

THE FIRST FORCE FOR GOOD:
THE BRITISH SYSTEM OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE, 1856-1956
A Conference to be held at the Joint Services Command and Staff College,
December 7-8, 2006

There is a belief that the British system of addressing strategic defence issues changed radically after 1956. The Empire was dead and the Cold War was a new political paradigm, which rejected previous British imperial defence concepts. Today, scholars such as Niall Ferguson and Bernard Porter have used the British imperial experience exclusively to help explain the current American strategic situation, raising questions about the applicability of the British Imperial past for America's strategic future. As America's closest ally, that attention to empire has ramifications for British strategic thinking as well. These attempts by Ferguson and Porter at prediction are misguided, however. What is missing from the analysis of these commentators is a sound understanding of what imperial defence was, how it worked, who made it work, and why it existed. By providing a clear definition of imperial defence and a comprehensive analysis of the way in which the constituent parts of that system have been studied, this conference, and subsequent edited book, will not only act as a useful guide for students of imperial and strategic studies, but will allow contemporary British defence policy makers to see how similar the strategic conditions they now occupy are compared to their forbearers, and perhaps most importantly, how they are not. Indeed, in the age of the Strategic Defence Reviews and Expeditionary Warfare, the principles and strategic pressures which governed the particular century of Britain's defence making process under review in this study, have to be considered the most relevant period of historical analysis which lends itself most usefully to assisting contemporary decision makers. A sophisticated and complete understanding of the principles of Britain's Imperial Defence will allow these decision makers to use the most appropriate lessons of history in their quest for future UK defence policy solutions. By bringing scholars and practitioners into the same location for a short period, this conference will allow both sides to gain better understanding and insight into the entire spectrum of the debate over the utility or not of the concept of Imperial Defence. Furthermore, the challenge to existing preconceptions concerning the principles of Imperial Defence will act as a catalyst to not only further contemporary studies, but also generate debate in the areas of empire studies, commonwealth studies, strategic studies and military history.

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A Defence Studies Department conference at the JSCSC: December 7-8 2006

Outline of event

This will be a two day conference, with international speakers and participants. The aim of the conference is to analyse the British Imperial Defence system in the period from 1856 to 1956 in terms of 1. What was Imperial Defence? 2. How did it work? 3. Are there useful lessons for British strategic foreign and defence policy makers today?

Program of events

Day 1: Registration from 0900 to 1000. (**Note early registration can be done on the afternoon of Dec.6th. Please indicate this preference when booking. A limited number of rooms for the night of the 6th are available, at additional cost.**)

1000 -1030 Welcome, Commandant JSCSC
Introduction to conference and themes – Greg Kennedy

1030 to 1200 The Foreign Office and Imperial Defence
-Thomas Otte, University of East Anglia
-John Kent, London School of Economics

Lunch 1200-1300

1300-1430 The Treasury, Intelligence and Imperial Defence
- George Peden, Stirling University
- Greg Kennedy, King's College London

15 minute break coffee

1445 -1630 The British Army, The Royal Navy and Imperial Defence
- Rod Thornton, King's College London
- Andrew Lambert, King's College London

Drinks and dinner **After Dinner speaker: LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIR JOHN KISZELY KCB MC, DIRECTOR, DEFENCE ACADEMY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Day two

0900-1030
The RAF, The Dominions and Imperial Defence
- David Hall, King's College London
- Niall Barr, King's College London

1030 – 1100 Coffee

1100-1230

The Colonies, The Media and Imperial Defence

- Stephen Badsey, Sandhurst

- Ashley Jackson, King's College London

1230-1400 Lunch

1400 -1600 Roundtable on themes and issues relevant for UK Armed Forces today to learn from Imperial Defence experience. All panellists and audience.

1600 Closing remarks and departure.

Cost: All inclusive, including registration fee, one night's accommodation, conference dinner, all other meals, coffee - £100.00

Registration Fee - £30.00 (only)

One day registration, without overnight stay, including registration fee, dinner, meals, coffee - £80.00

To book attendance at the conference or for any further information, please contact:

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