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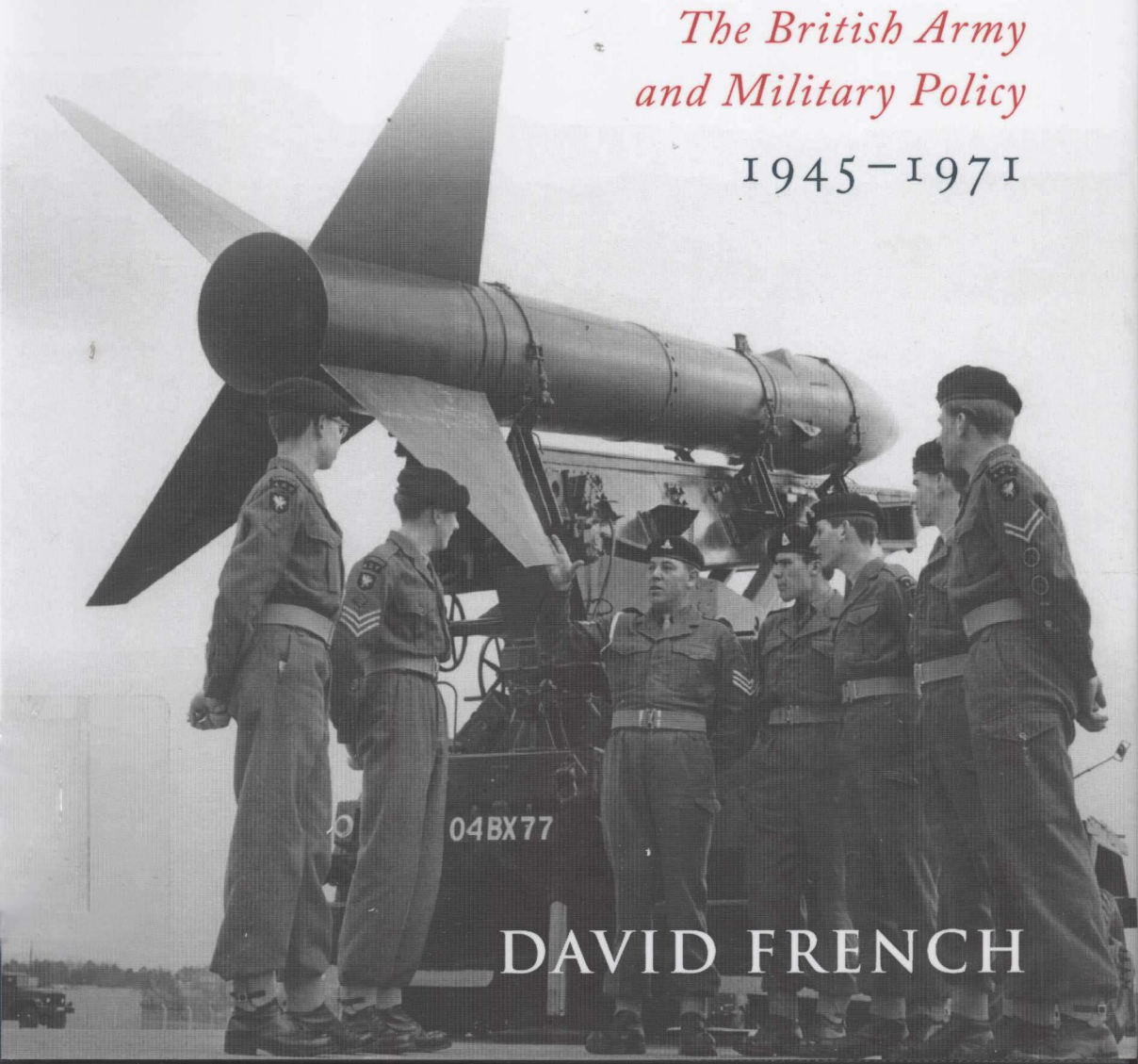
# ARMY & EMPIRE & COLD WAR

## *The British Army and Military Policy*

## 1945–1971

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# *Abbreviations*

| | |
|---|---|
| AA | Anti-Aircraft |
| AAC | Army Air Corps |
| AAG | Assistant Adjutant-General |
| ABS | Army Board Secretariat |
| ABTU | Army Basic Training Unit |
| AC | Army Council |
| ADGB | Air Defence of Great Britain |
| ADM | Atomic Demolition Mine |
| AER | Army Emergency Reserve |
| AORE | Army Operational Research Establishment |
| AORG | Army Operational Research Group |
| APC | Armoured Personnel Carrier |
| APWPC | Army Post-war Problems Committee |
| ASC | Army Strategic Command |
| BAOR | British Army of the Rhine |
| BDCC | British Defence Co-ordinating Committee |
| BTA | British Troops Austria |
| BTE | British Troops Egypt |
| CAB | Cabinet |
| CAS | Chief of Air Staff |
| *CBH* | *Contemporary British History* |
| CCC | Churchill College Cambridge |
| CDC | Cabinet Defence Committee |
| CDS | Chief of the Defence Staff |
| CGS | Chief of the General Staff |
| CIGS | Chief of the Imperial General Staff |
| C-in-C | Commander-in-Chief |
| CO | Colonial Office |
| Col. | Colonel |
| COS | Chiefs of Staff |
| CRO | Commonwealth Relations Office |
| *CTBNW* | *The Corps Tactical Battle in Nuclear War* |
| DAEP | Director of Army Equipment Policy |
| DAT | Director of Army Training |
| DCAS | Deputy Chief of Air Staff |
| DCD | Director of Combat Development |
| DCGS | Deputy Chief of the General Staff |
| DCIGS | Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff |
| DGMT | Director General of Military Training |
| DJAG | Deputy Judge Advocate General |
| DL/AW | Director Land/Air Warfare |
| DMI | Director of Military Intelligence |
| DMO | Director of Military Operations |

| | |
|---|---|
| DMT | Director of Military Training |
| DOAE | Defence Operational Analysis Establishment |
| DOPC | Defence and Overseas Policy Committee |
| DPA | Director of Personnel Administration |
| DPR | Director of Public Relations |
| DPS | Director of Personal Services |
| DRA | Director Royal Artillery |
| DRAC | Director Royal Armoured Corps |
| DSD | Director of Staff Duties |
| DSO | Distinguished Service Order |
| DTA&C | Director Territorial Army & Cadets |
| DTI | Director of Tactical Investigation |
| DWD | Director Weapons Development |
| ECAC | Executive Committee of the Army Council |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |
| *EHR* | *English Historical Review* |
| FARELF | Far Eastern Land Forces |
| FFC | Field Force Conspectus |
| FO | Foreign Office |
| Gen. | General |
| GOC | General Officer Commanding |
| GOC-in-C | General Officer Commanding-in-Chief |
| GSO | General Staff Officer |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| *INS* | *Intelligence and National Security* |
| ITC | Infantry Training Centre |
| IWMDOD | Imperial War Museum Department of Documents |
| IWMSA | Imperial War Museum Sound Archive |
| *JCH* | *Journal of Contemporary History* |
| JIC | Joint Intelligence Committee |
| *JICH* | *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* |
| *JMH* | *Journal of Military History* |
| JPS | Joint Planning Staff |
| *JRUSI* | *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* |
| *JSS* | *Journal of Strategic Studies* |
| KAR | King's African Rifles |
| *KR* | *King's Regulations* |
| KSLI | King's Shropshire Light Infantry |
| LHCMA | Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London |
| LST | Landing Ship, Tank |
| Lt.-Gen. | Lieutenant-General |
| Maj. | Major |
| Maj.-Gen. | Major-General |
| MC | Military Cross |
| MELF | Middle East Land Forces |
| *MES* | *Middle Eastern Studies* |
| MGO | Master-General of the Ordnance |
| MI5 | The Security Service |
| *MML* | *Manual of Military Law* |

| | |
|---|---|
| MOD | Ministry of Defence |
| MOS | Ministry of Supply |
| NAM | National Army Museum |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NCO | Non-commissioned officer |
| NKA | North Korean Army |
| NORTHAG | Northern Army Group |
| OC | Officer Commanding |
| *ODNB* | *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* |
| OPD | Overseas Policy and Defence Committee |
| Orbat | Order of battle |
| OTC | Officers Training Corps |
| PEG | Programme Evaluation Group |
| PLA | People's Liberation Army |
| PREM | Prime Minister's Office |
| psc | Passed Staff College |
| PUS | Permanent Under Secretary |
| QARANC | Queen Alexander's Royal Army Nursing Corps |
| QMG | Quarter-Master General |
| RA | Royal Artillery |
| RAC | Royal Armoured Corps |
| RAF | Royal Air Force |
| RCB | Regular Commission Board |
| RAMC | Royal Army Medical Corps |
| RAOC | Royal Army Ordnance Corps |
| RASC | Royal Army Service Corps |
| RCS | Royal Corps of Signals |
| RE | Royal Engineers |
| REME | Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers |
| RG | General Register Office |
| RTR | Royal Tank Regiment |
| SACEUR | Supreme Allied Commander Europe |
| SAGW | Surface-to-Air Guided Weapon |
| SAS | Special Air Service |
| SHAPE | Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe |
| SSG | Summed Selection Groups |
| SSGW | Surface-to-Surface Guided Weapon |
| *SW&I* | *Small Wars and Insurgencies* |
| T&AFA | Territorial and Auxiliary Forces Association |
| TA | Territorial Army |
| TAF | Tactical Air Force |
| TAVR | Territorial Army and Volunteer Reserve |
| *TCBH* | *Twentieth Century British History* |
| TDC | Tactical Doctrine Committee |
| TNA | The National Archives |
| UN | United Nations |
| VAG | Vice Adjutant-General |
| VCDS | Vice Chief of the Defence Staff |
| VCGS | Vice Chief of the General Staff |

| | |
|---|---|
| VCIGS | Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff |
| WO | War Office |
| WOSB | War Office Selection Board |
| WRAC | Women's Royal Army Corps |

# *Contents*

# Introduction

The veterans of the Fourteenth Army who fought in Burma between 1942 and 1945 called themselves 'the forgotten army'. But that appellation could just as well be applied to the whole of the British army after 1945. With the exception of a few brief mentions of the introduction and end of National Service, the post-war army has been ignored in general histories of post-war Britain.[1] Even general histories of the army itself have treated the post-war period as little more than a coda to the two world wars.[2] Anyone looking along the shelves of British bookshops for works on the army since 1945 is likely to come away with the impression that it consisted of little else besides the SAS.[3] The reality was that the SAS never consisted of more than a single regular and two Territorial Army regiments, whereas by 1965 the regular army alone could muster 140 teeth arm units. But in publishing terms they are invisible. Such scholarly studies of the post-war army as there are have focused on the exotica of the Gurkhas, and, predictably, the SAS.[4] The main function of this book is to fill this gap.

It is easy to understand the reasons for this historical amnesia. The army has been written out of post-war British history because to admit that it took part in active operations in the empire after 1945 is to admit the hollowness of British claims that their imperial mission was the beneficent one of bringing peace, democracy, and

[1] P. Hennessy, *Never Again. Britain 1945–51* (London: Penguin 2006), 91, contains a single reference to the army. K. Morgan, *The People's Peace. British History 1945–1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), P. Hennessy, *Having it so Good. Britain in the Fifties* (London: Penguin, 2007), D. Sandbrook, *Had it so Good. A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Little Brown, 2005), D. Knyston, *Austerity Britain 1945–51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), idem, *Family Britain 1951–1957* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), A. Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2007), contain brief references to National Service, and Knyston (2007), and Morgan briefly discuss the Army Bureau of Current Affairs in the context of the 1945 general election. But readers will look in vain in the index of any of these books for a mention of the army. One exception to this litany of neglect is B. Harrison, *Seeking a Role. The United Kingdom 1951–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[2] See e.g. M. Carver, *Britain's Army in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1998). Two exceptions to this generalization are G. Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart. A History of the British Army 1945–1970* (London: Willim Kimber, 1971), and C. McInnes, *Hot War Cold War. The British Army's Way in Warfare 1945–95* (London: Brassey's 1996), but neither of them were able to consult the extensive range of archival material which form the foundation of this study.

[3] A survey of Amazon.com on 4 April 2011 discovered no fewer than 33 books about the SAS in print and on sale.

[4] R. Gregorian, *The British Army, the Gurkhas and Cold War Strategy in the Far East, 1947–1954* (London: Macmillan, 2002); T. Jones, *Postwar Counterinsurgency and the SAS 1945–1952. A Special Type of Warfare* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); idem, *SAS. The First Secret Wars. The Unknown Years of Combat and Counter-insurgency* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).

independence to colonial peoples. Most academic historians of the end of formal empire have long abandoned such notions, although it is still possible to find occasional assertions that 'as would happen so often in the period, the British lacked the stomach for repression'.[5] That was a claim that would have come as a surprise to the insurgents who fought against British rule in Palestine, the Suez Canal Zone, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, and South Arabia. In fact, between 1945 and 1968, the British not only deployed their military forces overseas more frequently than either the USA or the USSR, but they also mounted about three dozen overseas military operations, fought in more than twenty countries, and in nearly every major region of the world.[6] These operations came at a considerable human cost. Between 1945 and 1960 the army suffered about 11,000 fatal casualties.[7] But there are at least studies of some of these individual operations. That is more than can be said for the army's largest and most powerful field force, BAOR, which has yet to attract its historian.[8] Why it has not done so is the product of two factors. Archival evidence of its activities is surprisingly scanty, little having reached the National Archives for the period after 1949.[9] Furthermore, as it never actually embarked upon the war for which it prepared, historians have nothing dramatic to describe and analyse.

The book opens with the end of the Second World War, and closes with the final withdrawal of British forces from east of Suez, an event that marked the end of Britain as a major imperial power. This is consonant with the dominant narrative of twentieth-century British history, which seeks to explain the apparent decline of British power. In 1900 Britain was the world's most powerful imperial state. By the 1970s it was merely a middle-ranking power situated off the north-west coast of continental Europe, with a handful of residual colonial commitments scattered across the globe. Much of the published literature on the British army in the twentieth century sits comfortably within this narrative. At its best, the army has been portrayed as an institution that struggled manfully with the world around it, but was constantly denied the resources that it needed to meet the challenges that the world presented to it.[10] At its worst, it was a military dinosaur, unable either to comprehend or come to terms with the changing environment.[11] Confusion about its evolution abounds. In his monumental biography of Field Marshal Montgomery, Nigel Hamilton has painted a roseate view of the army that his protagonist created. Montgomery's aim, Hamilton claims, was

[5] N. Fergusson, *Empire. How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2004), 329.

[6] J. van Wingen and H. K. Tillema, 'British military intervention after World War Two: militance in a second-rank power', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 17 (1980), 291–303.

[7] R. Broad, *Conscription and Society in Britain 1939–1964. The Militarization of a Generation* (London: Routledge, 2006), 203–4.

[8] A military history of the Cold War written after its conclusion devoted less than two pages to BAOR. D. Miller, *The Cold War. A Military History* (London: Pimlico, 2001), 234–45.

[9] A discussion with the Army Historical Branch in 2008 could not shed any light on the whereabouts of BAOR's records for the period since 1950.

[10] M. Carver, *Tightrope Walking. British Defence Policy since 1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1992).

[11] C. Barnett, *Britain and Her Army, 1509–1970* (London: Penguin, 1970).

> to restore to a post-war British army the professionalism of Marlborough and Wellington—an army that could be sent overseas and confront any enemy, anywhere; a new 'Model Army' on the lines of Cromwell: efficient, compact, well generalled, with dedicated professional officers and men. However dismally Monty might fail as CIGS, this vision of Britain's post-war Army, despite the problems of running down an empire and safeguarding the security of Europe, would gradually be achieved; and while British industry and commerce often failed to meet the challenges of the post-war world in competitiveness, marketing and productivity, Monty's 'Model Army' would in time emerge the most successful and professional army of any major liberal power.[12]

These claims are misleading. The 'New Model Army' was never intended to 'be sent overseas and confront any enemy, anywhere'. It was designed to help to deter, and if deterrence failed, to fight the Soviet army in the Middle East and Europe. It was meant to be 'efficient', for what use was an army that was inefficient? But it was meant to be large, not compact, and although it was to contain professional officers and men, the bulk of its manpower when it was mobilized would be provided by short-service conscripts and recalled National Servicemen. Far from trying to create a 'professional army', Montgomery wanted to create a nation in arms. Finally, this summary ignores the fact that almost as soon as Montgomery left the War Office his successor, Sir William Slim, was compelled by the force of circumstances created by the Cold War to unpick much of his creation.

Historians have at least reached a consensus about the army's war fighting doctrine for conventional operations. They have claimed that it suffered from intellectual sclerosis, and that its ideas remained mired in the final years of the Second World War.[13] Some analysts have suggested that they were not jolted out of this complacency until the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons in the later 1950s, while others have insisted that little changed until the reforms introduced by Sir Nigel Bagnall in the 1980s.[14] But, by contrast, the army has been given high marks for the way in which it evolved doctrines and practices to conduct counter-insurgency operations. Indeed it is this aspect of the army's experiences that have attracted the most attention from historians. The dominant historiography has propagated the notion that the British army developed a successful model for counter-insurgency operations that other armies would have done well to follow. It was a model that was based upon adherence to the rule of law, and avoidance of the pitfalls of employing massive fire-power. Instead it opted for a doctrine of minimum force and intelligence-led operations. Soldiers worked in close co-operation with the police

[12] N. Hamilton, *Monty. Vol. 3. The Field Marshal 1944–1976* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 622.

[13] A. Mallinson, *The Making of the British Army* (London: Bantam Press, 2009), 384, 407; Gen. Sir H. Beach, 'British forces in Germany, 1945–85', in M. Edmonds (ed.), *The Defence Equation* (London: Brassey's, 1986), 157–74; P. Cornish, *British Military Planning for the Defence of Germany, 1945–50* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Barnet, *Britain and her Army*, 490; Blaxland, *The Regiments Depart*, 341.

[14] S. Lee, 'Deterrence and the defence of Central Europe: the British role from the early 1980s to the end of the Gulf War' (Ph.D., University of London, 1994); A. Gwynne Jones, 'Training and doctrine in the British Army since 1945', in M. Howard (ed.), *The Theory and Practice of War. Essays Presented to Captain B. H. Liddell Hart on his Seventieth Birthday* (London: Cassell, 1965), 311–17; J. Kizley, 'The British army and approaches to warfare since 1945', in B. Holden Reid (ed.), *Military Power. Land Warfare in Theory and Practice* (London: Cass, 1997), 183–7.

and civil administration, and were constantly analysing their experiences so they could learn lessons and improve their performances.[15] But why the same army should show flexibility and imagination in confronting one set of challenges, and inflexibility and a lack of imagination in confronting a second set, has remained unexplored and unexplained.

Other aspects of the post-war army's experiences have received equally little attention. There are a plenitude of books on the Suez crisis, and studies of several other expeditionary operations.[16] But there has been no attempt to understand how well or how badly the army was configured to project power overseas.[17] Studies of the army's personnel policies have focused on the experiences of National Servicemen, and have stopped when the last National Serviceman left the army. They have overlooked the significance of the fact that, even during National Service, the army contained large numbers of professional regular soldiers, and they have said little about how the institution of National Service affected the army's ability to prepare for war, or to fight when it was required to do so.[18]

There is, therefore, a need for a new narrative of the history of the army in the two and a half decades after the Second World War, one that will bridge these gaps and knit together this fragmented historiography. This book will try to produce it by placing

[15] T. R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–60* (London: Macmillan, 1990); idem, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era* (London: Macmillan, 1995); M. Dewar, *Brush Fire Wars. Minor Campaigns of the British Army since 1945* (London: Robert Hale, 1984); J. N. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife. Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Gen. Sir William Jackson, *Withdrawal From Empire. A Military View* (London: Batsford: 1986). This almost triumphalist literature drew much of its inspiration from Sir Robert Thompson's classic study of the British campaign in Malaya and the US campaign in South Vietnam, *Defeating Communist Insurgency. The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (St Petersburg, Fla.: Hailer Publishing, 2005. Orig. pub. 1966).

[16] N. de Lee, '"More like Korea than Suez": British and American intervention in the Levant in 1958', *SWC&I*, vol. 8 (1997), 1–24; R. Ovendale, 'Great Britain and the Anglo-American invasion of Jordan and Lebanon in 1958', *International History Review*, vol. 16 (1994), 284–303; L. Tal, 'Britain and the Jordan crisis of 1958', *MES*, vol. 31(1995), 39–57; M. Snell-Mendoza, 'In defence of oil: Britain's response to the Iraqi threat to Kuwait, 1961', *CBH*, vol. 10 (1996), 39–62; M. Joyce, *Kuwait 1945–1996. An Anglo-American Perspective* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); N. J. Ashton, 'Britain and the Kuwaiti crisis, 1961', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 9 (1998), 163–81; idem, 'A microcosm of decline: British loss of nerve and military intervention in Jordan and Kuwait, 1958 and 1961', *Historical Journal*, vol. 40 (1997), 1069–83; R. Coggins, 'Wilson and Rhodesia: UDI and British Policy Towards Africa', *CBH*, vol. 20 (2006), 363–81; P. Murphy, '"An intricate and distasteful subject": British Planning for the use of force Against the European Settlers of Central Africa, 1952–65', *EHR*, vol. 121 (2006), 746–77; C. Watts, 'Killing kith and kin: the viability of British military intervention in Rhodesia, 1964–5', *TCBH*, vol. 16 (2005), 382–415.

[17] This contrasts with the case of the navy, for which see I. Speller, 'A splutter of musketry? The British military response to the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute, 1951', *CBH*, vol. 17 (2003), 39–66; idem, *The Role of Amphibious Warfare in British Defence Policy, 1945–56* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 46–115; idem, 'Amphibious operations, 1945 to 1998', in R. Harding (ed.), *The Royal Navy, 1930–2000* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 213–33; idem, 'The seaborne/airborne concept: littoral manoeuvre in the 1960s?', *JSS*, vol. 29 (2006), 53–82; idem, 'Corbett, Liddell Hart and the "British Way in Warfare" in the 1960s', *Defence Studies*, vol. 8 (2008), 227–39; idem, 'Inter-service rivalry: British defence policy, 1956–1968', downloaded 25 August 2010 at http://www.rusi.org/go.php?structureID=commentary&ref=C4C6D2A628B79D

[18] T. Royle, *The Best Years of their Lives. The National Service Experience 1945–63* (London: Michael Jospeh, 1986); T. Hickman, *The Call-Up. A History of National Service* (London: Headline, 2004); Broad, *Conscription and Society*.

the history of the post-war army within the wider context of British strategic culture, by focusing on its ability to achieve the tasks that it was set by successive governments, and by analysing its capacity to generate fighting power.[19] This latter concept requires some explanation. Fighting power was the product of the interaction of three elements. It had a conceptual component that rested upon the army's doctrine and that determined how the army was to be organized and to go about its business of fighting. It had a moral component which was concerned with motivating soldiers to fight. They had to believe in the causes for which they were being asked to fight, they had to be sustained by the feeling that they were part of a team that shared common goals, and they had to be led by men who could persuade them to take risks and assume responsibility on the battlefield. Their efforts also had to be managed by senior officers who knew how to make the best use of the resources they had to hand. Finally, fighting power had a physical component. The army had to have enough men who were properly trained to do the jobs they were asked to do, it had to have enough equipment of the right quality, and it had to be able to sustain formations in the field for long enough to get the job done.

All three aspects of the army's fighting power were constrained by a wider strategic culture that had a long historical pedigree. Since the eighteenth century Britain had been unable to feed itself. Its economic survival and political stability had depended on the success of its trading companies, finance houses, and industrial enterprises. Its political leaders had developed a liberal political culture, which made it impossible for them to give absolute priority to defence over all other goals. But geographically Britain was a small island off the north-west coat of Europe. Much as it might have wished to focus its energies on trade, industry, and exploiting the economic assets of its burgeoning empire, and to spend the bulk of its defence budget on the navy which directly protected all three of them, it was too close to Europe to be able to ignore shifts in the continental balance of power. Governments, therefore, had to spend some money on the army, much as they might have resented it. Consciously or unconsciously most of the politicians and civil servants amongst British policy-makers, although not all service officers, were disciples of the eighteenth-century economist Adam Smith. Smith had drawn a distinction between productive labour, which added to the nation's wealth, and unproductive labour, epitomized by bloated naval and military establishments, which he thought did not.[20] Time and again British policy-makers echoed Smith's sentiments that spending on defence was at best a necessary evil. Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary between 1905 and 1916, once remarked 'I call expenditure on armaments unproductive because it brings in no direct return. I do not say that it is unnecessary. It is, of course, a form of insurance.'[21] Harold Macmillan, Prime

[19] What follows is derived from Joint Doctrine's Concepts Centre, *British Defence Doctrine 0-01 (JWP 0-01)* (London: MOD, second edition, 2001), chapter 4, *passim*.

[20] A. Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 330, 342, 344–5, vol. 2, p. 689.

[21] TNA FO 800/109. Sir E. Grey to Sir B. Mallet [n.d.].

Minister from 1957 to 1963, was to justify reducing defence spending by claiming that Britain 'cannot afford to carry too many insurance policies'.[22]

The perennial problem that confronted policy-makers was to determine how much insurance they needed. The notion that resources devoted to defence were wasteful and ought to be minimized, combined with the fact that Britain had only a small population, encouraged defence planners to make use of a combination of force-multipliers to compensate for their own geographical and demographic shortcomings. They tried to appease those potential enemies who were willing to be appeased, and to deter those who were not. Both strategies were likely to be cheaper in human and economic terms than actually fighting wars. In peacetime they shunned entangling continental alliances, but in wartime they were quick to pursue burden-sharing arrangements to ensure that others did as much as possible of the heavy lifting of continental land fighting. Outside Europe they utilized colonial military manpower whenever possible. Everywhere they tried to use the latest military technologies to give the fighting services a competitive edge.[23] Asking the electorate to pay more for defence was always a policy of last resort.

These were the broad cultural and political constraints that configured the shape of the British army for most of the period after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The regular army was composed of long-service professionals. It was usually small compared to the forces maintained by the continental great powers. When the latter adopted universal conscription in the late nineteenth century, the British did not follow their lead. The main task of the regular army was to garrison the empire, to assist in maintaining internal security in the colonies, and to fight small wars on the frontiers of the empire. These were tasks for which conscripts, who might only serve for a couple of years before being released back into civilian society, would have been of little use. For much of this period Britain could afford to avoid conscription because of its island geography. Home defence was the job of the Royal Navy, supported by the small number of men willing to enlist as volunteers for part-time service in the Volunteers and the Territorial Army. Most British men were never called upon to don uniform to serve their country. It was only during the two world wars, at times of real national crisis, that the British created mass armies, sent them to the Continent, and employed conscription. They did so because their allies, in the face of their own mounting casualty bills, were no longer prepared to allow the British to conserve their own human resources, and fight to the last Frenchman, Russian or American. Burden-sharing was an essential element in British strategic policy in both world wars. But, as the British discovered, it came at a price, and that price was that their allies had to perceive that there was a rough equality of sacrifice between them.

At the end of the First World War, British military policy reverted to the norm, a small regular army garrisoning the empire, a not very efficient Territorial Army

[22] A. Horne, *Macmillan. Volume 2. 1957–1986* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 47.

[23] D. French, *The British Way in Warfare, 1688–2000* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1990); idem, 'Have the options really changed? British defence policy in the twentieth century', *JSS*, vol. 15 (1992), 50–72.

waiting to support it, and a population willing to cheer its soldiers from a distance, but rarely willing to serve in person. But, they could not do the same after the Second World War. By 1948 the world was rapidly becoming polarized into Western and Eastern camps, and descending into the Cold War. A degree of military readiness that would have been unthinkable in the past now seemed essential. What gives the history of the British army in the quarter of a century after 1945 its special coherence is that it broke away from those historical norms in three significant respects. In 1948 peacetime conscription was introduced for the first time in Britain. It was deemed essential because the army had to be sure that it would be able to mobilize large numbers of trained soldiers immediately on the outbreak of the next major war. This meant that the regular army would not only have to garrison Britain's overseas possessions, but it would also have to become the principal resource for training a mass of short-service conscripts, who, after their service with the colours, would be required to perform a period of compulsory part-time service in the Territorial Army. This amalgam of the regular and Territorial Army was Montgomery's 'New Model Army'. But very quickly, as the Cold War deepened, some of the conscripts found themselves committed to active operations in obscure parts of the world whose names they barely knew. The second major departure from past practices came in April 1949 when, as a founder member of NATO, Britain entered into an entangling peacetime alliance. Finally, as one of the architects of the Paris Agreement of October 1954, it accepted an indefinite military commitment on the Continent.

Each of these departures from historic norms came at a price. The perennial economic problems that beset Britain's post-war economy meant that the old questions—how much military insurance was enough, and how much could Britain afford—returned. By the middle of the 1950s Conservative ministers were becoming convinced that Britain had to pay less. From the second half of the 1950s there was a hesitant shift back towards aspects of the old model. Conscription was abandoned in favour of a smaller, all-regular army of professionals. The Territorials reverted to being a small all-volunteer force. Lack of manpower was compensated for by the introduction of new high-technology weapons. Britain not only acquired, courtesy of the USA, a strategic nuclear deterrent, but in the 1960s the army was given a new generation of conventional weapons and, again courtesy of the USA, its own tactical nuclear weapons.

However, some things did not return to what they had been before 1939. By the end of the 1960s the British empire had been dissolved. This was partly because the economic cost of garrisoning the empire seemed to be insupportable. But of equal importance in accelerating the process of decolonization were the growing political costs of trying to use force to contain colonial nationalist insurgencies, or to counter the machinations of regional powers that were hostile to British interests. At a time when it was waging the Cold War in an effort to prevent the spread of Soviet and Chinese Communism, Britain could ill afford to alienate potential allies or drive neutrals into the enemy's camp by behaving in ways that were increasingly regarded as illegitimate by the international community. By 1968 the British had, with varying degrees of reluctance, accepted that as the main threat to their security came

from Europe, and the main focus of their future prosperity lay in Europe, so Europe would also have to be the focus of the small, all-regular professional army that they could afford.

## STRUCTURE OF BOOK

The structure of the book is determined by the questions that it seeks to address. The tasks that the army was called on to fulfil, and the resources in men, money, and material that it was given to accomplish them, were determined by a series of overlapping groups of policy-makers in and around Whitehall. The opening chapter will examine who they were, describe the structures of ministries and committees within which they worked, and make some general comments about their collective attitudes towards defence matters. Britain's long-term defence policy, and the army's place within it, were the product of their decisions about the country's interests, how best to protect and promote them, and the share of national resources that they believed should be devoted to doing so. In making these difficult decisions, they had to take account of a series of sometimes competing and conflicting factors, including what they perceived to be Britain's national obligations and aims, the geo-strategic context, threats to the security of Britain and its overseas possessions, the doctrines and capabilities of the armed forces, and the intentions and capabilities of actual and potential allies.

Once they had taken account of all of those factors they could establish the tasks that the armed force in general, and the army in particular, had to undertake. In theory the size and nature of those tasks should, in turn, have determined the size, shape, equipment, and state of readiness of the army. In practice the reverse was the case. The armed forces had to get by with what they had, rather than what they wanted or needed. Chapter 2 will begin by examining what roles policy-makers expected the post-war army to be called on to fulfil, and how they went about restructuring it in the immediate post-war period to meet them. It will show that Montgomery's 'New Model Army' was intended to deter the Soviet threat, or, if deterrence failed, to fight a large-scale, high-intensity conventional war in Western Europe and the Middle East that they did not think would begin until about 1957. But, even before Montgomery left the War Office in 1948 it was apparent that the assumptions that had underpinned his creation were being eroded. The onset of the Cold War meant that the army actually had to carry out not one, but three roles. How it was reconfigured by Montgomery's successor as CIGS, Sir William Slim, will be considered in the second part of this chapter. Not the least of Slim's difficulties was that he had to do this, as Chapter 3 will show, at a time when the defence budget was under great pressure, when the army had to fight its corner in Whitehall to secure the resources that it needed, and when, during a period of full-employment, recruiting and retaining manpower with the necessary mix of skills was a constant problem. Measured in terms of resources and manpower, the army's most important roles were the part it played in NATO's efforts to deter a major war in Europe, and in helping to prevent Soviet incursions into the Middle

East. The British army was never actually required to fight a conventional war in either of those theatres, but Chapter 4 will explore its plans and preparations to do so, and try to assess its likely military effectiveness had it been called on to put them into practice.

But Britain's position as a world power was not only threatened by Communist forces from outside its empire. It was also challenged by a series of colonial nationalists from within, and in meeting their challenges in the decade after 1945 the army was called on to mount a series of low-intensity counter-insurgency campaigns in places as far apart as Palestine, Malaya, the Suez Canal Zone, Kenya, and Cyprus. There is an almost hagiographical historiography that suggests that in doing so the British discovered a kinder, gentler, way of conducting counter-insurgency campaigns. Chapter 5 will explain the extent to which such interpretations should not be taken at their face value.

The third role that was thrust upon the army was a product of the fact that Britain was also challenged by several regional powers, most notably Iran in the Persian Gulf, North Korea assisted by Communist China in the Far East, and Nasserite Egypt in the Middle East. It was these challenges that forced it to prepare, and in some cases actually embark upon, expeditionary operations. This role had historical precedents. The pre-war regular army had contained a nucleus expeditionary force of regular soldiers that could be mobilized reasonably expeditiously and sent overseas in an emergency. During World War Two it also developed an amphibious warfare doctrine that enabled it to take part in a series of successful amphibious operations from 1942 onwards. But Montgomery's 'New Model Army' lacked an expeditionary component, and, although he hoped to base what he called an Imperial Reserve in the Middle East, he was never able to find a sufficient surplus of soldiers to do so. The reasons for this gap in the army's preparations, and its uninspiring record in these kinds of campaigns will be explored in Chapter 6.

In 1950–1 Attlee's Labour government embarked upon Britain's most expensive ever peacetime rearmament programme. Almost the first thing Churchill's Conservative government did when it came to power was to cut back on that programme. This marked the start of a series of efforts to produce what the Conservatives hoped would be a sustainable defence programme. In the mid-1950s their efforts culminated in a major reconfiguration of British defence policy, and the structure of the army within it. This has usually gone under the title of the 'Sandys reforms', so named because the Conservative Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys, was instrumental in implementing them. But Sandys brought few original ideas of his own to bear on the army. Rather he drew heavily on a reform programme that had already been set in train by the CIGS and DCIGS, respectively Sir Gerald Templer and Sir Richard Hull. It was they who developed the blueprint that underpinned the army's new configuration as an all-regular force shorn of National Servicemen. How and why these changes came about will be explored in Chapter 7.

The remaining chapters of the book will examine the successes and failures of the post-Sandys army. Chapter 8 will look at the manifold problems of recruiting and retaining manpower for the all-regular army. Chapters 9 and 10 will look at how the army on the Continent developed a doctrine for nuclear war and will