

Land Warfare Studies Centre

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**From Legend to Learning:
Gallipoli and the Military Revolution of World War I**

by

Michael Evans

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between the 1915 Gallipoli campaign and the military revolution of World War I. The paper seeks to focus on what can be learnt from the military expedition rather than concentrating on its legendary aspects. The study evaluates the strategic concept behind Gallipoli, provides a sketch of the events of the campaign, and then analyses the context and enduring significance of the Allied attempt to seize the Dardanelles. It suggests that Gallipoli remains a cautionary tale for a 21st-century military profession confronting information-age warfare based on a Revolution in Military Affairs.

The commanders at the Dardanelles lacked the ability to adapt to the new industrialised warfare of World War I, and from this perspective Gallipoli has much to teach military officers about the need for mental adaptation in complex military situations. The paper goes on to argue that British and Allied failure at Gallipoli was due largely to organisational weaknesses in the areas of command and staff work. These weaknesses magnified the personal failings of various commanders and contributed to the disaster of the Dardanelles campaign. Finally the paper outlines the lessons of Gallipoli and suggests that, for students of future warfare, the combination of advanced weapons and antiquated ideas demonstrated during the campaign remains of continuing relevance.

GALLIPOLI 2000

EIGHTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY ESSAY

FROM LEGEND TO LEARNING: GALLIPOLI AND THE MILITARY REVOLUTION OF WORLD WAR I¹

Soon there'll come—the signs are fair—
A death-storm from the distant north.
Stink of corpses everywhere,
Mass assassins marching forth.

Alfred Lichtenstein, 'Prophecy' (1913)²

For most Australians, Gallipoli is a sacred ground of lost endeavour, or as the film director Peter Weir once put it, 'a legend we'll always remember and a story we'll never forget'.³ Weir's famous 1981 film *Gallipoli*, accompanied by the haunting music of Albinoni, Bizet and Paganini, is self-consciously the work of an Australian nationalist. The final freeze frame of the dying Archy is probably the most famous scene in Australian cinema—classical in both its anti-imperial symbolism and in its celebration of the Anzac legend.⁴ Weir

¹ This paper is based on a presentation by the author to 1 QWG Manoeuvre, American–British–Canadian–Australian (ABCA) Armies Standardisation Program on 22 September 1999 at the Australian Army's Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, Puckapunyal, Vic.

² Cited in Angus Calder (ed.), *Wars*, Penguin Books, London 1999, p. 12. Alfred Lichtenstein was a German expressionist poet who was killed on the Western Front in September 1914.

³ This was the phrase that was widely used in advertising the film.

⁴ The image has been compared to the famous photograph in *Life* magazine taken by Robert Capa of a Spanish Civil War soldier 'the

uses the doomed charge of the Australian Light Horse at the Nek as a metaphor for the birth of a nation. In the film, the attack at the Nek is portrayed as a kind of Australian Balaclava. For Weir, this incident is a damning indictment of British military leadership, to the extent that Colonel Robertson—the officer who gives the orders for the futile bayonet charges of the 10th Light Horse—is portrayed as British, even though he was Australian.

As Weir and his scriptwriter—the playwright David Williamson—recognised, Gallipoli lends itself to romantic tragedy and legend by virtue of its setting on the Aegean Sea and its proximity to the plains of ancient Troy. For British and Anzac officers educated in the Greek classics and the poetry of Byron, the idea of fighting the Turks at the Hellespont and close to Troy combined legendary romance with an ideal of Christian chivalry. Inspired by parallels with Homer and Byron, the poet Rupert Brooke wrote:

They say Achilles in the darkness stirred . . .
And Priam and his fifty sons
Wake all amazed and hear the guns,
And shake for Troy again.⁵

It was not only Englishmen that were enthused by the idea of being the heirs of Achilles. One of the most formidable of

instant he is dropped by a bullet through the head in front of Cordoba'. For the photograph see Robert Capa, *Robert Capa, 1913–1954*, eds Cornell Capa and Bhupendra Karia, ICP Library of Photographers, vol. 1, Grossman Publishers, New York, 1974, p. 21. See also Jay Hyams, *War Movies*, Gallery Books, New York, 1984, p. 215.

⁵ R. Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980, p. 339.

Australia's brigade commanders, Brigadier General H. E. 'Pompey' Elliott, thought that the resemblance between Australian diggers and Greek warriors was striking.⁶ In 1920, the noted Australian classics scholar H. W. Allen saw nothing unusual in delivering a paper to the Classical Association of Victoria comparing Xenophon's Greeks with Australian diggers.⁷ Yet, romance and legends, for all their use in building mystique and ethos, are not conducive to good military science. Gallipoli has often been overshadowed by legend at the expense of learning. This paper suggests that it is possible to demythologise Gallipoli while still honouring the sacrifice of the Anzacs and of the Allied soldiers who fell on the peninsula in 1915. The aim is to re-evaluate Gallipoli with a focus on its significance for warfare in both the industrial age of the 20th century and the dawning information-age of the 21st century.

Four themes are explored. First, this essay examines the strategic manoeuvre concept behind Gallipoli. It suggests that the plan was one of the most original to emerge during World War I, but that it lacked the technological and tactical means to achieve success. Second, a sketch of the campaign is provided. The paper argues that it is misleading to see Gallipoli as a separate form of warfare from the Western Front. The Dardanelles expedition encountered nearly every problem that confronted the Allies in France, and it must be examined in that context. Third, the reasons for failure at Gallipoli are assessed, with a particular focus on the problems faced by a British military establishment

⁶ Carl Bridge and Iain Spence, 'H. W. Allen's "Xenophon's Greek diggers"', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, April 1997, Issue 30, pp. 1–10.

⁷ *Ibid.*

confronted by the military technical revolution of industrialised warfare between 1900 and 1918.

Fourth, the context and significance of Gallipoli are analysed. It is suggested that the failure to seize the Dardanelles in 1915 is a cautionary tale. As we enter a new century in a new information age, we may—like the commanders at the Dardanelles—lack the organisational innovation required to operate in a new paradigm of warfare. The generals who failed at Gallipoli were often men of reputation and ability, but they were also men who were unprepared for the intellectual challenges of mass industrialised warfare. For the future generals of the information age, Gallipoli has much to teach about the need for mental adaptation in complex military situations.

The Strategic Concept behind Gallipoli

At the time of the Dardanelles initiative in early 1915, British grand strategy was divided into two schools of thought: the continental school and the maritime school.⁸ The continental school believed that the world war could only be won through a commitment in Europe to concentrate on what they saw as the true centre of gravity: the German Army on the Western Front. Advocates of the continental commitment included figures such as Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Britain's most famous

⁸ See Tuvia Ben-Moshe, *Churchill: Strategy and History*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado, 1992, chaps 1–2 and 'Churchill's Strategic Conception during the First World War', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, March 1989, XII, I, pp. 5–21.

soldier, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, the Secretary of State for War.⁹

The maritime school, on the other hand, advocated a strategy of the circumference against the centre using the might of British naval power to wear the enemy down. The maritimists argued that this approach was Britain's natural strategy. Their inspiration was Elizabethan England raiding the Spanish Main in the 16th century; Wolfe winning Canada at Quebec in 1759; and Wellington fighting in the peninsula from 1809 to 1814.¹⁰ It was the ideas of the maritime school that were to be popularised by Liddell Hart after the war in his famous 1932 book, *The British Way in Warfare*.¹¹

In 1914, the main advocate of the maritime school on the British War Council was Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty in the Asquith Government. Churchill was influenced by the work of Sir Julian Corbett, the great British maritime strategist, and he sought to synthesise the continental and maritime schools.¹² Churchill argued that Britain should assume the defensive on the Western Front but attempt an offensive to envelop Germany and its allies on either the Baltic coast or in south-eastern Europe. By early 1915, with deadlock on the Western Front and the Russian Army reeling at the hands of the Central Powers in the east, Churchill became the driving force behind a grand scheme to force the Dardanelles. The aim was to knock Turkey out of the war, relieve Russia

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ B. H. Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare*, Faber, London, 1932.

¹² Ben-Moshe, *Churchill*, pp. 21–7.

and develop an offensive into the Balkans along the Danube to destroy the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹³

Military analysts and historians are still divided as to whether Churchill's strategic concept was sound.¹⁴ Some are convinced that the Dardanelles scheme was one of the best ideas to emerge from World War I. The British official historian of Gallipoli, Brigadier General C. F. Aspinall-Oglander, called the campaign 'one of the few great strategical conceptions of the World War'.¹⁵ Liddell Hart described the strategic logic behind Gallipoli as 'a sound and far-sighted conception'.¹⁶ Other historians have been less flattering. In 1970, the leading British historian Robert Rhodes James argued that the Gallipoli venture had little to recommend it because there were 'fundamental fallacies in the original conception'.¹⁷

¹³ *Ibid.*, chap. 2. See also, David Jablonsky, *Churchill: The Making of a Grand Strategist*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1990, pp. 17–22.

¹⁴ The literature on Gallipoli is vast. For an excellent historiographical overview see Edward Spiers, 'Gallipoli', in Brian Bond (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, pp. 165–88. Major studies include Alan Moorehead, *Gallipoli*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1956; Robert Rhodes James, *Gallipoli*, Macmillan, London, 1965; and John Robertson, *Anzac and Empire*, Hamlyn, Melbourne, 1990.

¹⁵ Brigadier General C. F. Aspinall-Oglander, *History of the Great War*, vols 1–2, *Military Operations: Gallipoli*, Heinemann, London, 1929–32, vol. 2, p. 479.

¹⁶ B. H. Liddell Hart, *A History of the World War 1914–1918*, Faber, London, 1934, p. 188.

¹⁷ Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900–1939*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981 edn, pp. 91; 96–9.

On balance it is probably true that the Dardanelles scheme was perhaps a rare chance to generate a strategic manoeuvre that, if properly resourced, offered opening a south-eastern front in the soft underbelly of Europe. However, the key to success lay not in the conception but in the execution, and this required a well-planned combined sea–land operation—something the British had not attempted since the ill-fated Walcheren expedition of 1809.¹⁸ In effect what was needed was a surprise assault along the lines of MacArthur at Inchon. Unfortunately, what eventuated was the most badly managed British campaign since the Crimea.

The Campaign at Gallipoli

From the outset of the campaign to force the Straits, operational execution failed to match strategic conception. Instead of being planned as a joint operation, integrating amphibious landings with naval support, the Dardanelles campaign was split into two separate phases. The first phase was designed as an independent attempt to force the Dardanelles by naval power alone; the second phase was an amphibious assault and a land campaign.

Phase One: The Naval Attack, February–March 1915

In the first or naval phase, Churchill's plan was for the Royal Navy to swiftly break through the Dardanelles to the Sea of Marmara and pound the Turks into submission, using naval gunfire. This plan not only forfeited surprise, but ignored an important 1906 appreciation drawn up by the Committee of

¹⁸ Geoffrey Till, 'Amphibious Warfare and the British', in Geoffrey Till, Theo Farrell and Mark J. Grove, *Amphibious Operations*, The Occasional No. 31, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Camberley, November 1997, pp. 5–20.

Imperial Defence, which warned that a naval operation against the Dardanelles would require methodical bombardment and extensive minesweeping, and was unlikely to succeed without the simultaneous use of ground forces.¹⁹ However, Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty was impatient; he wanted a naval *coup de main*, and he used all his considerable powers of persuasion to sway his fellow politicians.²⁰ It was not for nothing that Admiral Sir John Fisher, the First Sea Lord, described Churchill's plan as 'damnable' and had earlier expressed the view that 'any naval officer who engages a fort worthy of the name fort, deserves to be shot!'.²¹

Yet that is exactly what the Royal Navy set out to do: to engage the Turkish forts with a fleet of thirty vessels including eighteen battleships. The attempt to force the Straits was soon thwarted by hidden mines, mobile howitzers and long-range fort guns. Attempts to demolish the Turkish forts guarding the Straits by a mixture of naval shellfire and demolition by landing parties during February 1915 failed. On 18 March, Turkish guns and mines sank three Royal Navy battleships and badly damaged three other vessels. Admiral John de Robeck, the naval commander, was disturbed by the magnitude of these reverses and refused to prosecute the naval campaign any

¹⁹ John Lee, 'Sir Ian Hamilton and the Dardanelles, 1915', in Brian Bond (ed.), *Fallen Stars: Eleven Studies of Twentieth Century Military Disasters*, Brassey's, London, 1991, pp. 36–7.

²⁰ Ben-Moshe, *Churchill*, pp. 41–52 and Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, The Free Press, New York, 1990, p. 134.

²¹ A. J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1964, p. 495.

further for fear of further losses.²² At this point, the emphasis of the operation shifted from a sea assault to a land assault.

Phase 2: The Land Campaign, March–October 1915

In March 1915, Lord Kitchener appointed General Sir Ian Hamilton to command a 70 000-man force. Designated the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, it consisted of five divisions: the British 29th Division, two Anzac divisions, a Royal Naval Division and a French colonial division. Its mission was to seize the Gallipoli Peninsula and clear the way for the Royal Navy to converge on Constantinople.²³

By the military standards of his time, Sir Ian Hamilton had all the credentials for success. In Michael Howard's words, Sir Ian was 'one of the most sensitive and intelligent as well as influential of Britain's professional soldiers'.²⁴ As an innovative and brilliant infantry commander, Hamilton had made his name in South Africa as Kitchener's Chief of Staff.²⁵ In 1904–5 he had been an observer with the Japanese Army in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War. His two-volume study of the war, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book*, published in 1906–7, is still considered a minor military classic.²⁶ Between 1910 and 1914, Hamilton held the posts of General Officer

²² A. J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1965, pp. 206–7; 214–18; 236; 260–1.

²³ Lee, 'Sir Ian Hamilton and the Dardanelles, 1915', pp. 36–8.

²⁴ Michael Howard, 'Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, p. 521.

²⁵ Lee, 'Sir Ian Hamilton and the Dardanelles, 1915', pp. 33–5.

²⁶ Sir Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, 2 vols, E. Arnold, London, 1906–7.

Commanding, Mediterranean, and Inspector General of Overseas Forces. In these two posts he earned a reputation both as a leading thinker on future warfare and as one of the most progressive officers of his generation.²⁷

However, nothing in Hamilton's background could have prepared him for the task of overcoming the serious obstacles in commanding the land assault at Gallipoli. As John Lee has pointed out, 'never in human history had his [Hamilton's] task—an assault landing in the face of an enemy who was prepared and armed with rapid-firing weapons—been attempted'.²⁸ First, the British War Council underestimated the need for detailed advanced planning for an amphibious campaign against the Turks. Indeed, the planning was so poor that Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the War Council, was moved to observe: 'it is conceivable that a serious disaster may occur'.²⁹

Second, Lord Kitchener and the Imperial General Staff had formed no plan of operations despite the fact that Kitchener regarded the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force as representing only about half the number of troops estimated to take the peninsula.³⁰ Third, intelligence on both the Turkish order of battle and on the topography of Gallipoli was all but nonexistent. In 1915, the available knowledge about Turkey in the War Office Intelligence Branch amounted to one 1912 manual on the Turkish Army and two tourist guide-books.³¹

²⁷ Lee, 'Sir Ian Hamilton and the Dardanelles, 1915', p. 35.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁹ Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli*, vol. 1, pp. 101–2.

³⁰ Cohen and Gooch, *Military Misfortunes*, p. 136.

³¹ Rhodes James, *Gallipoli*, p. 53; Lee, 'Sir Ian Hamilton and the Dardanelles, 1915', p. 39.

‘The Dardanelles and Bosphorus’, wrote Hamilton in his diary, ‘might be on the moon for all the military information I have got to go upon’.³²

Fourth, Hamilton found that he was critically short of artillery and ammunition because of the competing demands of the Western Front. For example, his five divisions had only 118 guns each—a third of the standard number; there was an almost total lack of howitzers, trench mortars, grenades and high-explosive ammunition.³³ These serious firepower deficiencies meant that Hamilton was overly dependent on support from the guns of de Robeck’s naval force. However, the battleships in the Dardanelles were old vessels and lacked modern fire-control or high-explosive shells. Consequently, naval barrages were fired on a flat trajectory that was unsuitable for reducing Turkish entrenchments.³⁴

Fifth, Hamilton was denied the one really great advantage of amphibious power: the element of strategic surprise. He had to assemble his forces from the Greek island of Lemnos and then from Alexandria in Egypt—nearly 600 miles away from the Dardanelles. As the Australian official historian Charles Bean noted, expeditionary security was so poor that the Egyptian press began to publish details of the British forces and their

³² Sir Ian Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, Arnold, London, 1920, 2 vols, vol. 1, p. 14.

³³ Cohen and Gooch, *Military Misfortunes*, p. 136.

³⁴ See Geoffrey Till, ‘Brothers in Arms: The British Army and Navy at the Dardanelles’, in Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (eds), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, Leo Cooper, London, 1996, pp. 170–2.

destination.³⁵ Between the end of March and the Allied landings of 25 April 1915, the Turkish Government appointed a tough German general, Liman von Sanders, to command the six divisions of the Turkish Fifth Army at Gallipoli and doubled its strength to over 80 000 troops.³⁶

It is against this background that we must assess the landings of April and the major attacks of May and August in the campaign. Although Hamilton had lost the strategic initiative, he retained the element of tactical surprise. On 25 April, he launched an attack on seven different landing positions on beaches at Cape Helles and Gaba Tepe. Behind these beaches lay high ground at Achi Baba and Sari Bair. It was vital for the Allies to seize these positions in order to dominate the entire peninsula.

The main strike force was the 29th Division, which was to land at Cape Helles and drive six miles inland to capture Achi Baba. Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood and the Anzacs were to land further north at Gaba Tepe and to strike at the Sari Bair heights. If the British and Anzac assaults succeeded, then the Turks would be cut off in the rear and the Narrows would fall.³⁷ To maximise tactical surprise, there were to be three feints. In the north, the Royal Naval Division conducted an amphibious demonstration at Bulair. In the south, the French division mounted a diversionary amphibious raid at Kum Kale

³⁵ C. E. W. Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic., 1946, p. 76.

³⁶ Liman von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, US Naval Institute, Annapolis, MD, 1928, pp. 56–61.

³⁷ Lee, 'Sir Ian Hamilton and the Dardanelles, 1915', pp. 40–2.

on the Asian side of the Dardanelles and an amphibious demonstration at Besika Bay south of Kum Kale.³⁸

These northern and southern diversionary attacks by the Royal Naval Division and the French were highly effective. For forty-eight hours Von Sanders was unsure where the main British assault was located, and he diverted a Turkish division away from the south towards the Allied feint at Bulair in the north.³⁹ The success of the feints gave Hamilton local superiority at the main point of attack by the 29th Division at Cape Helles. Success now depended on good execution, and it was here that the British commanders faltered. The landings were marred by errors in navigation, poor landing-craft, inadequate logistics and weak communications.⁴⁰

The British 29th division landed on five separate beaches at Cape Helles, code-named S, V, W, X and Y. Only W and V beaches were heavily defended. On both beaches, British troops ran into a murderous combination of underwater wire, mines, machine-guns and shellfire. At V Beach the Dublin Fusiliers, the Hampshire Regiment and Munsters lost 60 per cent of their strength; at W beach the Lancashire Fusiliers suffered similar casualties.⁴¹ The landings at V and W Beaches were heroic actions in which a total of twelve Victoria Crosses were won. At X and Y beaches, however, there was only light resistance. Y beach was all but undefended, and two British battalions had the opportunity to take the Cape Helles – Krithia defences in the rear. However, Lieutenant General

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Cohen and Gooch, *Military Misfortunes*, pp. 137–8.

⁴¹ For accounts of the landings see Moorehead, *Gallipoli* and Rhodes James, *Gallipoli*.

Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, the divisional commander, failed to drive into the Turkish right flank while Hamilton remained detached at General Headquarters and did not intervene to overrule him.⁴² The result was that the Turks halted the Cape Helles assault. Between 25 April and 28 April, 29th Division took 9000 casualties; the Krithia Line was assaulted, suffering 6000 losses. The carnage was such that on 6 May Hamilton recorded: ‘we are now on our last legs. The beautiful battalions of 25 April are wasted skeletons’.⁴³

To compound the reverses at Helles, 15 000 Anzacs failed to land at Z beach at Gaba Tepe but came ashore at Ari Burnu two miles further north. The Australians landed on a narrow beach swept by deadly Turkish fire in which command and control disintegrated as large numbers of officers were killed or wounded. The Anzac advance to the Sari Bair heights was halted by Mustafa Kemal’s 19th Turkish Division. In the fighting the Anzacs suffered 50 per cent casualties.⁴⁴ The Turks then pinned the Australians and the New Zealanders down in what became known as Anzac Cove. The situation was so grave that the Anzac commanders, Birdwood and Major-General Sir William Bridges, wanted to evacuate, but Hamilton ordered them to dig in.⁴⁵

⁴² Aspinall-Oglander, *Military Operations: Gallipoli*, vol. 1, pp. 201–15; Sir Ian Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, vol. 1, p. 147.

⁴³ Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, vol. 1, pp. 147–57.

⁴⁴ For the Anzac landings see Robertson, *Anzac and Empire*, chaps 9–10 and Denis Winter, ‘The Anzac Landing: The Great Gamble?’, *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, April 1984, IV, pp. 13–21.

⁴⁵ Lee, ‘Sir Ian Hamilton and the Dardanelles, 1915’, p. 42.

In fact, the whole Mediterranean Expeditionary Force now had to dig in to defend the small bridgeheads it had secured. Thus the great strategic manoeuvre to open the straits degenerated into a positional struggle defined by attrition warfare. From toeholds on the peninsula, Hamilton faced the daunting task of expelling a tough opponent from one of the finest natural fortresses in the world. Gallipoli resembled a huge sandpit full of precipices, endless ravines and impassable ridges covered in thick scrub. In these conditions, the need was for good artillery and large numbers of infantry weapons such as grenades and trench mortars, but all were in short supply. From 1 June to 13 July, British troops suffered 17 000 casualties at Helles for a gain of some 500 yards.⁴⁶

The Disaster at Suvla Bay, August 1915

In early August, Hamilton, with his force doubled to eleven divisions, tried to break out with an assault based on Suvla Bay. What followed was one of the most extraordinary disasters in the history of British arms. The historians Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch have written of Suvla Bay:

The battle that took place on the peninsula from August 6–9, 1915, provides one of the most striking examples in modern military history of the failure of an organisation to seize and secure a success that, to both contemporaries and subsequent historians, looked to be there for the taking . . . The Suvla Bay landing presents exactly those major characteristics . . . indicative of true military misfortune: the failure of one party to do what might have been reasonably expected of it, and widespread shock at the outcome once the true scale of the lost opportunity became known.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ For the situation facing Hamilton see T. H. E. Travers, 'Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1994, vol. 29, pp. 403–42.

⁴⁷ Cohen and Gooch, *Military Misfortunes*, p. 139.

Hamilton's aim was once again to seize the heights at Tekke Tepe at the centre of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Five divisions making up IX Corps under Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Stopford had the responsibility of achieving this objective. Incredibly, Stopford had never commanded troops in battle before and was semi-infirm. The Anzacs launched diversionary attacks to assist Stopford's assault and to prevent Turkish reinforcement of the heights at Sari Bair and Chunuk Bair. The epic Australian assault at Lone Pine followed. Then on 7 August the Australians launched the attack at the Nek. However, unlike Lone Pine, the Nek had nothing to do with Suvla as portrayed in Peter Weir's film. The Nek attack was aimed at assisting the New Zealanders to seize Chunuk Bair.⁴⁸

On landing at Suvla, Stopford's IX Corps was met by only 2000 Turks as Von Sanders had again been lulled by Hamilton's feints using the Anzacs. Yet Stopford, with a ten-to-one advantage in numbers and much of the peninsula at his mercy, simply stopped his advance for forty-eight hours. His action was probably partly due to the chaotic state of British staff-work and organisation. For example, command and control was so utterly confused that some divisional officers were sent by mistake to Egypt rather than Suvla. To take Tekke Tepe required first-rate planning and determined command since the infantry had to cross four miles to reach cover—in searing heat, with no water and, above all, with no artillery. Stopford retired to his ship and left matters to his squabbling brigadier generals. One brigade major later recalled of the Suvla operation:

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 139–63; Travers, 'Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model', pp. 416–26 and Robin Prior, 'The Suvla Bay Tea Party: A Reassessment', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, October 1985, VII.

No sane man, reading a history of war in the twentieth century, imagines a division going into action with nothing but what it can carry in its hands. This is what we did, and of course we had no [artillery] guns.⁴⁹

Hamilton's staff officer Colonel Aspinall urgently informed his chief that 'golden opportunities are being lost . . . situation serious'.⁵⁰ However, by the time the detached Hamilton finally issued orders to attack the heights of Tekke Tepe on 8 August, Von Sanders had detected the concentration at Suvla. He recovered quickly and dispatched forces under the able Kemal to repulse the attempted breakout. British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith wrote to Kitchener on 20 August 1915 stating: 'I have read enough to satisfy me that the generals and staff engaged in the Suvla part of the business ought to be court-martialled and dismissed from the army'.⁵¹

In October, Hamilton was relieved of command, and the Allies began a withdrawal. The most successful part of the operation was the evacuation planned brilliantly by General Sir William Birdwood. The campaign cost the Allies 265 000 casualties, including 46 000 dead. The Turks suffered 250 000 casualties, including 86 000 killed.⁵²

⁴⁹ Quoted in Travers, 'Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model', p. 423.

⁵⁰ Eric Wheler Bush, *Gallipoli*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1975, p. 249.

⁵¹ Quoted by John Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1988, p. 50.

⁵² Robert Rhodes James, *Gallipoli: A British Historian's View*, Melbourne University History Occasional Paper, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 1–11; Robertson, *Anzac and Empire*, pp. 263–4.

The Reasons for Failure at Gallipoli

Many historians see the British failure at Gallipoli as a series of catastrophic individual command mistakes. While it is true that competent command at Helles and Suvla might have improved the chances of success, there is a strong case for viewing the defeat at the Dardanelles campaign as a British Army 'systems disaster'.⁵³ To understand how this disaster occurred, one must briefly examine the evolution of the British Army's tactical and command philosophy in the first decade of the 20th century and in the first two years of the Great War.

The British Army's Image of Future War, 1902–14

Between the end of the Boer War in 1902 and World War I in 1914, the British Army was undergoing a complex transformation from a colonial force to a modern continental force equipped with machine-guns, up-to-date rifles and heavier quick-firing artillery. Smaller-calibre rifles, brass cartridges and magazine loading gave infantry a rapid rate of fire; the introduction of high-explosive shells and recoilless gun-carriages brought mobile and long-range heavy artillery into service. New technology increased the scale of battle to an unprecedented extent in the history of warfare.⁵⁴

The firepower revolution of the early 20th century challenged Edwardian ideas concerning the organisation of the British Army and the nature of future war.⁵⁵ As an institution the

⁵³ Travers, 'Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model', p. 434.

⁵⁴ Howard, 'Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914', p. 511.

⁵⁵ Travers, 'Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model', pp. 426–41. See also Tim Travers,

pre-1914 British Army was characterised by a highly personalised command-system. Dominated by such generals as Wolseley, Roberts and Kitchener, it operated through patronage, protectors and protégés rather than institutional mechanisms. The British General Staff had only been formed in 1908, and its influence was yet to be felt. Officers were often promoted on charm rather than ability; for example, Alexander Godley, who commanded the New Zealanders at Gallipoli, was promoted because he ‘had a delightful manner with his seniors’.⁵⁶

In addition, the pre-1914 British Army’s military philosophy was based on two central beliefs that reflected the ethos of a personalised command-system: a belief in the offensive and a belief in the primacy of a human and psychological battlefield.⁵⁷ Both beliefs represented attempts to ensure that the traditional and qualitative human factor was not overcome by new quantitative technical advances in modern warfare. In this way, new weapons could be accepted in the British Army, but not necessarily integrated into its tactical thinking. This dissonance allowed many senior British officers to speculate at once about a revolution in firepower and yet to view its challenge in the comfortable paradigm of the Napoleonic-style offensive.⁵⁸

‘The Hidden Army: Structural Problems in the British Officer Corps, 1900–1918’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1982, XVII, pp. 523–44.

⁵⁶ Travers, ‘Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model’, p. 431,

⁵⁷ See Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare*, Routledge, London, 1987, chaps 1–3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, chap. 2.

The key problem for the British Army between 1902 and 1914 was how to get troops to cross a fire-swept ‘zone of death’, suffer large casualties and still maintain a determined assault. To help maintain an offensive spirit, a theory of what the noted historian of World War I Tim Travers has called the human–psychological battlefield developed. This theory was based on a belief that human values and moral forces could overcome fire-swept ground in infantry attack. The critical problem of how to reconcile the preponderance of firepower with infantry mobility therefore became a psychological rather than a tactical problem.⁵⁹

In several key respects, the British Army’s theory of the human–psychological battlefield was symptomatic of a wider cultural despair and pessimism arising from a profound anti-modernism among European military elites. Rapid advances in military technology inspired a general belief in the need for a reassertion of personal efficacy among many senior army officers in Germany, France, Russia and Britain. Throughout early 20th-century Europe, there was a growing martial belief in the spirit of the offensive based on an ideal of ‘heroic vitalism’.⁶⁰ In France, for example, the school of the offensive à *l’outrance* was developed; it was based on Colonel (later Marshal) Ferdinand Foch’s famous equations:

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ See Antulio L. Echevarria II, ‘On The Brink of the Abyss: The Warrior Identity and German Military Thought before the Great War’, *War & Society*, October 1995, XIII, ii, pp. 23–40; Douglas Porch, ‘The French Army and the Spirit of the Offensive, 1900–14’, in Brian Bond and Ian Roy (eds), *War and Society: A Yearbook of Military History*, Croom Helm, London, 1975, pp. 117–43 and Michael Howard, ‘Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914’, pp. 510–26.

‘War = the domain of moral force. Victory = will’.⁶¹ In the British Army, Sir Ian Hamilton echoed elements of these ideas when he wrote: ‘it is on [the strength of individual] moral forces that we must stand or fall in battle’.⁶²

The Failure of All-arms Doctrine: The Reaction to the Machine-gun and the Role of Artillery

The effect of a traditional and personalised military system with an emphasis on a human–psychological battlefield is well exemplified by the British Army’s reaction to both the introduction of machine-guns and the debate over the role of artillery in future warfare. In 1907, trials at the Musketry School at Hythe revealed that at 600 yards two Maxim machine-guns could annihilate a battalion advancing in open order in one minute if the troops did not go to ground.⁶³ The obvious need was for suppressive counter-battery artillery-fire and more infantry-support weapons such as mortars and grenades.⁶⁴

Both ideas were unpopular with the infantry because they suggested that artillery and infantry-support weapons should be increased at the expense of aimed rifle-fire and bayonet.

⁶¹ See Porch, ‘The French Army and the Spirit of the Offensive, 1900–14’, pp. 117–22; 138.

⁶² Hamilton, *A Staff-Officer’s Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, vol. 1, p. 12.

⁶³ Dominick Graham, ‘*Sans Doctrine: British Army Tactics in the First World War*’, in T. Travers and C. Archer (eds), *Men at War: Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century*, The Free Press, Chicago, 1982, p. 74.

⁶⁴ Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *Fire-Power: British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904–1945*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1985, p. 29.

Such ideas did not fit the Edwardian human–psychological image of war. Officers such as General Sir Douglas Haig and his protégé, Brigadier General Launcelot Kiggell, argued that the British Army was to be an army of personnel not of materiel. In 1910 the *Infantry Training* manual reflected this philosophy by stating that the aim of the infantry was to advance to win on the direct-fire battlefield.⁶⁵

As a result, both machine-guns and artillery were designated as support weapons. The infantry, artillery and cavalry therefore embraced ‘the tactics of separate tables’.⁶⁶ Yet, when World War I broke out, the battles of 1914 and 1915 showed the inadequacy of the human–psychological model when pitted against a new technological model of machine warfare. Men faced Alfred Lichtenstein’s predicted ‘death-storm’ or, as the German soldier–writer Ernst Jünger put it, ‘the hurricanes of steel’.⁶⁷ The use of machine-guns and heavy artillery consumed infantry offensives like bundles of straw in a furnace. Positional warfare involving combined-arms cooperation, heavy artillery-fire in weight and volume, and indirect fire control and counter-battery operations had to be learnt and adapted to over four years of stalemate and massive casualties.⁶⁸ Only in 1918 did ‘mechanical warfare’

⁶⁵ See T. H. E. Travers, ‘The Offensive and the Problem of Innovation in British Military Thought 1870–1915’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1978, XIII, p. 551; *The Killing Ground*, pp. 67–70.

⁶⁶ Bidwell and Graham, *Fire-Power*, p. 22.

⁶⁷ Gerhard Loose, *Ernst Jünger*, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1974, p. 29.

⁶⁸ For a provocative essay see Jonathan Bailey, *The First World War and the Birth of the Modern Style of Warfare*, The Occasional No. 22, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Camberley, 1996, pp. 4–20.

(the application of tanks, aircraft, machine-guns and artillery) replace the human–psychological model of infantry-centred warfare in the British Army.⁶⁹

Organisational Failure: Gallipoli's Resemblance to the Western Front

All the prewar trends outlined were present in the British Army's operations at Gallipoli, and all contributed to the Allied failure. Gallipoli was in many key respects a classic example of the systemic failure in the Edwardian Army's approach to combat in World War I. As Tim Travers has observed, 'Gallipoli, so long seen as an isolated case because of its nature as an amphibious operation and because of its geographical location, should really be seen in the context of the Western Front'.⁷⁰

Gallipoli resembled the Western Front in that the British command was confronted by the reality that a stalemate in tactics had swallowed up the strategy to overwhelm Turkey.⁷¹ Hamilton and his senior officers were as perplexed by the 'new war' on the Gallipoli Peninsula as their colleagues were by the stalemate on the Western Front. Like the generals on the Western Front, Hamilton pursued the pre-1914 model of offensive warfare and the psychological battlefield to try to break the Turks' resistance. At Gallipoli, as on the Western

⁶⁹ Tim Travers, 'The Army and the Challenge of War 1914–18', in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, pp. 215–40.

⁷⁰ Travers, 'Command and Leadership Styles in the British Army: The 1915 Gallipoli Model', p. 428.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 428–9.

Front, the traditional infantry offensive delivered into the white-hot jaws of defensive firepower proved costly and ultimately foundered. Yet, in accordance with the prevailing ideas of the human–psychological battlefield, Hamilton committed more and more men to the Gallipoli offensives. Confronted by attrition, he tried to defeat firepower by manpower and morale. As he put it, ‘[I want one more] dashing assault . . . before we subside into this ghastly trench warfare’.⁷² In July 1915, Hamilton came to the realisation that this approach was not working. He wrote to Kitchener:

The old battle tactics have clean vanished. I have only quite lately realised the new conditions . . . The only thing is by cunning, or surprise, or skill, or tremendous expenditure of high explosives, or great expenditure of good troops, to win some small tactical position which the enemy may be bound, perhaps for military or perhaps for political reasons, to attack. Then you can begin to kill them pretty fast.⁷³

In this statement one finds an example of the conversion from mobile warfare to the style of attrition warfare that became common on the Western Front. To compound the tactical stalemate at Gallipoli, there was the problem of the personalised command-system and poor staff-work—again features of the Western Front. Hamilton’s style of command—like that of Haig’s—did not lend itself to understanding combined operations or combined-arms warfare. Thus artillery preparation before an infantry assault was often lacking in coordination and timing, as Peter Weir showed so well in his re-creation of the Nek assault in the film *Gallipoli*. The problem at Gallipoli, as in France, was that general headquarters and divisional headquarters designed in the era of

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 430.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

the Edwardian Army were too personalised and remote from the fighting. They became immersed in detail and symmetry, which created rigidity and an inability to prevent futile attacks when circumstances changed abruptly.⁷⁴

To complicate planning further was the detachment between the British General Staff and Administrative Staff at Gallipoli. They were located on separate ships and remained divided throughout the campaign. Consequently errors of supply, logistics, reinforcement and coordination abounded because of a system devised for another era. Another mark of command detachment on both Gallipoli and the Western Front was exhaustion. At Gallipoli there was an insistence on constant fatigues—a traditional practice—but one in which in the new conditions of trench warfare contributed to rapid exhaustion during attack. Operations at Gallipoli failed for much the same reasons as the British offensives at Neuve Chapelle and Loos in France in 1915. The British military system was in the midst of a structural transition and gripped by a crisis in both tactical adaptation and staff work.⁷⁵

For all the personal mistakes made at the Dardanelles, ultimately the problems of the 25 April landing, the August assaults by the Anzacs at Lone Pine and the Nek, and the extraordinary inaction and chaos at Suvla Bay were ultimately systemic failures. These failures are well reflected by a report by the Imperial General Staff in September 1915 on Suvla Bay that stated:

To disembark troops on beaches which could not be carefully surveyed, seize covering points in the face of opposition and then

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 431–4.

to advance against a strong position from 5 to 6 miles distant over extremely difficult country with inadequate artillery and without sufficient water in very hot weather, is a task that would try to the utmost the most capable leaders and the most seasoned troops.⁷⁶

In short, the British Army command structure of 1915 was inflexible; its ethos was that of the battalion in the Sudan campaign or the Boer War. The Gallipoli commanders—Hamilton, Birdwood, Hunter-Weston and Stopford—were men locked into a military culture that did not foster quick change. Popular British and Australian historians such as Alan Clark and John Laffin have savaged the commanders at the Dardanelles as cold-blooded murderers. Clark called his book on World War I commanders *The Donkeys*. Laffin's 1988 polemic has the unflattering title, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*.⁷⁷ In the latter book, Laffin places Hamilton, Hunter-Weston and Stopford in a 'top ten' of butchers and bunglers.⁷⁸ This is a view that seems to come straight out of Charles Chilton's spectacular 1960s theatrical satire, *Oh! What a Lovely War*—a play that, in the words of Alex Danchev, portrayed senior British officers as combining 'homicidal imbecility with vainglorious ambition'.⁷⁹

Modern scholarship has shown that the command problems of World War I were much more complex than Laffin's simplistic

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

⁷⁷ Allan Clark, *The Donkeys*, Hutchinson, London, 1961; Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*.

⁷⁸ Laffin, *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One*, p. 8. The list also includes French, Haig, Gough, Haking, Harper, Rawlinson and Townshend.

⁷⁹ Alex Danchev, 'Haig Revisited', *RUSI Journal*, Summer 1990, CXXXV, ii, p. 71.

focus on personal failings.⁸⁰ In reality, the problem of command at Gallipoli was related to the structural functioning of the entire British military system in 1915. Sir Ian Hamilton, like French and Haig, was part of a senior leadership model that was transforming itself from the personal command style of the Boer War to the technocratic General Staff Officer style that evolved from 1916 to 1918.⁸¹

The Gallipoli commanders tried to impose personal leadership in circumstances where collegial staff-work and good communications were essential. Most errors were in fact already latent in the rigid structure of the British Army, in which prewar socio-organisational imperatives often took precedence over flexibility. Structural rigidity made possible and indeed magnified the active errors of officers of limited talent such as Hunter-Weston and plain incompetents such as Stopford. In this way, the failure of Gallipoli was really a systems disaster that flowed from both the structure of the British Army and the nature of warfare in 1915.

Lessons Learnt from Gallipoli

What lessons can be deduced from the Gallipoli campaign? There are perhaps five. First, although the campaign failed to force the Dardanelles, it had a negative strategic impact on Turkey. No lesser figure than T. E. Lawrence later argued that the casualties suffered by Turkey in the defence of the Dardanelles destroyed the first-line Ottoman Army and

⁸⁰ See especially the work of Tim Travers, *op. cit.*

⁸¹ Tim Travers, *How the War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front 1917–1918*, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 175–82.

assisted both the Arab Revolt and Allenby's campaign in Palestine, which led to the collapse of the Turkish Empire in 1918.⁸²

Second, Gallipoli had a major impact on the evolution of amphibious operational thinking among Western armed-forces. It was, after all, the most ambitious amphibious operation in the annals of military history until the Normandy invasion of 1944. Nowhere was this thinking more marked than in the United States Marine Corps. Gallipoli provided examples of all four types of amphibious operation: raid, demonstration, assault and withdrawal. For these reasons, the United States Marine Corps considered Gallipoli to be a failure in execution, but not in concept. In the words of Brigadier General Eli K. Cole, the campaign provided 'practically all the elements [with] which we, as Marine officers, should be familiar'.⁸³ After World War I, Major Generals John A. Lejeune and John Russell reorganised the Marine Corps from a defensive Advanced Base Force into an offensive Expeditionary Force using amphibious doctrine. By the time of the 1941–45 Pacific campaign modern communications and fire support procedures, combined with specialised landing-vehicles such as the Higgins bow-ramp landing-craft and Amtracs (amphibious tractors), made modern amphibious warfare possible.⁸⁴

⁸² T. E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1926, p. 51.

⁸³ Robert O'Neill, 'For Want of Critics . . . The Tragedy of Gallipoli', *Army Quarterly & Defence Journal*, January 1991, CXXI, i, p. 79.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1991, pp. 80–5 and Lieutenant Colonel Garratt J. Sullivan, 'The Genesis of Amphibious Warfare Doctrine', *Military Review*, May–June 1995, LXXV, iii, pp. 95–7.

Third, Gallipoli was a major strategic training ground for Winston Churchill, who was to preside over Britain's conduct of World War II. The Dardanelles campaign influenced the creation of the Combined Operations Command in 1940. The Dardanelles debacle also stood Churchill in good stead during the planning and equipping of forces for D-Day in 1944. As Professor Robert O'Neill has pointed out, 'without amphibious operations the Second World War could not have been won, and without the experience of thousands of British naval and army personnel in the Dardanelles landings, that capacity would not have been raised as swiftly and surely'.⁸⁵

Fourth, Gallipoli is a reminder of how armies can simultaneously move forward technologically but look backward organisationally—a situation that should engage the attention of every advocate of the Revolution in Military Affairs debate. The British experience between 1902 and 1917 is a graphic example of the truth that the most important problem in military innovation is not the development of new weapons but their intellectual mastery in an institutional framework.⁸⁶

In 1915 Gallipoli was a case of a particular military system trying to master the implementation of overwhelming technology. It is worth noting that the military revolution of World War I produced nearly all the major conventional weapons of the 20th century: machine-guns, heavy artillery, tanks and aircraft; yet, organisationally and doctrinally, armies struggled to adapt to industrialised conflict.⁸⁷ The combination of

⁸⁵ O'Neill, 'For Want of Critics . . . The Tragedy of Gallipoli', p. 80.

⁸⁶ Peter Paret, *Innovation and Reform in Warfare*, The Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History No. 8, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO, 1962, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Bailey, *The First World War and the Birth of the Modern Style of Warfare*, p. 17.

advanced weapons and antiquated ideas that was demonstrated at Gallipoli, Verdun and the Somme remains a powerful warning for today's military practitioners. In the 21st century, armies will need to ensure that their organisation and ideas keep equal pace with the introduction of information-age technology for the new battlespace.

CONCLUSION

Like the great German Schlieffen Plan of 1914, the British scheme at Gallipoli in 1915 was designed as a strategy of envelopment. Both plans failed largely because the tactical and operational means did not fit the strategic ends sought. Yet, just as the Schlieffen Plan was the forerunner of Field Marshal von Manstein's 1940 Ardennes plan and General Schwarzkopf's envelopment of the Iraqi Army in 1991, so too was Gallipoli the forerunner of Normandy, Inchon, the Falklands and the littoral manoeuvre concepts of the post-Cold War era. As the great continental strategies spawned in the 20th century recede into history, a maritime approach to strategy involving expeditionary warfare seems to be filling the vacuum.⁸⁸ Under these circumstances, it is likely that Gallipoli will continue to be studied with profit in many of the world's military staff colleges in the early 21st century.

The British military historian Cyril Falls once observed that, although Gallipoli could not equal the Somme in pure tragedy, the campaign remained a poignant episode in which 'the tragedy of missed chances, the might-have-beens, often strikes the imagination more forcibly than a human holocaust'.⁸⁹ Much has been invested in the Anzac legend that

⁸⁸ Brigadier Robert Fry, 'The End of the Continental Century', *RUSI Journal*, June 1998, CXXXIII, iii, pp. 15–18.

⁸⁹ Cyril Falls, *The First World War*, Putnam's Sons, New York, 1960, p. 107.

was born at Gallipoli, often at the expense of learning from the tactics and strategy of the campaign. In 1995, Robert Rhodes James declared that most Australians possessed an understanding of Gallipoli that reflected ‘a kind of nationalistic paranoia’.⁹⁰ While this view is an exaggeration, it is true that, for Australia and New Zealand, Gallipoli is not just a battlefield but the birthplace of national identities: Anzac Cove, Monash Valley, Lone Pine, The Nek—which are all places of sacred pilgrimage. The Dardanelles battleground remains a place of spirits that, by virtue of its romantic setting, lends itself to a powerful form of ‘retrospective sentimentality’.⁹¹

Legend, romance and sentimentality infuse Peter Weir’s celebrated film, and these elements have clearly affected the way the campaign has been understood in Australia’s popular consciousness.⁹² As David Stratton, one of Australia’s leading film critics, has observed, ‘the sweep of Weir’s vision, the humour, the tension, the painstaking recreation of the Gallipoli beach and cliffs, all make for a film of astonishing power’.⁹³ One of the most affecting scenes in *Gallipoli* is that of the Australian line officer, Major Barton, sitting in his tent at

⁹⁰ Rhodes James, *Gallipoli: A British Historian’s View*, p. 3.

⁹¹ John North, *Gallipoli: The Fading Vision*, Faber, London, 1936, p. 20.

⁹² In 1981, the film won nine Australian Film Institute Awards. However, its anti-imperial overtones continue to irritate some British historians. In 1995, Robert Rhodes James declared the portrayal of the attack at the Nek—the climax of Weir’s film—to be ‘a deliberate travesty of history’. See Rhodes James, *Gallipoli: A British Historian’s View*, p. 2.

⁹³ David Stratton, *The Avocado Plantation: Boom and Bust in the Australian Film Industry*, Macmillan, Sydney, 1990, p. 27.

night, listening to the beautiful duet, 'Au fond du temple saint', from Bizet's opera *The Pearl Fishers*. As the camera moves slowly away from Barton into a sweeping darkness punctuated by a kaleidoscope of flashes, lights, fires and explosions, the faces of stoic diggers awaiting the dawn battle are illuminated.

Later, we see Barton in the trenches exhorting his men before their charge: 'Remember who you are. The Tenth Light Horse, men from Western Australia'. His words recall not the imperial drumbeats of Sir Henry Newbolt or Sir Edward Elgar, but the national ballads of A. B. Patterson and Henry Lawson. With such deft touches of visual power, Weir simultaneously invokes Australian ideas of mateship, individuality, colonial innocence and a mood of melancholy sacrifice. As the American film critic Jack Kroll has written, *Gallipoli* succeeded in capturing the doomed beauty of an Australian pilgrimage to annihilation in 'a moving lament for a brave and betrayed generation'.⁹⁴

In 2000, on the eighty-fifth anniversary of the Anzac landings, Prime Minister John Howard's speech at the dawn service at Gallipoli combined all the elements of legend, romance and sentimentality. Howard called the Australian military effort at Gallipoli 'a monument upon which evening will never fall'.⁹⁵ He went on to note:

Thus, we come to this place, at this hour, on this day to observe not only a dawn but a dusk. For dusk has all but fallen on that great-hearted generation of Australians who fought here. The shadows gather on a time and a world in which our nation's spirit

⁹⁴ Jack Kroll, 'Journey's End', *Newsweek*, 7 September 1981.

⁹⁵ John Howard, 'Anzac Flame is ours to Keep Alive', *The Australian*, 26 April 2000.

was born. Soon the story of Anzac, which forever joins the people of Australia and New Zealand, will pass gently from memory into history. Soon, the fire struck here will be ours to tend. Soon, its record, once written on pages wet with tears, will be ours alone to guard, ours to cherish, ours to live.⁹⁶

Howard spoke knowing that only two of the original Australian soldiers who landed on the shores of Turkey in 1915 remain alive. Earlier, one of the surviving veterans had handed a flag to a young Australian Army officer to be unfurled at the 2000 Gallipoli service. In this way, there has been a symbolic transfer of the custodianship of the Anzac tradition to a new generation in a new century, thus ensuring that 25 April continues to represent ‘the day that does not die’.⁹⁷

For other nations, the legacy of Gallipoli is more prosaic. For Turkey, Gallipoli is the place where the founder of the modern Turkish state, Kemal Attaturk, first rose to prominence. For Britain, France and the United States, Gallipoli was a glimpse of the future of war in the 20th century. In 1915, the contours of future war were unclear, for the owl of history is a bird of the darkest night and does not easily shed light on its secrets. As our continental century of two world wars and a cold war ends, we must try to adapt to a new paradigm of 21st-century conflict, in which asymmetric military challenges, small but lethal ethnic wars and policing failed states seem to predominate.

For Australian soldiers, part of the military challenge of the new century means that, in considering the significance of

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 April 2000 editorial and *The Age*, Melbourne, 26 April 2000 editorial. The last two Gallipoli veterans, Alec Campbell and Roy Longmore, are both over 100 years old.

Gallipoli, there must be a symbolic shift towards learning from the campaign rather than merely appreciating its powerful legend. It is intellect rather than emotion that should guide a modern army into an uncertain future. Unlike the leaders of the British Army between 1902 and 1914, the Australian Army of the early 21st century must harness all of its intellectual resources in peacetime to avoid having to learn tragic lessons in wartime. To succeed in such an endeavour would be to honour the memory of the many brave men who—eighty-five years ago on the shores of the wine-dark Aegean sea—faced the raw and unexpected power of an earlier, but no less deadly, military revolution.

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