

Introduction:

The Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902 was the beginning of the end of British expansionism. British military forces began using tactics such as concentration camps, as well as a harsh scorched earth policy, that brought into question, whether they were the civilized nation they believed, or if they were just as brutal and uncivilized as they perceived the natives to be. The origins of the Second Boer War can be found in the ashes of the first Boer War, as Afrikaner settlers set up their republics and threatened British economic interests in the region. Once the war began, it was a brutal effort on both sides, British forces used Scorched Earth tactics, including burning Boer farms and homes to the ground and forcibly relocating Boers to camps to drive the Boers to surrender.

While British Concentration camps would become a rallying cry for journalists and early human rights activists, as they pointed out the hypocrisy and brutality of the war. The Boers would use hit-and-run guerilla tactics to evade and ruin British supply lines, using siege warfare on major British cities to drive British citizens from their homes and ultimately drive the British from South Africa. Boer and British tactics worked to make the Boer War a deadly conflict that would change the way that the British military, public, and government would look at colonial expansion and wars in general. No longer would the British military fight aggressive expansionist wars to grow the empire, though the empire grew larger over time, that was more an effect of British victories in World War I and World War II. The British government would become more concerned with maintaining and holding their territories rather than expanding them.

The British military had changed significantly following the war, they were more mobile and had worked on building better fortifications and increasing their marksmanship as a response

to Boer snipers. The outcome of the Second Boer War and the violence that it brought would have ramifications that would last in both South Africa and The British Empire as a whole. Some ramifications would be an end to aggressive British colonial expansion, and a more inwardly looking British public and government.

The First Boer War of 1880 to 1881 was a somewhat minor rebellion compared to its' more famous sequel, however, it should not be discounted as it had direct ramifications that led to the second war. The reasons for the outbreak of war were due to Boer's resentment over the British annexation of their territory. The Boers outnumbered the British 20 to 1 and felt that they should be an independent nation of Calvinist Boers.¹ British Administrators felt differently, of course, they believed that it was a British holding and as such, that the Boers were British subjects and should be part of their empire.

Boer Commandos launched surprise attacks on British Forces and led to a series of British defeats, The Boers were so well adapted to irregular tactics that Col. Charles Callwell remarked that "The First Anglo-Boer War of 1880-1881 was a case of "operations of regular armies against irregular, or comparatively speaking irregular forces."² The Boers would ultimately win the war, as many back homes in London had more issues at home to deal with and were weary of stoking any more nationalistic Boer sentiments.³ The Boers would continue to

¹ Stephen M. Miller and John Laband, "Chapter 9: The First Anglo-Boer War, 1880-1881," in Queen Victoria's Wars British Military Campaigns, 1857-1902 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 167-186.

² Stephen M. Miller and John Laband, "Chapter 9: The First Anglo-Boer War, 1880-1881," in Queen Victoria's Wars British Military Campaigns, 1857-1902 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 167-186.

³ Stephen M. Miller and John Laband, "Chapter 9: The First Anglo-Boer War, 1880-1881," in Queen Victoria's Wars British Military Campaigns, 1857-1902 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 167-186.

celebrate the war as their First War of Independence and would have to fight another war just 20 years later.⁴

Historiography:

Various sources have written about the Boer Wars, both the First Anglo-Boer War and the second more devastating Second Anglo-Boer War. Several of them have covered the overview of the war, and some have gone deep into the military tactics and strategies that have been revised and reformed following the end of the conflict. This paper is going to focus on the brutality and violence that spawned from the war, covering both the various battles and concentration camps run by the British. Different sources from a variety of perspectives come into play within my paper, colonial soldiers who have arrived fresh off the ships, and Boer commandos who have been in the terrain and the harshness of South Africa their entire lives. Some other sources cover the concentration camps, with differing views on whether they were good and necessary, or brutal and unnecessarily inhumane.

One of the main purposes this paper is being written is in the hope to find a consensus on how the camps should be looked at, and how the violence changed the British Empire as a whole. The main argument of my paper is that the Second Anglo-Boer War is indirectly responsible for the end of the British Empire, through the change in British perception of themselves, and the way the world viewed them. Following the Boer Wars, Germany, Austro-Hungary, and The Ottoman Empire would form an alliance against Britain, France, and Russia in the First World War. One of the arguments this paper posits is that this happened due to the loss of British invincibility, they were stopped for 3 years by an unorganized and untrained militia of

⁴ Stephen M. Miller and John Laband, "Chapter 9: The First Anglo-Boer War, 1880-1881," in *Queen Victoria's Wars British Military Campaigns, 1857-1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 167-186.

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farmers, compared to other modern militaries the British were behind during the war. The source, "The International Impact of the Boer War." Demonstrates how the Boer War was perceived by the various nations of the world during and following the war, and how they changed their view of the British following the confrontation with the Boers in South Africa.

The Second Anglo-Boer War made the British Military reorganize itself and made it become a more modern and efficient fighting military, several sources such as "From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914," showcases how the British Military was behind in organization and tactics and thus had to make changes in doctrine and organization to modernize following the Boer War.

The creation of a more mobile and quick detachment group allowed the British military to become more mobile, and most famously the usage of colonial troops in warfare is gaining its first major steps in the Boer War, specifically the Australian troops which would become famous in World War I and World War II. Sources detailing the usage of colonial troops include "Australians in War: With the Australian Regiment, from Melbourne to Bloemfontein," "The Colonials in South Africa, 1899-1902, Their Record, Based on the Dispatches, and "Doing Canada Proud: The Second Boer War & the Battle of Paardeburg," and show the beginning of Britain's reliance of colonial troops for much of their fighting in far off colonies and major battles after they had proven themselves during the Boer War.

Lastly, the concentration camps, this topic has received much discussion from differing sources, both in support of them such as "Life in the Concentration Camps," written in 1901, where the author discussed the camps as not that big of a deal more or less. Other sources and individuals such as Emily Hobhouse, and "The Concentration Camps of the South African War," which is a more modern source, written in 2009, where are analyzed and looked at from a

historical perspective as well as how they have continued to influence Afrikaner and British history.

The various sources that cover the Boer War have discussed the different aspects, from the medical side such as Sir. Arthur Conan Doyle, to the concentration camp side such as Emily Hobhouse and Katherine Brereton. This paper will focus primarily on the battlefield side such as the first-hand accounts of colonial soldiers, and their Boer enemies, as well as the public outcry and split regarding the concentration camp situation that Emily Hobhouse and other activists railed against following the war. The paper will not seek to shatter any beliefs about Britain's role in the Boer War, neither will it seek to make one side the hero in the conflict, nor the other side the villain. The argument and topic in discussing how the Boer War and the violence it brought changed Britain and the other world powers, ultimately leading to the end of Britain's Empire and indirectly World War I.

1. Interwar and lead-up:

Following the First Anglo-Boer War as it would be known, was a time of tension in the region, British economic interests were limited by the fact that the Boers controlled large swaths of land north of South Africa. One of the major causes for rising tensions in the region was the discovery of gold in The South African Republic, also known as Transvaal, this led to a large influx of British citizens and gold miners hoping to make it rich in the SAR gold fields.⁵ The Uitlanders or Outlanders as the Boers called them came in large swaths, this led many Boer citizens to be weary and fear for their way of life as all of these British citizens came into their nation.⁶ Gold ore was cheap to harvest and easy to sell, this led to many large mining operations

⁵ "Boer War." National Army Museum. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/boer-war>.

⁶ "Boer War." National Army Museum. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/boer-war>.

coming to the area. Much of the gold ore lay close to the surface, this allowed many companies to come in quickly, harvest the easier gold, and then turn those profits into heavier equipment and larger labor forces to harvest the deeper and more difficult gold.⁷ The large number of foreign companies led to many Boers resenting their Uitlanders encroaching on their hard-won land.

Tensions continued to boil until in 1895, Dr. Jameson and British South Africa Company soldiers led a raid to try and incite tensions and lead to British intervention in the area. Historians debate the exact reasoning behind the raid, some believe that it was merely greedy gold miners, and others believe it a more elaborate conspiracy on behalf of Cecil Rhodes to create enough of a stir to bring British forces in and ensure that Transvaal was securely in British control rather than the neighboring German colonial controls.⁸ Whatever the causes behind the raid, all that it accomplished was raising more tensions with the native Boers and embarrassing the British Military and higher command. The British response was to place a more imperialist South African administrator, Sir Alfred Milner in charge as the High Commissioner for Africa.⁹ The Boer response was an overwhelming victory for SAR presidential candidate Paul Kruger in 1898, he ran on a policy of being even more strict and reluctant to allow British settlers political power.¹⁰

Though tensions remained high, there were several offers and proposals between the two governments, primarily focusing on lowering tensions and hopefully avoiding possible war.

⁷ Blainey, G. "Lost Causes of the Jameson Raid - JSTOR." JSTOR. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2592099>.

⁸ Blainey, G. "Lost Causes of the Jameson Raid - JSTOR." JSTOR. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2592099>.

⁹ "Boer War." National Army Museum. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/boer-war>.

¹⁰ "Boer War." National Army Museum. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/boer-war>.

Several proposals were sent to the British administrators of the Cape Colony (British South Africa), one such proposal was a proposition to offer franchises to British settlers in the Boer republics.¹¹ Paul Kruger also demanded that the British drop all claims to rule over the Boer Republics and allow third-party nations to intervene in the current affairs of the two nations. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain refused any proposal from Kruger or the Boer republics, he believed that they could be easily defeated and as such, the British administrators had no reason to acquiesce to Boer's proposals and demands.

Due to the tensions and refusals on both sides, war seemed to be on the horizon. The reasons for the war are numerous, from enterprising miners and business magnates such as Cecil Rhodes to ardent imperialists such as Joseph Chamberlain, many desired Boer land and would go to any means to seize that land. Several attempts were proposed to simmer tensions down, however, due to an underestimation of the Boers, British administrators refused Boer proposals. Unfortunately, the Boers and British forces would fight a war over the land both desired and would lead to a bloody conflict that would lead to thousands displaced and killed during the upcoming conflict.

First shots and the beginning:

After many attempts at a peaceful negotiation, The Boer Republics demanded that British forces withdraw all soldiers from their borders, as well as all reinforcements that were sent to South Africa.¹² Britain refused and ignored other demands and ultimatums, believing that The Boers were no serious threat to British interests in the region. After the refusal to comply, the two Boer Republics launched surprise attacks on British towns and centers all over Cape Colony

¹¹ "Boer War." National Army Museum. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/boer-war>.

¹² "Boer War." National Army Museum. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/boer-war>.

and Natal.¹³ The attack shocked the British administration and settlers in the colonies, and led to the onset of the Second Anglo-Boer War.

The first shots of the war began on October 12th at the Kraaipan railway siding, 800 Boer Commandos sabotaged a railroad line, leading to a large explosion and the subsequent capture of the train and all workers who survived.¹⁴ Once the Boers had taken control of one of the major railways in the colony, it allowed them to cut off supplies, and control the flow of goods and passengers into the Boer Republics, as well as the British colonies in the area. The importance of taking the railways is twofold, it allowed the Boers to cut off supplies to British forces in the interior, and it also denied British reinforcements entry into the Boer Republics and the interior of the Cape Colony.

Once the opening salvos of the war had occurred, several fronts had opened, one in Natal, one in Cape Colony, one in Bechuanaland, and one in Griqualand, among all of these the one that was favored early on for the Boers was Natal.¹⁵ The reason behind attacking Natal and making it the favored early front was due to a couple of reasons. One of the main reasons being, many of the Boer veterans had fought there during the First Anglo-Boer War in the 1880s, and thus would be familiar with the terrain which is a major advantage, especially against a foreign army. Secondly, Many of the British forces had been pulled back to the interior of the colony to protect some of the more major centers, thus the frontier cities were undermanned¹⁶. Lastly, the Boer Republics were not 100% in agreement on many issues early on in the war, The Orange Free State did not feel justified in attacking Cape Colony due to the Cape Prime minister's

¹³ "Boer War." National Army Museum. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/boer-war>.

¹⁴ Nasson, Bill. *The South African War, 1899-1902*. London: Arnold, 1999.

¹⁵ Nasson, Bill. *The South African War, 1899-1902*. London: Arnold, 1999.

¹⁶ Nasson, Bill. *The South African War, 1899-1902*. London: Arnold, 1999.

tenacity in fighting for Anglo-Boer mediation previously before the outbreak of war.¹⁷ The Orange Free State's leaders felt that they were Transvaal's defensive ally and would remain as such, Marthinus Steyn claimed that it was "Pretoria's war, and their role was to keep it up as their ally."¹⁸

The beginning of the Second Boer War was fast and striking, taking British leadership off guard, and striking at the heart of transportation in the region. Many in the Boer leadership had disagreements over whom to fight and where to strike as they were surrounded more or less by British colonial holdings and British soldiers. The fight for Boer independence would be a long one, as Great Britain was unwilling to lose the lucrative gold mines and territory that Transvaal and the Orange Free State consisted of. Hundreds of thousands of British soldiers would be sent to the front lines against tens of thousands of Boer Commandos. British military doctrine would be forever changed by fighting a guerrilla war in unfamiliar territory against a highly mobile group of insurgents.

British Tactics:

Since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in the early 1800s, the British Army had not fought a large-scale war against a major power, instead, it fought minor colonial engagements with natives, as well as dealing with pirates in the Indian and Pacific oceans. While the Second Anglo-Boer War was not a large-scale conflict pitting large armies against each other, it nonetheless influenced the British Army greatly and changed the way it fought wars. The three yearlong Second Anglo-Boer War would be the costliest and deadliest colonial war fought by the British military during the Victorian era, with more than twenty thousand casualties against the

¹⁷ Nasson, Bill. *The South African War, 1899-1902*. London: Arnold, 1999.

¹⁸ Nasson, Bill. *The South African War, 1899-1902*. London: Arnold, 1999.

Boers.¹⁹ Due to the shocking number of defeats and the longevity of the war, the British military began a drive to reinvent their military, focusing more on mobility and colonial troops. The war would forever change the British Military, as it adopted more guerrilla tactics and a scorched earth policy, where they would burn Boer homes and farms before placing Boer families and allies into camps to deny their enemy any allies or supplies. After the war, the British military would transform into a small but highly professional and organized unit that would face the likes of Germany and the Ottoman Empire just 12 years later.

The previous combat experience of the British military for the past 50 years had consisted of minor colonial skirmishes against native forces in areas such as South Africa, New Zealand, Sudan, and Egypt, many of these engagements pitted well-equipped and well-trained British soldiers against underequipped, and disorganized native militias.²⁰ Previous experience fighting colonials would be of no use to British soldiers fighting an organized and determined enemy who used British tactics against them. Due to this belief that the Boers would be no more a threat than the other colonials that they had fought for the past half century, the British military leadership placed small detachments in Cape Colony and Natal as a defensive force. Many of the forces were placed on the border of Transvaal, this led to the ultimatum by Paul Kruger on October 11th.

Early British tactics involved a disciplined and well-ordered frontal advance with volley fire to stop charging opponents, this had worked well in fighting in the Sudan, Egypt, and

¹⁹ JONES, SPENCER. "From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914." Amazon. Univ of Oklahoma Press, 2013. <https://www.amazon.com/Boer-War-World-1902-1914-Commanders/dp/0806144157>.

²⁰ JONES, SPENCER. "From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914." Amazon. Univ of Oklahoma Press, 2013. <https://www.amazon.com/Boer-War-World-1902-1914-Commanders/dp/0806144157>.

elsewhere in Africa as East Asia. British forces would advance, stop, kneel, and raise their rifles and fire in unison to stop advancing foes, from here they would reload and advance.²¹

Due to the advance, volley fire, then advance again strategy, British forces were used to fighting at relatively close ranges, and with an enemy that used much the same tactics. Fighting against Boer forces typically occurred at 800-2,000 yards away, with Boer marksmen taking shots with their Mauser rifles.²² British tactics had remained unchanged for years, even with the advent of bolt action magazine-fed rifles, their single-shot tactics remained unchanged. British horsemanship had remained unchanged as well, often the cavalry would charge in and fight on horseback, and soldiers would dismount to fire, before remounting and moving.

Later British reforms would focus on mobility and speed, British forces changed their rifles to accept more rounds and would revise the way they moved and conducted warfare. Lord Kitchener would use a brutal method of warfare known as scorched earth, the British military would leave no Boer farms standing, and over 30,000 Boer farms were burned and looted.²³ The fallout from the scorched earth British military strategy would lead to the grown and increased usage of the concentration camp system which will be discussed later in the paper. Lord Kitchener's entrance into the war would mark a turning point for British military victories since the beginning of the war the Boers had been on a streak of victories. Kitchener reformed the

²¹ JONES, SPENCER. "From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914." Amazon. Univ of Oklahoma Press, 2013. <https://www.amazon.com/Boer-War-World-1902-1914-Commanders/dp/0806144157>.

²² Jones, Spencer. "'Shooting Power': A Study of the Effectiveness of Boer and British Rifle Fire, 1899 – 1914."

Accessed April 9, 2023.

https://wlv.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/2436/620805/Spencer_J_Shooting_Power_2014.pdf?sequence=6.

²³ Pretorius, Fransjohan. "Concentration Camps in the South African War? Here Are the Real Facts by Fransjohan Pretorius, (the Conversation), February 18, 2019." Concentration camps in the South African War? Here are the real facts by Fransjohan Pretorius, (The Conversation), February 18, 2019 | South African History Online. Accessed April 22, 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/concentration-camps-south-african-war-here-are-real-facts-fransjohan-pretorius-conversation>.

British military and ultimately led to the victory.²⁴ Unfortunately for Lord Kitchener, the blame for much of the unsavory events of the war would be placed on him, he helped to lead the British to victory, however, he ultimately was at fault for many of the atrocities that were conducted.²⁵

Ultimately the Boer War was a turning point for the British Military, no longer did they rely on single-shot volley offensives, instead, they adopted a more mobile form of warfare. The Boers used hit-and-run irregular style of warfare, this provided them an enormous advantage against the more rigid and conventional British military. Many of the reforms instituted because of the Boer War would go on to aid the British during the World Wars in the next century. The usage of colonial soldiers is one of the most famous examples of Britain's Empire aiding them in times of war, many colonial soldiers proved themselves during the Boer War, specifically the Australians. The Boer War is often overlooked in terms of world history, however, the impact that it had on Britain's military is still evident today, as the British military is still a highly mobile force that has adapted the lessons of the past and utilizes them today.

Boer Tactics:

The Boers' first moves consisted of trying to stop the British early and deny them any chance of reinforcement and resupply, thus they struck targets that were undermanned and were weak points. Boer forces also relied on many of their veterans being familiar with the terrain, as well as using the natural ridges to give them an advantage over the numerically superior British military. Initially, the Boers were highly successful, leading large sieges and operations targeting many British strongholds all over the border region of Natal and Cape Colony, including sieging

²⁴ "Herbert Kitchener: The Taskmaster." National Army Museum. Accessed April 22, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/herbert-kitchener-taskmaster>.

²⁵ "Herbert Kitchener: The Taskmaster." National Army Museum. Accessed April 22, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/herbert-kitchener-taskmaster>.

Ladysmith and Kimberly which were large British settlements in the region. Many of these shocking early victories, were demonstrative of the British belief that the Boers posed no real threat and were not to be taken seriously. Boer forces were adept at using the terrain to their advantage and attacking British waypoints and disappearing into the brush where they could not be followed, and where they could strike again.

Compared to the British, the Boers were unorganized and lacked military discipline, and did not have a standing army, instead, they relied on a citizen militia that could be called up in times of crisis.²⁶ Compared to many of the enemies which the British military had fought over the past century, the Boers were relatively well equipped, with magazine-fed rifles which were put to good usage with Boer marksmanship. Regarding the Boer militia, they were volunteer white citizens who would come together in a commando, which was a Boer military unit with no fixed size, it all depended on how many people lived in a particular area, and how many of them were white.²⁷ Regarding the officers of commandos, they were elected with some basic requirements being that they needed to provide a horse, rations, and a firearm of some sort, this was typical of all Boer Commandos.²⁸ Boers who could not afford a rifle were provided one by the government, however, horses and rations were required for each soldier.²⁹

Boer guerrilla tactics served them well, however, as the war went on the various sieges they led ultimately led to their downfall. Deneys Reitz describes in 1900, how the Boer cause

²⁶ JONES, SPENCER. "From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914." Amazon. Univ of Oklahoma Press, 2013. <https://www.amazon.com/Boer-War-World-1902-1914-Commanders/dp/0806144157>.

²⁷ JONES, SPENCER. "From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914." Amazon. Univ of Oklahoma Press, 2013. <https://www.amazon.com/Boer-War-World-1902-1914-Commanders/dp/0806144157>.

²⁸ JONES, SPENCER. "From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914." Amazon. Univ of Oklahoma Press, 2013. <https://www.amazon.com/Boer-War-World-1902-1914-Commanders/dp/0806144157>.

²⁹ JONES, SPENCER. "From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914." Amazon. Univ of Oklahoma Press, 2013. <https://www.amazon.com/Boer-War-World-1902-1914-Commanders/dp/0806144157>.

was falling apart, and that they would have to lift the siege of Ladysmith, due to the large number of British troops arriving.³⁰ When describing the retreat of Ladysmith, Reitz notes that there was no formal retreat command, every commando was merely told to make his retirement on his own accord, they did not march, nor run, they loaded up their wagons and horses and walked over 20 miles to Elandslaagte.³¹ The informality of the retreat demonstrates how the Boers were a ragtag band of militia trying to defend their homeland from a superior force. Reitz notes later how after many of the Boers surrendered, he and others fought in a desperate guerrilla campaign, even more so than during the early stages of the war.

The Boer military demonstrates how a small and determined force can hold off a larger and more organized military. Boer Commandos were made up of a citizen militia who had to provide their equipment, contrast this with the highly professional and organized military of the British, how could they do it? Knowledge of the land and the resources thereof allowed the numerically and undersupplied Boers to fend off the might of the British military for around 3 years. German Mauser rifles and international volunteers all poured in to help the Boers fight, and though they lost the war ultimately, they showed the British and the world at large what fierce soldiers the Boer commandos were.

Armies' tactics and weapons compared:

Early in the war, the two sides could not be more different, Boer Commandos relied on hit-and-run style tactics, preferring to hit a target and disappear back into the bush from where they came. British tactics involved large forces moving in very conventional ways, often to their detriment as it allowed Boer soldiers to hit them before they could react. Over time however this

³⁰ Reitz, Deneys. *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2016.

³¹ Reitz, Deneys. *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2016.

changed, British forces adopted much of the Boer hit-and-run style of warfare. One aspect of the war that determined much of the violence and led to many British casualties, was the marksmanship of the Boer Commandos. Many Boers grew up hunting and shooting rifles from an early age, due to this they had a proficiency with rifles and very high standards of accuracy. Combined with Boer's mobility, this accuracy made them a deadly threat to the British soldiers in the area who had to contend with their attacks.

The Boers were noted for their excellent eyesight when compared to British soldiers, it was noted by Sir. Redvers Buller that "if a European and Boer were walking towards each other in an open country, the Boer would see the other two miles in advance."³² Boer eyesight allowed them to use many of the most modern military rifles and cartridges to their advantage on the open plains of South Africa. Among the most important rifle that the Boers used was the German Mauser rifle in 7.57mm Mauser, this rifle had improved reliability and an improved bullet design which allowed it to shoot further, and more accurately than previous designs.³³ The Mauser rifle was a five-shot magazine-fed rifle design, this allowed the Boers to load 5 rounds and continue to use those rounds until needing to be reloaded using a 5 round stripper clip.³⁴

British forces used a Lee Enfield rifle chambered in .303 British, this rifle had a 10-round magazine, however, British doctrine favored the more traditional single shot.³⁵ British officers

³² Jones, Spencer. "Shooting Power": A Study of the Effectiveness of Boer and British Rifle Fire, 1899 – 1914." Accessed April 9, 2023. https://wlv.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/2436/620805/Spencer_J_Shooting_Power_2014.pdf?sequence=6

³³ Association, National Rifle. "The Guns of the Boer Commandos." An Official Journal of The NRA. Accessed April 9, 2023. <https://www.americanrifeman.org/content/the-guns-of-the-boer-commandos/>.

³⁴ Association, National Rifle. "The Guns of the Boer Commandos." An Official Journal Of The NRA. Accessed April 9, 2023. <https://www.americanrifeman.org/content/the-guns-of-the-boer-commandos/>.

³⁵ Association, National Rifle. "Lee-Enfield Rifle-Workhorse of the British Empire." An Official Journal Of The NRA. Accessed April 11, 2023. <https://www.americanrifeman.org/content/lee-enfield-rifle-workhorse-of-the-british-empire/>.

believed that allowing each soldier 10 rounds would encourage them to waste ammunition, thus they blocked the magazine and only allowed the use of a single shot.³⁶ The loss of firepower had negatively affected the British forces in the region, as Boers had an advantage both in mobility, and firepower, Boers forces could move and fire multiple rounds on horseback before needing to reload, while British forces had to fire and reload after every round, therefore, lowering their effectiveness and hindering their ability to fight back.

Over time the British military adopted the Boer style of warfare, they adapted their Lee Enfield's to fire all 10 rounds and began to be more mobile as they had adapted to the climate, as well as how to use horses effectively. Along with adapting their weapons and equestrian tactics, British forces began to use scorched earth, burning Boer farms, and taking Boer families to the concentration camps where thousands would die during the war.

Controversy: The camps:

The one image that has stood the test of time regarding the Second Anglo-Boer War is that of the British Concentration Camps, these were established to control and contain Boer families and their native allies. The British hoped to deny Boer soldiers supplies, as well as deny them their homes and families. British leaders had hoped that keeping families locked in these camps would lower Boer morale and lead to a hasty surrender, it did, though not before thousands died in the camps. Activists such as Emily Hobhouse and others would rally behind the camps and work to expose them for the inhumanity that they were, while others such as

³⁶ Association, National Rifle. "Lee-Enfield Rifle-Workhorse of the British Empire." An Official Journal Of The NRA. Accessed April 11, 2023. <https://www.americanrifeman.org/content/lee-enfield-rifle-workhorse-of-the-british-empire/>.

Katherine Brereton would defend the camps. The legacy of these camps is a dark one in British history and one that has affected them many times.

Various articles have been written about the concentration camps, both during the war and after the war. Katherine Brereton wrote regarding the camps, "Temporary homes which the Burghers are living in are called concentration camps, and most of the families are living in canvas tents may be more aptly described as large towns or villages."³⁷ Ms. Brereton believed that the conditions were up to the individuals, the Boers that kept a tidy house would have a tidy house, and those that did not would have a dirty home and therefore spread disease. Ms. Brereton's description of the camps is one of everyday life, she describes school children lining up for class, and families reading letters from their fathers who were shipped off to camps across the sea.³⁸

The camps could be described as small towns and villages, as they had churches, schools, hospitals, post offices, and other seemingly normal aspects of a town.³⁹ One thing that separated the camps from towns, however, was the fact that they were often guarded with British soldiers and had barbed wire surrounding the perimeters to dissuade possible escapees from leaving the camps.⁴⁰ Many of the men in the camps were often given jobs to work, using the forced labor to build bridges and rail lines for British supplies to come into the camps.

³⁷ Brereton, Katherine. "Life in the Concentration Camps." Pro Quest. Pro Quest. Accessed March 2, 2023. <https://www.proquest.com/>.

³⁸ Brereton, Katherine. "Life in the Concentration Camps." Pro Quest. Pro Quest. Accessed March 2, 2023. <https://www.proquest.com/>.

³⁹ Brereton, Katherine. "Life in the Concentration Camps." Pro Quest. Pro Quest. Accessed March 2, 2023. <https://www.proquest.com/>.

⁴⁰ Brereton, Katherine. "Life in the Concentration Camps." Pro Quest. Pro Quest. Accessed March 2, 2023. <https://www.proquest.com/>.

As seen in the images below, many of the camps were unsanitary and led to many children and others contracting diseases and dying. The image below is of Lizzie Van Zyl, a Boer girl who contracted Typhoid fever and died shortly after this image was taken. Reportedly: "Nurses who tried to help her were told by the camp heads "not to interfere with the child as she was a nuisance."⁴¹ Emily Brower wrote that many of the deaths by disease, however, were "Soundless when compared to the infant mortality in Brooklyn during the hot weather."⁴² The atrocities that both Boers and Native Africans suffered are unimaginable, not only were housing conditions horrible, but families also had to cram into small tents as seen below. The conditions were perfect for disease and sickness, which became the number one cause of death in the camps, leading to numerous examples of children such as Lizzie Van Zyl. Activists such as Emily Hobhouse would raise awareness around the camps as well as other humanitarian issues within the British Empire, and unlike other activists, she would have a wide-reaching audience and would stay relevant for years, lasting even until today. Not only did activists like Emily Hobhouse fight to bring recognition to the camps, but Cornelius also Broeksma who was a prosecutor in The British colony of Cape, was executed by a firing squad in Johannesburg due to his incitement towards the suffering of women in the camps.⁴³

One way in which Emily Hobhouse worked to end the concentration camps was through her activism, she exposed the conditions in which thousands of Boers and native Africans lived. Ms. Hobhouse's actions led the British government to improve the conditions due to calls and

⁴¹ Oliver, Mark. Lizzie Van Zyl, a Dying Young Girl. Photograph. Allthatsinteresting. Bloemfontein Camp, South Africa, 1901. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/boer-war#7>.

⁴² Brower, Emily Howard. "Correspondence: Concentration Camps in South Africa." Proquest, October 26, 1901. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/136952364?pg-origsite=primo>.

⁴³ "Women and Children in White Concentration Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1900-1902." South African History Online. Accessed May 3, 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/women-and-children-white-concentration-camps-during-anglo-boer-war-1900-1902>.

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reports written by the Government's Ladies Commission which Ms. Hobhouse was a part of.⁴⁴

Due to the loud public outcry, Lord Milner would seize control of the camps from the British military in 1901, and as a result, the death rate would lower, and some sense of stability would come to the camps.⁴⁵



The concentration camps have been a reminder of Britain's brutality during the Boer War and led to an outcry from many in the British public, as well as the government. Many military leaders felt that the camps were perfectly fine, as they accomplished the military goals of denying Boers supplies and allies in which they could continue the guerilla war. Unfortunately for 48,000 Boers and the native Africans, it meant terrible living conditions and back-breaking

⁴⁴ Pretorius, Fransjohan. "Concentration Camps in the South African War? Here Are the Real Facts by Fransjohan Pretorius, (the Conversation), February 18, 2019." Concentration camps in the South African War? Here are the real facts by Fransjohan Pretorius, (The Conversation), February 18, 2019, | South African History Online. Accessed April 22, 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/concentration-camps-south-african-war-here-are-real-facts-fransjohan-pretorius-conversation>.

⁴⁵ Pretorius, Fransjohan. "Concentration Camps in the South African War? Here Are the Real Facts by Fransjohan Pretorius, (the Conversation), February 18, 2019." Concentration camps in the South African War? Here are the real facts by Fransjohan Pretorius, (The Conversation), February 18, 2019, | South African History Online. Accessed April 22, 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/concentration-camps-south-african-war-here-are-real-facts-fransjohan-pretorius-conversation>.

⁴⁶ Oliver, Mark. Lizzie Van Zyl, a Dying Young Girl. Photograph. Allthatsinteresting. Bloemfontein Camp, South Africa, 1901. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/boer-war#7>.

⁴⁷ Oliver, Mark. A Boer Family, Crammed Together inside of a Small Tent. Photograph. Allthatsinteresting. South Africa, 1901. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/boer-war#11>.

labor.⁴⁸ The camps have such an image and a history, that during the Second World War, the National Socialist Party in Germany would use the term concentration camp as a homage to the British camps during the Boer War. All in all, the camps are a dark chapter in British military, and colonial history, as not only were the adults kept captive in the camps, but children were also forced to stay for the entirety of the war.

Peace:

The war ended on May 31st, 1902, just before midnight when a Boer delegation and a British delegation met and agreed on the terms of peace.⁴⁹ Unfortunately for the Boers, the peace would not end in their favor as the two Boer Republics were annexed by the new South African colony in the British Empire. The peace was very kind to the Boer rebels, the British government paid over £ 3,000,000 to help restore families and rebuild much of the infrastructure that had been destroyed during the war, as well as offering interest-free loans to help those that were affected to help to continue to develop the economy.⁵⁰ The most interesting way that the British more or less conceded to the Boers was the fact that they shelved the proposal to enfranchise Non-Europeans until both Boer republics were self-governing, which was not going to happen.⁵¹ Due to this, many Indians, Native Africans, and other minorities would remain unable to vote and would remain in an underprivileged second class for the time to come.⁵²

⁴⁸ Pretorius, Fransjohan. "Concentration Camps in the South African War? Here Are the Real Facts by Fransjohan Pretorius, (the Conversation), February 18, 2019." Concentration camps in the South African War? Here are the real facts by Fransjohan Pretorius, (The Conversation), February 18, 2019, | South African History Online. Accessed April 22, 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/concentration-camps-south-african-war-here-are-real-facts-fransjohan-pretorius-conversation>.

⁴⁹ Nasson, Bill. The South African War, 1899-1902. London: Arnold, 1999.

⁵⁰ Judd, Denis, and Keith Terrance Surridge. The Boer War. London: John Murray, 2002.

⁵¹ Judd, Denis, and Keith Terrance Surridge. The Boer War. London: John Murray, 2002.

⁵² Judd, Denis, and Keith Terrance Surridge. The Boer War. London: John Murray, 2002.

The lasting effects of the peace allowed the Boers and other South Africans to thrive, though they still held resentment like Deneys Reitz would hold a grudge against the British and would flee to Madagascar for years until the outbreak of World War I when he and other Boers would return home to fight for Britain on the western front.⁵³

International Involvement and Views of the Second Anglo-Boer War:

The Second Anglo-Boer War was not an isolated incident, nations from all over the world played a role in some form or another, from German weapons being used by Boer Forces, to American mercenaries.⁵⁴ German weapons such as the Mauser helped the Boers significantly as the range of the Mauser rifle and the new 8mm Mauser round helped to increase the distance at which Boer forces could engage British forces at a further distance than what British rifle could reliably and accurately hit.

American forces would become directly involved in the war in the Jameson Raid in 1895, as they helped to try and stir British Uitlanders to revolt against the Boer citizens and government.⁵⁵ Many Americans would join the Irish Brigade to help the Boers against British forces, purely for the fact that they were fighting the British.⁵⁶

Similarly, to the United States, many in the German Empire favored the Boers in their conflict and made it difficult for the official German position of neutrality to be maintained.⁵⁷

⁵³ Reitz, Deneys. *Commando: A Boer Journal of the Boer War*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2016.

⁵⁴ "Boer War." National Army Museum. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/boer-war>.

⁵⁵ Headley, Michael. "Americans in the Boer War." *Militaryhistoryonline.com - Americans in the Boer War*. Accessed April 11, 2023. <https://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/Century19th/AmericansInTheBoerWar>.

⁵⁶ Headley, Michael. "Americans in the Boer War." *Militaryhistoryonline.com - Americans in the Boer War*. Accessed April 11, 2023. <https://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/Century19th/AmericansInTheBoerWar>.

⁵⁷ Wilson, Keith M. "The International Impact of the Boer War." *Google Books*. Google. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=253gBQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=boer%2Bwar%2B&ots=gonyJmGhN&sig=654Y5-VXsJt8G7yL8eEQbKzWorg#v=onepage&q=boer%20war&f=false>.

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The main difference, however, is that German volunteers were not as prevalent, nor were there many written about during the conflict. The main way in which Germany directly impacted the war was through the Mauser rifles which the Boers used to devastating effect.

Germany had been directly impacted by the outbreak of the Boer War, various German officials used the growing anti-Anglo sentiments of the German public to create and push naval bills, designed to increase the size of a new German navy.⁵⁸ The importance of Germany spending money and building a navy cannot be understated, during the First World War, Britain would be threatened by the German navy, a feat which not many nations had accomplished before. The German and British governments had not been on friendly terms, even before the Boer War, they had both been competing for territory and influence, both in Europe and in Asia. The outbreak of the Boer War, therefore, was immensely positive for German military and navy aspirations. Notably other European powers were paying attention as well, Russian officials even suggested intervening on behalf of the Boers, therefore weakening the British and empowering the Boers as a counter to the British in South Africa.⁵⁹ Many European powers toyed with the idea of intervening in the war, however, the only ones to somewhat have a direct impact were the Portuguese. British forces were allowed to land in and resupply at Delagoa Bay, a Portuguese

⁵⁸ Wilson, Keith M. "The International Impact of the Boer War." Google Books. Google. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=253gBQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=boer%2Bwar%2B&ots=gonyJMmGhN&sig=654Y5-VXsJt8G7yL8eEQbKzWorg#v=onepage&q=boer%20war&f=false>.

⁵⁹ Wilson, Keith M. "The International Impact of the Boer War." Google Books. Google. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=253gBQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=boer%2Bwar%2B&ots=gonyJMmGhN&sig=654Y5-VXsJt8G7yL8eEQbKzWorg#v=onepage&q=boer%20war&f=false>.

port in Africa, the arrangement depended on British promises to protect the Portuguese empire from any third-party attack or threats.⁶⁰

As evidence that the Boer War had a direct impact or indirect on many of the European colonial powers and empires of the day. Germany's naval buildup had direct consequences on the First World War as Germany's navy would challenge the British navy during the blockade of Britain and the Atlantic naval front during the war. While Russia and France would watch on with interest regarding the balance of power in Africa and the European continent. Often the Boer War is seen through the lenses of a rather isolated and confined colonial skirmish, instead of this globally viewed conflict that it was. Much like the American Revolution, which many Americans correlated it with at the time, it was viewed by some powers to possibly one-up the British, either militarily, or colonially.

How the war changed Britain and the Empire:

The Second Anglo-Boer War brought so much destruction to the South African colonies, with thousands of dead in the concentration camps, as well as thousands killed in battle. After the war different activists would come out against the perceived brutality of British doctrine in South Africa during the war, primarily focusing on British burning of Boer homes and the forced relocation of Boer families, mainly women and children to concentration camps. Many people would die in those camps and that would provide British activists ammunition to fuel their campaign against British brutality.

⁶⁰ Wilson, Keith M. "The International Impact of the Boer War." Google Books. Google. Accessed March 21, 2023. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=253gBQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=boer%2Bwar%2B&ots=gonyJmGhN&sig=654Y5-VXsJt8G7yL8eEQbKzWorg#v=onepage&q=boer%20war&f=false>.

The conduct of the war was controversial, to say the least, with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman noting "The war in South Africa is carried on by methods of barbarism."⁶¹ Along with Sir. Campbell-Bannerman, Sir. David Lloyd George noted that due to the camps and brutal method in which the war was being conducted that "A barrier of dead children's bodies will rise between the British and Boer races in South Africa."⁶² Many British officials and activists noted that the brutality of the war was going to cause issues and that the method of concentration camps was particularly problematic and that something must be done to help those imprisoned in the camps. Not all agreed, however, with Lord Kitchener noting "I fear there is little doubt the war will now go on for considerable time unless stronger measures are taken ... Under the circumstances, I strongly urge sending away wives and families and settling them somewhere else. Some such unexpected measure on our part is in my opinion essential to bring war to a rapid end."⁶³ The worry that the war would continue led many in the British military to try more harsh tactics, those tactics ultimately caused more harm than good, as seen in the outcry over the camps.

Regarding the military doctrine of the British Military after the War, they had reformed to become a more mobile and less rigid military. British military doctrine also moved towards using more colonial soldiers and relying more on their fighting ability to help supplement their

⁶¹ "Women and Children in White Concentration Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1900-1902." South African History Online. Accessed May 3, 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/women-and-children-white-concentration-camps-during-anglo-boer-war-1900-1902>.

⁶² "Women and Children in White Concentration Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1900-1902." South African History Online. Accessed May 3, 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/women-and-children-white-concentration-camps-during-anglo-boer-war-1900-1902>.

⁶³ "Women and Children in White Concentration Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1900-1902." South African History Online. Accessed May 3, 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/women-and-children-white-concentration-camps-during-anglo-boer-war-1900-1902>.

English forces, thus allowing them to fight on more fronts and use the experiences and abilities of the colonial troops which would play a major role in the World Wars just a decade later.

The Second Anglo-Boer War had lasting consequences regarding British military tactics, as well as the public image of the military and government. One of the defining features of the war is the concentration camps, which divided many of the British public, British government officials such as David Lloyd George opposed the camps, and Lord Kitchener was a supporter of the camps to end the war. Debates and government meetings all show how polarizing the war was in the United Kingdom, especially in London where activists worked tirelessly to try and improve conditions in the camps. The brutal nature of the war especially would be picked up by Boer nationalists as a war to help their political aspirations as they used the British conduct to push for more Boer home rule and rights.⁶⁴

Conclusion:

Britain's victory over the Boers solidified their hold over South Africa and allowed them unlimited access to the gold and diamond mines in the area, therefore helping to enrich the various mining magnates and the British Empire through taxation. The Boers would lose the war and hold resentment for years after the war, with the concentration camps becoming a major topic as native Afrikaans became politicians and officials in the new South African colonial government and after South African independence.⁶⁵ Scholars and activists continued to raise awareness about the conditions and the brutality of the camps, as thousands of women and children died due to the horrifying conditions they were forced to live in. Photos of dead children

⁶⁴ Heyningen, Elizabeth Van. "The Concentration Camps of the South African (Anglo ... - Compass Hub." History Compass, January 29, 2009. <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00562.x>.

⁶⁵ Heyningen, Elizabeth Van. "The Concentration Camps of the South African (Anglo ... - Compass Hub." History Compass, January 29, 2009. <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2008.00562.x>.

and dying Boers were placed in articles and newspapers as they were used to help bring an end to the brutality of the British campaigns in South Africa. People like Emily Hobhouse would publicize the conditions and push for change and recognition of the camps and their brutality to the British people. Ultimately many British soldiers did not want to acknowledge the camps, and some would justify them as necessary to end the war, while some people like Katherine Brereton would write articles describing the camps as very quaint and like how the Boers lived previously. The debate over the camps would rage in Britain, however as described previously, the Boers in South Africa would view the camps in a very negative manner and would use them to demonstrate how the British were brutal conquerors.

The war changed the way that Britain fought and conducted its Empire, no longer would they fight to conquer new land through brutal wars of colonialism, instead, they preferred to focus more on running the empire rather than growing it through force. British military doctrine also changed, rather than being a rather inflexible and ridged force that would march and fire then continue to march, they instead became more mobile and mounted. Boer forces had been mobile and used this to great effect on the British military while they marched through South Africa, thus they copied it and used it during the war and onward as they moved into the World Wars at the beginning of the 20th century.

The war was being watched by many of the world's superpowers, and it would affect many of their decisions after finding that the British could be stopped. American, German, and other powers would send weapons and mercenaries to intervene in the war which would affect the duration of the conflict. German Mauser rifles would help the Boers to fight British forces at a distance using Boer marksmanship and the natural terrain to their advantage. While various mercenaries would aid in the conflict on both sides, American forces would aid British forces to

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bring British rule to South Africa, and some would aid the Boers in their fight against the British Empire as they were helping a sister republic in fighting against the tyranny of the British.

Epilogue:

I initially decided to work on the Second Anglo-Boer War for my research paper as I found it to be an interesting end to the 19th century of Victorian England's domination of the world. Since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Pax Britannica had governed the world, both policing the seas for pirates and fighting colonial wars to expand the British economy and global reach. The fact that a small group of colonial rebels fought the British and held them for 3 years intrigued me and reminded me of the American Revolution in a way that I found exciting. One last aspect that was exciting was the fact that just 12 years after this war, World War I began, one of the most devastating wars in history, the first large-scale war in Europe for over 100 years. Why did this war begin, why was Britain not feared more and why did they not use their invincible might to keep the world in check and stop the German build-up?

I felt that the Boer War would be an interesting conflict to look at as it was the last major conflict that Britain fought until the outbreak of World War I. Britain also seemed to rein back their more violent expansionism after the 19th century, much of the territory that Britain got after the World Wars was due to taking it from Germany and the Ottomans, they did not seem as intent on taking land from natives as they were previously. I decided to look and see if the Boer War might have been the end of that, and it appears that it did help signal the end of Britain's expansionism that had been a facet of Britain's identity for the Victorian Age.

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