallipoli; but few were really glad*⁵².

The initial enthusiasm was obviously lost along the way, but still, the ANZACS felt a connection to the Turkish peninsula that had been their home for the last months. Nevertheless, Haythornthwaite reports that all survivors were afflicted by a feeling of futility and senselessness of war: indeed, 7,300 Australians and 2,400 New Zealanders had died. This inevitable feeling was nonetheless accompanied by pride and hope of being remembered: this is how "Argent" summarises his perception in the 1916 poem *Anzac*⁵³:

'And all of our trouble wasted! All of it gone for nix! Still, we kept our end up [...]. Fifty years on in Sydney they'll talk of our first big fight, and even in little old, blind old England possibly some one might'. And indeed, a hundred years after the battle, it is still essential in the two countries' history; however only few people remember what happened afterwards.

2.3. Post-Gallipoli

As mention before, the end of the Dardanelles mission was not the last ANZAC effort in the Great War⁵⁴. Indeed, other deployments were planned for the Dominion troops; but the defeat and the retreat in Turkey meant that the ANZACS required more soldiers for reinforcement, and the governments started to push for enlisting.

On December 8th 1915, when the evacuation had finally been established, the *Evening Post* reports on the recruitment issue with two opposing views on the political front, from the Minister of Defence James Allen and from the MP of Liberal Party Wilford respectively. While the former believed that even if a great amount of men had enlisted in the army corps, this should not cause a 'relaxation of efforts', the latter enquired about the accusation towards those men who did not subscribe. Wilford thought that there needed to be more

⁵² Emden and Chambers, p. 331.

⁵³ As reported in Hogue, *Trooper Bluegum at the Dardanelles*, p. 282.

⁵⁴ See 1.2. ANZAC efforts in the Great War, p. 9.

details about the men who did not want to serve, as they may have valid reasons for not wanting to enlist and not necessarily express disregard for the country and the Empire⁵⁵. Nevertheless, the newspaper does not make any reference to 'Lord Derby's Scheme', which is mentioned in the *Auckland Star* and in the Australian press of the same day.

This was the English recruitment scheme that had been extended to all Dominions and it had provided that men could "*either enlist at once or join the Army Reserve (Section B) and be placed in a group according to his age, and according to whether he is or is not a married man*"⁵⁶. The *Auckland Star* stated that more time was needed for New Zealand to keep up with the scheme, especially to avoid conscriptions and to remain in line with the voluntary enrolment plans⁵⁷. Australia proposed a similar view: *The Sydney Morning Herald* reports the same demand for a time extension of the plan, and it describes a recruiting meeting which was publicly held. The speakers of the said gathering, referring to the scheme, said that, as it was "*nearing its end, [...] drastic measures will be taken, possibly conscription, if not compulsion in a milder form*"⁵⁸. Accordingly, the *Advertiser* briefly refers to the time issue and to the acknowledgment that no conscription was the best policy for the Empire.

In addition to the recruitment issue, the Allied governments had to face the fact that they had invested a huge amount of months, men and money on an unsuccessful battle. The end of the Gallipoli mission indeed saw the creation of a 'Dardanelles Commission' that met from late 1916 to 1917, to produce two reports on the lost fight⁵⁹. They proceeded by interrogating 168 witnesses in 89 days, in order to enquire about the inception, causes and conduct of the mission⁶⁰. The two documents produced respectively assessed

⁵⁵ *Politicians' views*. In 'Evening Post', 8th December 1915, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *Lord Derby's scheme and medical recruiting*, p. 785.

⁵⁷ *Lord Derby's Scheme*. In 'Auckland Star', 8th December 1915, p. 5.

⁵⁸ *Recruiting meeting at Hurlstone Park*. In 'The Sydney Morning Herald', 8th December 1915, p.14.

⁵⁹ Macleod, *General Sir Hamilton and the Dardanelles Commission*, p. 418.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

the inception and the execution of the campaign; nonetheless, there was a conflict concerning the publication of said papers. While the majority of government representatives wanted to keep them confidential in order not to alarm public opinion, prominent leaders such as Winston Churchill and Sir General Ian Hamilton, Commander of the British Expeditionary Force, wished to clean their reputation through the publication, showing that many unfortunate events had caused the defeat.⁶¹ Hamilton, for his part, believed that he had made no major error during the mission, so an open and exhaustive report on the facts would certainly be in his interests⁶².

Together with Churchill, they hired a barrister to present their case, and they would eventually get the reports published; moreover, the two statements of the commission were purposely vague and bland in their description of the two figures, thus circumventing any harsh judgement on their unsuccessful orders. The publication was reserved to after the end of the war in 1919, so as to withhold any judgement of political and military commanders who continued to hold posts during the wartime: indeed, avoiding discrediting the commanders was a common practice during the conflict, as they could not be seriously punished for acting in the benefit of the preservation of their front.⁶³

Finally, it is worth noting that even in the mother country, while the Commission had been set up and was discussing the failure of the Dardanelles strategy, conscription was a largely debated topic as well. British enthusiasm had been almost sufficient to recruit volunteers and the government was very reluctant to introduce compulsory service, at least during the first years of the war. In any case, in 1916 conscription was eventually introduced: it is estimated that it provided only "*little more than one third of the total recruited in war*"⁶⁴. The British volunteers were many and they were driven by many forces: devotion to the country, prospect of a

⁶¹ Macleod, p. 424.

⁶² Ibid., p. 427.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 438.

⁶⁴ Goodlad, *British Governments, War and Society, 1793-1918*, p. 13.

better social status, pressure from peers, economic security, desire to escape industrial life and protection of loved ones.

One can thus find in the introduction of compulsory service after 1916 a common denominator between the Dominions and the English policies. Surely, the immense casualties of the previous and on-going battles called for more recruits; nonetheless, the initial enthusiasm of volunteers was fading and on the suggestion of war commanders and offices, the governments needed to take further actions. The next chapter presents the main features of the Australian and New Zealand governments' approach to the war and its difficulties, followed by a brief account of the countries' public opinion on the issues.

Chapter 3: Internal impact

3.1. Australian war governments

Two were the prominent figures in Australian politics during the war years, namely the Premiers Fisher and Hughes, both of whom tried their best to confront problems of war expenditure and recruitment deficiencies. After having served in the government as treasurer, Andrew Fisher had become Prime Minister in 1907, succeeding the former Labour leader Watson. Even if defeated by Cook's liberals in 1913, he regained office at the outbreak of the war, with the famous speech in which he declared the Australian support to Great Britain⁶⁵. Given his background as a Minister for Trade, even during the War, he focused on balancing the budget deficit, by increasing the rate of land tax and imposing probates on deceased estates; indeed he "*had a deep-seated abhorrence of debt, perhaps reflecting his working class upbringing and his experience of political corruption involving borrowing in Queensland politics*"⁶⁶. As his health deteriorated, in October 1915 he resigned from the Prime Ministership to become High Commissioner in London, and was succeeded by the interventionist William Hughes: however, it is still unclear whether the reason was solely his health issues, or if he was trying to avoid a Labour-party split, or even if he was 'pushed out by Hughes'⁶⁷. Nevertheless, the latter was about to witness the rupture of the party in first person.

As explained in the previous chapter⁶⁸, the recruitment issue was on top of the agenda in the years 1915-1917, and the Prime Minister spent much of his time as a leader of government confronting the problem, which was eventually channelled into two conscription referendums. As the scholar Jack Hetzel-Bone presents, already by the end of 1915 Hughes focused his politics on the promotion of voluntary war enlistment, by publishing the 'call to arms' manifesto, in which he exaggerated the risk of Australia being invaded, trying

⁶⁵ See 2.1. The outbreak of the war, p. 15.

⁶⁶ Hawkins, *Andrew Fisher: A Reforming Treasurer*, pp. 105-114.

⁶⁷ Macleod, p. 423.

⁶⁸ See 2.3. Post-Gallipoli, p. 21.

to appeal to peoples' fears. However, this policy was not universally shared within the Labour party⁶⁹. It was after having visited the Western Front in 1916, that Hughes realised that the increase in food, weapons and especially men was necessary⁷⁰. Additionally, the push for conscription was also affected by the fact that the British government had promised Australia to be able to attend the peace conference, had it provided the number of soldiers required⁷¹.

The conscription issue also divided the religious communities of the country, with support coming from the Anglican synod and the main opposition stemming from the Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. The former declared, on the one hand, that the conflict was "*a religious war and that the voices of the allies were being used by God to vindicate the rights of the weak and to maintain the moral order of the world*"⁷²; therefore, they passed a resolution in favour of conscription. On the other hand, Mannix, which was one of the most influential figures in Australia, thought that the war was mainly about economic issues, and that the country had contributed enough⁷³.

With the promise to send reinforcements to Europe, advocated especially by the ANZAC commander General Birdwood, and after having realised that volunteers would not be sufficient anymore, Hughes decided to hold two referendums on the issue. The latter were held in October 1916 and December 1917 respectively, and they both had a negative outcome. Indeed, the former resulted in a small majority against compulsory service, and the latter had an almost absolute majority of 'no'. Anyhow, the first referendum was more decisive for the future of the Australian Labour Party (ALP). After the results, Hughes left the party and joined forces with the liberals to form a new government as Nationalist Party, which was confirmed by the elections

⁶⁹ Hetzel-Bone, *The conscription debate during World War I*, pp. 24-25.

⁷⁰ Clark, *A short history of Australia*, p. 248.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Clark, *A short history of Australia*, p. 249.

⁷³ Ibid.

of May 1917⁷⁴. Indeed, from the moment the Prime Minister proposed the referendum, he lost the support the labourers, and several ministers started to resign from the Cabinet as a sign of protest: after the results, there were only four ministers left.

Following the latest elections, the Australian War office declared that 15,000 troops were required by the end of 1917. On this aspect, Hetzel-Bone specifies that maybe voluntary enlistment would have been sufficient to cover up the quota, however, General Birdwood was boosting the numbers in order to put pressure on the government to introduce conscription; moreover, the ANZACS were losing many of their soldiers on the Western Front. Thus, the second referendum was held in December of that year⁷⁵. Unlike the previous situation, Hughes had a majority in both houses this time, and could easily have modified the Defence Act; nevertheless, given the unstable political situation, it was decided to ask the country about their position on the recruitment issue once again. For the second time, Australia voted against conscription: Hughes resigned from his position – but just for two days. Immediately afterwards, when he was asked to form a new government, he reinstated the same one he had resigned from. This ended his push for conscription.

But as regards party politics, the war had a positive impact on the economy of the country; indeed, Clark states that the war "*provided the economic setting for the development of an industry that in time would carry the industrialisation of Australia to a point where its uniqueness and its bush lore disappeared*"⁷⁶. This was because the government had created control systems for the production of wool and wheat and it had set fixed prices. As for the secondary industry, since there was a huge demand for weapons, ammunitions, boots and clothes, iron and steel work factories were opened

⁷⁴ Smith, *On the conscription trail*, p. 98.

⁷⁵ Macleod, p. 438.

⁷⁶ Clark, *A short history of Australia*, p. 247.

up in 1915. Moreover, this production was needed to replace the British products, as the motherland was no longer able to provide the same goods.⁷⁷

3.2. New Zealand political forces

As for New Zealand, the involvement in the war was seen as something inevitable by all parties in the government: the country had indeed the reputation of being “the Crown’s most loyal Dominion”⁷⁸. The scholar Gwen Parsons reports on WWI as being a ‘voluntary war’ (as opposed to the ‘compulsory’ World War II) in New Zealand, stating that “*the importance of voluntarism on the New Zealand home front became clear almost as soon as war was declared*”⁷⁹.

The Prime Minister of the time, William Ferguson Massey, even if hugely opposed to war, believed that the support to England was fundamental for the future of its country. His opinion on the conflict was that belief that it would be “the most awful calamity that could afflict the human race”⁸⁰, but he also believed in imperial duty: on 31st July 1914 his government stated what help Great Britain would get from New Zealand – namely a voluntary expeditionary force – and the whole parliament signalled its consent by singing the British anthem *God save the King*.⁸¹ On the eve of the outbreak, the Prime Minister further stated New Zealand’s support in a telegram in which he famously wrote: “*all we are and all we have are at the disposal of the Imperial Government for the purposes of carrying on the war to a successful issue*”.⁸²

The main political forces driving the country were Massey’s Reform Party and the Liberal Party; however, there was a strong the labour movement,

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Pfeiffer, p. 178.

⁷⁹ Parsons, *The New Zealand home front during World War One and World War Two*, p. 420.

⁸⁰ Wall, *William Ferguson Massey and the Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, pp. 1-2.

⁸¹ Macleod, p. 423.

⁸² See 2.3. Post-Gallipoli, p. 21.

which would eventually evolve into the Labour Party in 1916⁸³. Indeed, the war was a turning point for the labourers: the main arguments on which they appealed concerned war, conscription and management of expenditures.

Reflecting the Australian case, the New Zealand industry rapidly developed during the war, especially for British necessities: Condliffe writes in the *Economic Journal* of 1919 that “*as soon as the first uncertainty of trade was past and Britain began to recover from the initial shock of war, [...] it was very evident that the exigencies of war would ensure a strong demand for New Zealand products*”⁸⁴. As the New Zealand economy was essentially based on agriculture, the demand was highest for primary products; nevertheless, some by-products were requested and industries began to spring up (among others, the manufacturing of dried milk and the general equipment for the Expeditionary Force)⁸⁵.

On the political side, even though conflicts were not present within the government, a great deal of disagreement was evident between Wellington and London. Rolf Pfeiffer states that the British government was “*all too willing to take risks at the expense of the Dominions and to fail to engage in adequate consultations*”.⁸⁶ One occasion in which this was evident was the first ANZAC efforts in the war in Samoa⁸⁷, during which Wellington demanded escort ships that were not initially provided for by the Empire.

The Samoan issue would then come back by the end of the war, more specifically at the Versailles peace conference in 1919, when discussing the future of the former German colonies. The British Prime Minister Lloyd George had stated that there were three options for the administration of formerly German-occupied territories: internationalisation, control through the League of Nations or annexation.⁸⁸ However, the Pacific islands’ annexation by the Dominions was fervently opposed by the President of the

⁸³ Parsons, pp. 421-422.

⁸⁴ Condliffe, *New Zealand during the War*, p. 169.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Macleod, p. 423.

⁸⁷ See also 1.2. ANZAC efforts in the Great War, p. 9.

⁸⁸ Pfeiffer, p. 185.

United States, Woodrow Wilson, as he was trying to promote peace through his 14 points scheme. Indeed, Lloyd George, although he was in favour of annexation, informed the rest of the Dominion Ministers that “*he had no intention of starting a fight with the USA on account of a few islands in the Pacific*”⁸⁹. Thus, the New Zealand Prime Minister Massey, together with the Australian Hughes and the South African Botha, drew up a draft that was later incorporated in the 22nd article Covenant of the League of Nations to solve the issue. The provision states that “*there are territories, such as South-West Africa and certain of the South Pacific Islands, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilisation, or their geographical contiguity to the territory of the Mandatory, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory, subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population*”.⁹⁰ So eventually, New Zealand was given the Samoa islands unofficially, and it no longer pushed for an immediate assignment.⁹¹

Additionally, as mentioned earlier,⁹² New Zealand and the other countries of the Empire, were facing a recruitment issue, which was coming to a dead end after the first to years of the war; compulsory service was eventually introduced in the country in 1916. To maintain the engagement of an (almost) unconditional support, New Zealand never failed to meet British requests: for example, in 1918 the British infantry were reduced from 12 to 9 battalions, while the New Zealand divisions remained the same.⁹³

Though the support was widespread, some scholars believe that the New Zealand effort was unnecessary; the main promoter of this thesis is Stevan Eldred-Grigg, who has carried out an analysis based mainly on the newspaper *Truth*, and focusing his understanding of the matter largely on the socialist forces of the time (which in 1916 convened in the New Zealand

⁸⁹ Pfeiffer, p. 186.

⁹⁰ *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, Article 22.

⁹¹ Pfeiffer, p. 187.

⁹² See 2.3. Post-Gallipoli, p. 21.

⁹³ Macleod, p. 423.

Labour Party, as mentioned above). In his review of Eldred-Grigg's latest work on New Zealand's involvement⁹⁴, the scholar McGibbon reports that Eldred-Grigg condemns the government's decision to go to war in 1914 and instead suggests that the country could have remained neutral without any external implications. Indeed, he believed that New Zealand was in no danger at all from Germany and that "*the government could have told the world that it would carry on with life as it was before the war and keep the peace in its own backyard*".⁹⁵

Nevertheless, McGibbon believes this interpretation to be reductive, as there were prominent reasons, whether political or economic, to support and engage in the war, which did not make it utterly 'unnecessary'; moreover, Eldred-Grigg's analysis is too narrow, being based mainly on socialist opinions. Finally, the prevailing feeling of the time was one of acceptance and enthusiasm towards the war. Indeed, even Eldred-Grigg realises that the majority of the population believed in participation, and that no government would have remained in office had it opposed the war at the outbreak.

3.3. Public opinion

During the first days of the outbreak, the apparent New Zealand public reaction was one of enthusiasm and pride: the Auckland Star of August 6th 1914 reports on the unchallenged positive feeling towards the war in the city, where thousands of people cheerfully marched in sign of support of the government's decision⁹⁶. However, the Wellington *Evening Post* of the same day describes a contradictory situation: while reporting the same 'wave of enthusiasm' and the crowds parading in the streets of the capital, it also writes that "*there was nothing to rejoice over – the Empire was in for trouble, and behind the outward expressions of patriotism there was an evident feeling*

⁹⁴ Eldred-Grigg, Stevan. *The Great Wrong War*.

⁹⁵ McGibbon, *The Great Wrong War: New Zealand society in WWI*, p. 28.

⁹⁶ *Prevalent in Auckland*. In 'Auckland Star' 6 August 1914, p. 6.

*of anxiety*⁹⁷. The article further reported that “*the majority of them [15.000 to 20.000 people], while not making themselves heard, betrayed the keenest interest in the momentous happenings, and in discussing the pros and cons of the situation displayed the general confidence in Great Britain’s ability to hold her own [...]*”⁹⁸. Thus, one could argue that New Zealanders realised that England could probably have made it on her own, hence implying that their support was not strictly necessary; or, more simply, they wanted to believe it so to avoid the awareness of the fact that they would probably be involved, had Britain entered the war.

Being a bicultural country, when talking about New Zealand’s public opinion, it refers to both the European-descendant New Zealanders (or Pakeha) and the Maoris: indeed, during the war their views were reflecting, as the majority of the Maoris supported the war like the rest of the population. Except for those who had suffered the most from the New Zealand Land Wars, most of the Maoris were in favour of the country’s involvement, and accordingly they formed a voluntary Maori Contingent.⁹⁹ However, given the strict British racial Imperial policy, their role in the war was limited, and they acted mainly as a support contingent.¹⁰⁰

In Australia as well, the first months were marked by enthusiasm: remarkable was a liberal demonstration which took place in the Sydney Town Hall on August 8th 1914. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reports that the meeting was attended by the Mayor, the Minister of Defence, the former Premier of Victoria and thousands of people.¹⁰¹ The spirit was one of huge patriotism: songs like ‘When the Empire calls’ and the National anthem were played by the military band, “*which the audience joined with great enthusiasm*”.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ *Patriotic scenes*. In ‘Evening Post’, 6 August 1914, p. 4.

⁹⁸ *Patriotic scenes*. In ‘Evening Post’, 6 August 1914, p. 4.

⁹⁹ Parsons, p. 422.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *Liberalism*. In ‘The Sydney Morning Herald’, 19 August 1914, p. 13.

¹⁰² Wall, pp. 1-2.

However, Australia was experiencing a political crisis¹⁰³ and the country's concerns were mainly in that direction. Victoria's ex-Premier Mr Watt delivered a speech during the above-mentioned meeting concerning Australia's role in the war, in which he declared: "*our duty is to at once settle our own affairs, and not to disturb the British government in its task of looking after the interests of the Empire, and the treaty nations with whom we are engaged and at the same time to see that all parties in Australia keep together in order that Australia's aid may be swift [...] and effective in this hour of great crisis*". Nevertheless, the newspaper specified that he did not mean to minimise the awful consequences of the conflict and that it was fundamental to make sure that "Australia's part was truly played".¹⁰⁴

There were indeed conflicting interests in the Dominions. On this aspect, the scholar Grant Mansfield argues that this was a time "*when patriotism and self-interest clashed to a far greater extent than at any other time during the war*".¹⁰⁵ While one cannot deny the presence of great support at the immediate outbreak of the Great War, the scholar also enquires about the apparent 'unbounded enthusiasm', which was beginning to fade already in November 1914.¹⁰⁶ However, he explains, the public opinion of the time – and also that of future generations – has been influenced by the early reports of CEW Bean¹⁰⁷ and Ernest Scott: they recognise a general enthusiasm in terms of national willingness to participate and patriotism. These theories would be challenged only from the 1970s on, with the writings of Robson¹⁰⁸ and Gammage¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰³ See also 3.1. Australian war governments, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ Wall, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁵ Mansfield, *Unbounded enthusiasm*, p. 364.

¹⁰⁶ Condliffe, p. 169.

¹⁰⁷ See also 1.1. Who were the ANZACS?, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ L.L. Robson offers an accurate account of recruitment during the war in *The First AIF: a study of its recruitment 1914-1918*, 1970.

¹⁰⁹ For further readings, see: Bill Gammage, *The broken years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra, 1974).

Drawing on Robson's writings, Mansfield explains that in November 1914 "the military imposed the complete censorship of all recruitment figures"¹¹⁰, as the number of volunteers that were enlisting was dropping; indeed, the reporting of the number of recruits in the newspaper was resumed from January to March, as there was a burst in the enlistment.¹¹¹ The popular opinion had also been affected by the reports of the time and of the interwar period, because they only concentrated on those men who enlisted, neglecting the position of those who did not: in this way, "*social historians have painted a misleading picture so far as Australia's overall war enthusiasm is concerned*".¹¹²

Not only was enthusiasm challenged after the first months, but also the ones that still were fervent about going to war did not realise the true implications for the country. "*Australians gained nothing from the war, and they were foolish to think they might take anything of value out of it, except a sort of sad nobility*"¹¹³ – is the interpretation Mansfield gives of Robson's studies. Thus, while confirming the presence of the war fever, this is no longer perceived as being a virtue.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Mansfield, *Unbounded enthusiasm*, p. 367.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Mansfield, p. 372.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 367, based on L.L. Robson's *First AIF*.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 368.

Conclusion

When talking about World War I, one should always bear in mind that the conflict involved forces from the most remote places in the world, and, more specifically, that the efforts of the ANZACS were fundamental. Their struggles are dearly remembered by the population and still commemorated today, especially this year with the recurrence of the centenary of the landings at Gallipoli. However, as has been discussed, public opinion on the matter has been influenced by the early reports of the war, which have hardly been challenged since then, if not only recently.

Thus the presence of a major popular and political support towards the war has been proved with several evidences, but this has been enhanced and emphasised subsequently by later war descriptions. Hence, one could question whether the later support of the war was genuine or if it was a reflection of the influences of the war writings. Moreover, given their remote location and their disinterest in territorial gains, one could ask why the Australian and New Zealand governments and population were all too keen on participating in the European conflict. This paper has tried to give a comprehensive presentation and understanding of how and why the war influenced the two antipodean islands to such a great extent, and if in fact there are some underlying causes to the World War I-war fever, other than unconditional colonial support.

A plausible reason for the lack of questioning of the so-called 'unbounded enthusiasm' towards the Great War and the ANZAC myth, is the fact that the ANZACS have helped the shaping of the Australian and New Zealand cultures: there are war memorials dedicated to them in most of the cities, the day of the landings (ANZAC Day) is a national holiday for both countries, the appellatives given to the soldiers are used today to describe the two populations (e.g. *Diggers* or the widely mentioned *ANZAC*). Thus, it would be very daring to state that the population (or at least the majority of it) was against the involvement in the war in the first place.

One could, however, state that the glorification of the soldiers and of the war has not always had a positive impact on societies: racial and gender discrimination have usually derived from the unbounded support for the ANZACS in Australia and New Zealand, and for the very requests of veterans and war heroes. The ANZAC myth has overshadowed the other major historical events of the two countries, concentrating only on the positive actions of the soldiers: the very Gallipoli battle, for instance, is never considered as a failed mission, but rather as a heroic effort.

Finally, given the undeniable prevalence of the war fever, it could be stated that this was not necessarily a positive sentiment: the humanitarian disaster and the large number of casualties wrecked the population. Thus, if initial support was not present, then the two countries probably could have remained neutral without major implications. Nevertheless, as has been presented, the governments that remained in office were those of the parties that supported the war and the unconditional involvement in both countries, thus signalling the will of the population to remain involved in the conflict.

However, it would be presumptuous to argue that the afore-stated answers are the only explanations of the presented arguments, as there may be some underlying factors that have not yet been discovered or analysed yet. Indeed, further research should be oriented towards publications of the war period that might have circumvented censorship and that might have stated different tendencies from those in line with official government announcements. Moreover, as already mentioned in the presentation of the paper, a future inquiry should assess the specific political ties that the colonies had with their mother land during the war, and if perhaps the outbreak and the involvement in World War I brought Great Britain closer to or further away from the Dominions. Finally, more space should be given in literature to the deputies, which left the governing coalition in 1916 in the Australian Hughes government, as there are not many accounts concerning either their subsequent activities or their reactions at the time of the division of the party.

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Sommario

L'Australia e la Nuova Zelanda nella prima guerra mondiale: reazioni rivisitate

Sommario

Analizzando la Prima Guerra Mondiale, si tralascia spesso il considerevole intervento dei Corpi dell'esercito australiano e neozelandese (comunemente definiti con l'acronimo ANZAC – *Australian and New Zealand Army Corps*), che sono stati impiegati come parte del Corpo di spedizione britannico in numerose missioni del conflitto. Il loro maggiore impegno si è avuto nella battaglia di Gallipoli, presso lo stretto dei Dardanelli, dove per otto mesi gli Alleati hanno combattuto le armate turche. Lo sbarco nella penisola, avvenuto il 25 aprile 1915, è oggi ricordato come *ANZAC Day*, ed è stato largamente commemorato nelle isole degli antipodi, soprattutto quest'anno, in occasione della ricorrenza del centenario dell'inizio della battaglia.

I soldati, le loro storie e i loro sforzi sono rimasti come una grande eredità nella cultura australiana e neozelandese, e hanno aiutato questi paesi a raggiungere lo status di nazioni autonome, facendoli quindi uscire dalla militante posizione di ex- colonie. L'impegno nelle missioni affidategli assicurò infatti, all'Australia e alla Nuova Zelanda, un riconoscimento a livello internazionale, e anche con una buona reputazione. L'intervento dell'esercito ANZAC, estrinseco di pretese territoriali – a differenza di qualsiasi altro intervento dei partecipanti del conflitto – ha rappresentato la più grande manifestazione di lealtà coloniale, di mascolinità e di virtù disinteressata. I volontari del corpo di spedizione ANZAC, essendo di discendenza inglese, erano portati a combattere per patriottismo; ciononostante, la Grande Guerra segnerà un punto di svolta nell'auto-percezione dei due paesi: dopo essersi seduti al tavolo della conferenza di Versailles in 1919 come vincitori, si sentiranno per la prima volta potenze indipendenti.

Gli eventi e i miti legati al corpo di spedizione sono stati divulgati principalmente dai corrispondenti di guerra del tempo, tra cui spicca la figura di CEW Bean. L'autore raccolse le sue memorie e visioni personali in un libro di dodici volumi sulla storia ufficiale dell'Australia nella Prima Guerra Mondiale, e la sua autorità non è stata (quasi) mai contestata: quindi, la sua

trasmissione, indubbiamente positiva, ha influenzato l'opinione pubblica e il dibattito accademico. Infatti, sono pochi i resoconti che riesaminano il mito ANZAC o ne mettono in dubbio l'universale condivisione. Da ricordare è il libro *'What's wrong with Anzac?'* ('Cos'ha l'ANZAC che non va?') di Marilyn Lake e Henry Reynolds, in cui gli autori sostengono che la storia dei due paesi ha subito un'eccessiva militarizzazione a causa della glorificazione dei soldati.

In effetti, l'esercito Oceanico è intervenuto copiosamente nel conflitto mondiale, già dai primi anni della guerra. Dopo varie missioni navali nel Pacifico, l'ANZAC ha raggiunto l'Egitto nel 1915, e quindi ha iniziato il suo addestramento e la sua organizzazione nelle trincee. Da qui sarebbe stato poi dislocato in Turchia, per la missione che avrebbe visto il suo maggior coinvolgimento. La battaglia di Gallipoli costò la vita di milioni di soldati da entrambe le parti, ma dopo mesi di combattimenti, l'esercito alleato dovette ritirarsi di fronte all'armata turca. L'offensiva è comunque ricordata come il più grande impegno militare dell'ANZAC: il luogo dove per la prima volta sbarcarono i soldati è ricordato ancora oggi come *ANZAC Cove* ('Baia di ANZAC') e l'intervento rispecchiò la tenacità dei soldati. Dopo Gallipoli, il corpo di spedizione fu schierato sul Fronte Occidentale, dove prese parte all'offensiva della Somme nel 1916, a Pozières, e a Passchendaele in Belgio – capitolo più tragico della storia neozelandese per le gravi perdite SUBITE. Partecipò inoltre a offensive su altri fronti fino alla fine della guerra nel 1918.

Ciò che è rimasto degli sforzi dell'esercito è il cosiddetto 'Spirito degli ANZAC', cioè le virtù impersonate dai tanto esaltati soldati. L'espressione era già usata dai quotidiani dal 1915, e ancora oggi gli Australiani e i Neozelandesi si riferiscono allo spirito degli ANZAC per ricordare gli antenati deceduti. Lo spirito è stato racchiuso nei racconti e nelle lettere di guerra, che descrivono i soldati spesso indisciplinati, rispetto agli standard inglesi, ma con un forte cameratismo e una grinta distintiva. Ad ogni modo, l'eccessiva esaltazione dello spirito dei soldati, ha creato all'interno di queste società una discriminazione, sia di genere nei confronti

delle donne, sia di razza, nei confronti degli aborigeni, e infine, anche nei confronti di chi non poté partecipare al conflitto.

Tuttavia, l'apprezzamento verso i soldati e verso il loro coinvolgimento nella guerra è stato sostanzialmente universale nelle due isole, già dallo scoppio nell'agosto 1914. Dalle testate della stampa e dalle dichiarazioni degli ufficiali, era chiaro che sia l'Australia sia la Nuova Zelanda sarebbero intervenute in caso di un'entrata in guerra della Gran Bretagna, visti i grandi legami coloniali. I due paesi però annunciarono il loro supporto non solo in spirito di lealtà coloniale, ma prendendo in considerazione numerosi fattori: la dipendenza economica e l'eventuale bancarotta in caso di distacco dal Regno Unito; la possibilità di attacchi navali, viste le mire espansionistiche tedesche nel Pacifico; e per quanto riguarda le motivazioni dei singoli soldati, anche la paga elevata ha avuto la sua importanza. Inoltre, anche il supporto da parte della popolazione, che nei resoconti del tempo appare incondizionato, potrebbe essere stato un'interpretazione limitata, visto l'alto tasso di censura del tempo.

La battaglia di Gallipoli, infatti, è tuttora glorificata come una grande missione – perché questo è quanto riportano i primi resoconti: tuttavia, la strategia, che era, in effetti, carente già dal piano iniziale, è stata riveduta. L'errore nel calcolo dell'atterraggio, del terreno e della potenza dell'armata nemica costò agli alleati l'offensiva. Durante i primi mesi il conflitto era all'impasse; la situazione prese una piega positiva per l'armata turca solo con l'arrivo dell'inverno. Gli alleati, infatti, realizzarono che non sarebbero stati in grado di portare avanti l'offensiva in condizioni così avverse; tuttavia, i comandanti inglesi si rifiutarono di annunciare una ritirata. Il generale Hamilton venne dunque sostituito con il generale Monro, più favorevole a una concentrazione delle forze di spedizione sul fronte occidentale piuttosto che su quello orientale, e conseguentemente la ritirata fu stabilita per dicembre.

Il controllo delle informazioni avveniva anche direttamente sul fronte DELLA battaglia, e tutti gli elaborati dei corrispondenti di guerra erano meticolosamente analizzati. Chi riuscì ad aggirare le ispezioni fu Keith

Murdoch, che grazie alle informazioni del reporter inglese Ashmead Bartlett, inviò una lettera di 30 pagine indirizzata al primo ministro australiano sulle condizioni del fronte di Gallipoli. Il suo gesto fu decisivo nella decisione della ritirata delle armate, ormai devastate dal clima e dal nemico turco. A seguito della ritirata, le truppe dell'ANZAC furono colpite da un ovvio senso di futilità della guerra, ma allo stesso tempo rimasero legate alla penisola di Gallipoli e non percepirono la ritirata come un fallimento, bensì come uno sforzo eroico. Un'attenta analisi del fallimento della missione fu portata avanti dalla *Dardanelles Commission* ('La Commissione dei Dardanelli') un gruppo di esperti che produsse due resoconti sull'origine, le cause e su come fu portata avanti la strategia della missione, per giustificare l'immenso investimento in soldi, soldati e il tempo impiegato. I due documenti furono pubblicati alla fine della guerra nel 1919, su grande sollecitazione di Winston Churchill e del generale Hamilton, che erano stati gli ideatori della strategia. La pubblicazione dei resoconti significava, infatti, una rivalutazione degli stessi davanti all'opinione pubblica, visto che attribuiva la disfatta ad una serie di eventi avversi.

La fine della battaglia non segnò tuttavia la fine del coinvolgimento dell'ANZAC nel conflitto mondiale; Pertanto le divisioni avevano bisogno di ulteriori rinforzi per attenersi al cosiddetto *Lord Derby's Scheme* ('Il piano di Lord Derby', dal nome del suo ideatore), lo schema inglese che prevedeva le modalità per il reclutamento. La stampa del tempo sia australiana che neozelandese, asseriva il bisogno di avere più tempo a disposizione per attenersi allo schema, poiché i governi di entrambe le nazioni volevano continuare la politica di arruolamento volontario piuttosto che introdurre il servizio obbligatorio. Tuttavia, quest'approccio, che non solo divise le forze politiche dei due paesi, si rivelò alla fine fallimentare, e sia l'Australia sia la Nuova Zelanda, sulla scia del Regno Unito, furono costrette a introdurre il servizio obbligatorio. Il calo dell'arruolamento volontario era indice non solo delle gravi perdite avvenute sul fronte occidentale e orientale, ma rappresentò anche la diversa percezione della guerra da parte dell'opinione pubblica dopo la sconfitta di Gallipoli. La questione del reclutamento è

dunque considerata come un comune denominatore tra le politiche del Regno Unito e quelle delle ex colonie; tuttavia, questa ebbe un impatto molto più decisivo nei governi dell'Australia e della Nuova Zelanda.

Infatti, il reclutamento fu la causa della rottura del partito laburista australiano che dal 1913 era rimasto al governo fino al 1916, prima con Fisher e poi con Hughes. Mentre il primo aveva incentrato la sua politica sul bilanciamento del deficit del budget, il premier Hughes focalizzò la sua attenzione sul reclutamento di nuove truppe. Dopo aver visitato il fronte occidentale nel 1916, il primo ministro realizzò che un aumento di soldati e munizioni era necessario; il suo interventismo da questo punto di vista fu canalizzato in due referendum tenutisi uno nell'Ottobre 1916 e l'altro nel Dicembre 1917, che chiedevano alla popolazione australiana di esprimere un'opinione riguardo al servizio obbligatorio. Entrambi i referendum ebbero un risultato negativo, e già dopo il primo il partito laburista si era spaccato. La maggior parte dei ministri aveva, infatti, lasciato il governo in segno di protesta, e conseguentemente Hughes aveva unito le forze con i nazionalisti per formare un nuovo governo che fu approvato alle successive elezioni.

In Nuova Zelanda invece non furono presenti scontri parlamentari, anche se la guerra segnò un punto di svolta per i laburisti che si organizzarono in un partito nel 1916, appellandosi soprattutto a temi anti-guerra. Il Premier Massey, che fu capo del governo dal 1912 al 1925, sebbene sostanzialmente contrario alla guerra, riteneva il supporto alla Corona inglese di fondamentale importanza per il suo paese; la Nuova Zelanda aveva infatti la reputazione di essere il Dominio più leale dell'Impero. Ciononostante, ci furono delle discordanze tra Massey e il Premier inglese Lloyd George, soprattutto alla fine del conflitto, in relazione alle isole Samoa nel Pacifico. La Nuova Zelanda spingeva infatti per un'annessione di quest'ultime, ma ciò si scontrava con i 14 punti di pace del presidente americano Woodrow Wilson. La questione fu infine risolta con una clausola nel Patto della Società delle Nazioni che informalmente accordava alla Nuova Zelanda un controllo sulle isole.

La guerra ebbe tuttavia un impatto positivo sull'economia di entrambi i paesi, poiché creò le condizioni necessarie allo sviluppo dell'industrializzazione. In Australia, il governo attuò un sistema di controllo della produzione di lana e grano e impose dei prezzi fissi. Inoltre, data la grande domanda di armi, munizioni ed equipaggiamenti, nel 1915 furono aperte numerose industrie di ferro e acciaio. In Nuova Zelanda invece le esportazioni principali erano soprattutto costituite dai prodotti primari, poiché l'economia neozelandese era basata principalmente sull'agricoltura; tuttavia, alcuni prodotti industriali fecero la loro prima apparizione sul mercato neozelandese, come il latte in polvere e la produzione di attrezzature per le truppe. Il motivo principale dello sviluppo fu l'aiuto che le ex-colonie offrivano alla Gran Bretagna, data la sua impossibilità a mantenere un tasso elevato di produzione, soprattutto per quanto riguardava l'industria agricola.

Le reazioni della popolazione dell'Oceania sono solitamente descritte come entusiastiche e favorevoli alla guerra, e le parate e i raduni riportati dalla stampa del tempo confermano questa teoria. Tuttavia, alcune testate giornalistiche descrivono anche un sentimento di angoscia durante i primi giorni dello scoppio e una convinzione che il Regno Unito avrebbe potuto cavarsela da solo, come a denotare una paura di un coinvolgimento nel conflitto, soprattutto in Nuova Zelanda. In Australia invece, sebbene la maggior parte della gente reagì positivamente alla guerra e si dedicò a grandi manifestazioni di supporto, l'attenzione era principalmente incentrata sulla crisi politica che affliggeva il paese.

Ciononostante, il parere favorevole per la guerra è stato probabilmente influenzato dai primi resoconti dei giornalisti del tempo, tra cui i maggiori sono quelli del già nominato CEW Bean ed Ernest Scott. I loro scritti esaltano i soldati e la guerra, e l'opinione pubblica del tempo e quella futura sono state largamente suggestionate da questi racconti. La teoria dell'entusiasmo smisurato dell'Australia e della Nuova Zelanda sarà contestata solo dal 1970 in poi, dagli autori Robson e Gammage. Questi ultimi riportano, ad esempio, che c'è stata una sorta di censura per quanto riguardava i numeri

dell'arruolamento volontario: i dati apparivano e sparivano dalla stampa secondo la quantità delle iscrizioni, suggerendo quindi un supporto maggiore a quello reale. Gli autori riconoscono comunque la presenza di un supporto consistente nei confronti della guerra, che però non assume più connotati positivi: le due nazioni avrebbero potuto mantenere una posizione neutrale senza mettere troppo a rischio la loro autonomia.

Per concludere, si può affermare che l'entusiasmo e il supporto nei confronti della guerra era indubbiamente presente in Australia e in Nuova Zelanda, sia dalla parte del governo, sia dalla parte della popolazione. Quest'apprezzamento, esagerato e tramandato grazie ai corrispondenti di guerra, ha influenzato notevolmente la percezione del conflitto delle generazioni future. Inoltre, è stato notato come la guerra mondiale abbia enormemente influito sulla storia e sulla cultura delle due isole, vista la grande eredità di monumenti, giorni e appellativi commemorativi che il conflitto ha lasciato. Una delle possibili spiegazioni per il supporto smisurato e per il grande rispetto che hanno le due popolazioni nei confronti della guerra è che la guerra ha giocato un ruolo fondamentale nell'affermazione delle due nazioni sul piano internazionale, ha dato forma alle loro culture e gli ha conferito una reputazione positiva per il loro impegno disinteressato.