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The Gallipoli Campaign: Aims, Options, Outcomes

OK, let me begin by considering what, if anything, Australia contributed to the decision to invade Turkey in 1915?

Now, we must ask that question because, as we know, the Gallipoli campaign holds a very special place for Australians. Indeed it's said to be the event which above all others, brought Australia to nationhood, - through which 'we came of age'. And yet, if 'nationhood' means anything, it would have to include the making of *independent* decisions in *the best interests of Australians*, of its own people.

Yet, clearly, that did not apply to Australia's decision to join Britain in its war against Germany, - or Turkey. In fact most Australians were then, - and have since remained, - entirely ignorant of the reasons behind Britain's decisions for war, and, needless to say, they were not consulted on its wisdom or conduct. Moreover, an Australian government had simply gone along with Britain's war declaration, adding one of its own, - as again happened at the outset of WWII.

And so when in November 1914, our first volunteer troops left Albany, West Australia for France, as they were given to understand, the decision to disembark them in Egypt, then commit them to the invasion of Turkey was an entirely British one.

Now while it goes without saying that from beginning to end of that campaign our troops fought most valiantly and selflessly under the most difficult of conditions, the very real sacrifices involved can in no sense justify or compensate for the total lack of *independent* Australian decision-making. After all, this would have required a close knowledge of Britain's strategic thinking, Australia's agreement to become involved, and its full participation in the planning of operations involving Australian troops, - none of which applied.

OK, then, what were Britain's aims underlying its decision to invade Turkey?

By way of background, at the outbreak of WWI the major combatant states maintained that with the right sort of 'fighting spirit' the conflict could be settled in 'a few months', the troops 'home by Christmas'. However, by November, 1914, both European Fronts had degenerated into the frightful

stale-mated carnage of trench warfare (which as Barbara Tuchman described it) “*that murderous insanity that sucked up lives at the rate of 5,000 and sometimes 50, 000 a day*”. Perhaps not too surprising then, the question of whether there might be easier victories elsewhere. A directly related issue was how more nations could be induced to join the Entente side, Britain’s Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener arguing that an assault on Constantinople could bring in Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania -- providing they were offered Turkish territory. (MG1, 362; BT, 425-6)

Now here one needs to bear in mind that as a long-declining state Turkey with its extensive resource-rich Ottoman territories was seen as an Empire fit for plunder, many states hovering, just waiting their opportunity. Indeed, in that regard, territorial and resource prospects were powerful lures not only for the lesser powers, but for Britain, France and Russia as well.

Evidence of such British motivation comes from a letter to Winston Churchill, the Admiralty’s First Lord, from his flamboyant First Sea Lord, Admiral Lord ‘Jackie’ Fisher. As quoted by Churchill in *The World Crisis*, Churchill’s own record of World War One, it goes:

“*January 3, 1915*

Dear Winston,

I’ve been informed by Hankey that War Council assembles next Thursday, I CONSIDER THE ATTACK ON TURKEY HOLDS THE FIELD!-but ONLY if its IMMEDIATE! ...” (Fisher then goes on to propose what he calls his ‘Turkey plan’, which includes:)

“II. Immediately replacing all Indians and seasoned troops from Sir John French’s command with Territorials, etc., from England (as you yourself suggested) and embark this Turkish Expeditionary Force ostensibly for protection of Egypt! WITH ALL POSSIBLE DESPATCH at Marseilles! and land them with troops now in Egypt at Haifa and Alexandretta, the latter to be the REAL occupation because of its inestimable value as regards the oil fields of the Garden of Eden, with which by rail it is in direct communication,

III. The Greeks go for Gallipoli at the same time as we go for Besika, and the Bulgarians for Constantinople, and the Russians, the Servians, and Roumanians for Austria (all this you said yourself!)

But as the great Napoleon said, ‘CELERITY’-without it-‘Failure’!

*Yours,
F.”* (WC1ii, 95-6)

Now all this may sound like Boy's Own Adventure stuff, but seeing it reproduced in *The World Crisis*, we have to take it seriously since it truly represents the sort of thinking which affected so many in high places, - and hence so many young lives.

Of course, if we go further back, from historian Denis Winter's research of documents from Britain's *Committee of Imperial Defence* (CID), we find that plans to reshape Turkey's Ottoman Empire in Britain's favour had been forming ever since the end of the Boer War. (DW, 4 -13) I won't go into that detail here, except to point out that from 1910, Lord Kitchener was appointed Consul General for Egypt, a position held through to 1914 when he became Minister of State for War; and also that from 1910, Major-General Sir Ian Hamilton was appointed Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean, these appointments clearly indicating a serious on-going British interest in the region, including Turkey's Ottoman territories. (DW, 3-13)

And so, clearly, the Gallipoli campaign was not, as often portrayed, simply due to some late arrived-at consideration such as Russia's need for access to the Dardanelles. Indeed, any doubts on this are swept away by Churchill's own accounts of the Gallipoli Campaign's background and unfolding events from 1914. (WC1i & WC1ii)

As Churchill records, describing his letter to Prime Minister Asquith of December 31, 1914: "*I wanted Gallipoli attacked on the declaration of war.*" (WC1ii, 92) for, as he explained, early in August, 1914, Greece's Prime Minister, Venizelos had, with his King's consent, "...*formally placed at the disposal of the Entente powers all the naval and military resources of Greece..*", including some 250,000 troops. Churchill then goes on, "*This magnanimous offer greatly attracted me. No doubt on the one hand it was a serious risk of adding Turkey to our enemies. On the other hand, the Greek Army and Navy were solid factors; and a combination of the Greek armies and fleet with the British Mediterranean squadron offered a means of settling the difficulties of the Dardanelles in a most prompt and effective manner.*" (WC1i, 485) And, as Churchill continued, "*If we were not going to secure honest Turkish neutrality, then let us, ... get the Christian States of the Balkans on our side.*" (WC1i, 486)

Now, since Turkey had every reason not to involve itself in any *European* war, this comes across as a rather strange argument. At all events, as both Prime Minister Asquith and Foreign Secretary Grey were aiming to keep Turkey out of the war, Greece's offer was not at that stage taken up.

At all events, on August 31, 1914, approved by Grey, Churchill had written to Noel Buxton, who was about to undertake a 'propaganda tour' of the

Balkans, to stress the need to enlist every Christian Balkan State: Bulgaria, Serbia, Roumania, Montenegro and Greece for, as he claimed, England “...has been the friend of every Christian State in the Balkans in all their years of struggle and suffering. She has no interests of her own to seek in the Balkan Peninsula. By acting together in unity and good faith the Balkan States can now play a decisive part, and gain advantages which may never again be offered.”(WC1i, 487) So here we see very clearly Churchill’s line of thinking!

And fully expecting war against Turkey, Churchill began to prepare for it. Thus writing on September 1, 1914 to Sir Charles Douglas, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Churchill called for “...a plan for the seizure by means of a Greek army of adequate strength of the Gallipoli peninsula with a view to admitting a British Fleet to the Sea of Marmora.”, he then further indicating, “...the matter is urgent, Turkey may make war on us at any moment.” (WC1i, 487-8) Oh my, how striking parallels with today’s Iraq spring to mind!

Now, obviously at this stage, this Greek-based military campaign was Britain’s first, -- clearly its preferred, option, - yet in the absence of military support from Russia to assist Greece’s troops, Foreign Secretary Grey still held back. (WC1i, 489-90)

Then on September 9, 1914, Britain withdrew its Naval Mission to Turkey, Churchill requesting that its head, Admiral Limpus (also titular head of the Turkish Navy) be transferred to command the British naval squadron assigned to watch the mouth of the Dardanelles. But, as Churchill put it, “*This project was not, however, pursued, it being thought that it would be unduly provocative to employ on this station the very officer who had just ceased to be the teacher of the Turkish Fleet the Admiral who knew the Dardanelles with all its possibilities.*” (WC1i, 491)

My God!, as you might exclaim, what was that all about?! Well, let me explain. Since 1911 there had been in Turkey a British Naval Mission, the role of which, together with an Armstrongs’ and Vickers’ subsidiary, ‘*The Imperial Ottoman Docks, Arsenal and Naval Construction Company*’, was to modernise, to strengthen that country’s naval defences. (N-B, 41, 72, 179, 191, 350; AA, 94-5,135-6, 269) Moreover, on July 28, 1914 (that is, just before the war had begun) two modern battleships, the *Reshadieh*, and the *Sultan Osman*, which had just been completed for Turkey at Armstrongs’ and Vickers’ shipyards in Britain, - indeed, fully paid for and with their Turkish crews ready to board, were requisitioned by Churchill for the Royal Navy.(WC1i, 208-9)

Well, while this made Turkey's leaders, its Committee of Union and Progress, - the so-called 'Young Turks' - more than a little unhappy, it pleased Germany's high command who, keen to take advantage of the situation, directed two of their battleships they had in the Mediterranean, (the *Goeben* and *Breslau*), to proceed to Constantinople. And, at that stage, Germany ever so 'sneakily' supplied Turkey with these two battleships as 'replacements'. However, the catch for Turkey was that they came complete with their German crews still under German command! (BT, 158-9) Hence the British naval watch at the Dardanelles' entrance, Churchill's distress, and his claim of Turkey's 'hostility' in accepting the German ships.(WC1i, 492) So when Allied ambassadors in Constantinople protested at Turkey's 'breach of neutrality', Turkey demanded Germany disarm its ships, - but this was refused. And instead the compromise reached was that the ships, then renamed *Jawus* and *Midilli*, would be, (quote) 'sold' to Turkey. (BT, 160)

As Churchill admits, all this undoubtedly strengthened the influence of Turkey's pro-German faction, Talaat Bey boss of Turkey's ruling Committee, then signing (in secret on August 2), a military alliance with Germany that promised mutual support should either country be at war with *Russia* - a long-time enemy of Turkey known to have designs on the Dardanelles --.(BT, 140-2; WC1i, 494) However, notwithstanding German pressure, the Turks, who were totally averse to becoming embroiled in any *European* war, firmly refused to join that war.(BT, 142, 160) And so for nearly three months, while the Allies attempted to gain Talaat's support by promises of 'Ottoman territorial integrity', - and the Germans continued to press their reluctant 'ally' to join the war, the Turks stood firm, determined to stay out of it (BT, 160-1)

Ultimately however, the Germans won out by ordering their Admiral, Souchon, (still in command of the 'Turkish' ships) to cross the Black Sea on October 28 and bomb Odessa and other Russian ports, this causing first Russia, then Britain and France, to declare war on Turkey. Thus did Germany, 'ever-so-cleverly' succeed in *forcing* Turkey into the war.(BT2,160-1). - all this so well described by Barbara Tuchman in "*August 1914*", her wonderfully-written account of the first month of the First World War. (BT, 139-162)

It was indeed a dismal outcome for Turkey whose people were to suffer so greatly, - such being the fate of small powers unless they take great care not to become ensnared and shamelessly exploited by Great Powers. In this case both Turkey and Britain were tricked by Germany. And to make things worse for Britain's war plans, already by mid September Greece's enthusiasm for war on Turkey was cooling, notwithstanding Churchill's on-going promises of later rewards. (WC1i, 491-3)

So, at this stage, following discussions with Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey who still advised caution, Churchill saw only the gloomy prospect of, *“England, without an army, with not a soldier to spare, without even a rifle to send, with only her Navy and her money, counted for little in the Near East. Russian claims to Constantinople directly crossed the ambitions of King Ferdinand and of King Constantine.”* (WC1i, 493-4)

Now, according to Churchill, in October 1914 Turkey was about ‘to invade’ one of its ‘own’ Ottoman territories, Egypt, - a threat which by late October was said to be imminent.(WC1i, 494-7) Seemingly that remained so until about the third week of November when it turned out that, *“The Turkish attack proved however to be only of a tentative character.”*(WC1i, 498) And, as he further relates, at this very time the *Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACS)* *“...had been steaming steadily towards France.....”*, reaching the Suez Canal by November’s end, and since (quote) *“..the Turkish invasion of Egypt was still threatening, .. Lord Kitchener .. Began to disembark the whole Australian and New Zealand Force at Suez for the purpose of completing their training and defending the line of the Canal.”* (WC1i, 498-9)

Now at that stage, notwithstanding the continued holding back of military support by the ‘Christian Balkan States’, as the end of 1914 approached there remained it seemed for Churchill, ‘the vision splendid’, for as he portrayed it: *“...as this act in the stupendous world drama comes to its close, we see already the scene being set and the actors assembling for the next. From the uttermost ends of the earth ships and soldiers are approaching or gathering in the Eastern Mediterranean in fulfillment of a destiny as yet not understood by mortal man. The clearance of the Germans from the oceans liberated the Fleets, the arrival of the Anzacs in Egypt created the nucleus of the Army needed to attack the nucleus of the Turkish Empire.”* (WC1i, 499-500)

Well, much more in this vein follows, but only direct experience of the text can convince the reader of its authenticity. It is as if we are in the presence of a poetic Rumsfeld, Bush or Cheney conjuring up visions of glories and victories just around the corner.

And since the possibilities of Turkey remained with Churchill, he asks might not Italy *too* be Enticed? For as he wrote: *“The momentous importance of exciting the interest and ultimately obtaining the adherence of Italy was ever in my mind. But I felt that the Dardanelles and Turkey were the real ‘motor muscles’ of Italian resolve. If in addition to all her anti-Austrian feelings, Turkey, with whom Italy had only just ceased to be at war, and from whom she had newly wrested the Tripoli province, was to be vigorously attacked and possibly overthrown; if the whole Turkish Empire*

was to be cast on to the board, plunged into the centre of the struggle, with all its rich provinces and immense Italian interests perhaps an easy prey, could Italy afford to remain indifferent?" (WC1ii, 111-2) Ever so revealing, -- for enticed in that way, how could Italy refuse?!

Well, the outcome was that Italy, formerly a member of the Triple Alliance (allied to Germany and Austro-Hungary) but then neutral, was promised the southern provinces of Turkish Asia Minor, including the ports of Marmarice and Antalya, along with other territories, to join Britain in the war. And yet, as we know, Italy's troops did not become involved in the Gallipoli campaign.)(MG1,364) And, thus there remained an overall troops shortfall requiring an altogether different approach.

And so we come to Britain's second option, namely, a 'no-troops, -- an *all-Naval*' Assault?

Well, the proceedings of Britain's War Council Meeting of January 28, 1915 were recorded by its Secretary, Colonel Maurice Hankey, from which I'll paraphrase:(WC1ii, 163-4) Aware of the failure to gain support from the 'Balkan Christian States', Mr Churchill emphasised Russia's and France's enthusiasm for such a strategy. In essence, the proposal was to force a way through the Dardanelles to the Sea of Marmora and Constantinople, Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War considering it to be a 'vitally important' plan. Mr Balfour too, saw in it many advantages, including that Constantinople '*would be brought under our control*' and that it would open a passage to the Danube; indeed, it was difficult to imagine 'a more helpful operation'.(WC1ii,163)

According to historian Martin Gilbert, War Council Secretary, Hankey was greatly taken with the idea for similar reasons because, as he saw it, - it would give the Anglo-French naval forces access to the Danube, quote, "*...as a line of communication for an army penetrating into the heart of Austria, and thus bring British sea power to bear in the middle of Europe.*" !! (MG, 362) And Foreign Secretary Grey was also in favour since it would: "*...finally settle the attitude of Bulgaria and the whole of the Balkans.*" And of course all were reassured by the knowledge that with the necessary ships *already* heading for the Dardanelles, the operation could be accomplished in 3 to 4 weeks, Mr Churchill explaining the plan of attack on a map. (WC1ii, 163-4)

Yet, in common with all previous British strategic studies, Lord Fisher's view was that for success, a *combined* naval-military attack was absolutely essential. Now, as we've seen, Churchill had attempted to obtain sufficient troops from many seemingly likely nations, - yet since the problem remained, in a last effort to provide a military force, it was decided to offer Britain's

29th Division, plus a French Division, - providing Greece would join the Allies, -- but at that stage Venizelos declined! Notwithstanding this Fisher, writing to Churchill on February 16 was perfectly clear, saying “*I hope you were successful with Kitchener, in getting divisions sent to Lemnos tomorrow! it will be the wonder of the ages that no troops were sent to cooperate with the Fleet with half a million soldiers in England.*” Nevertheless, - still, on February 16 existing military limitations stood, just the one British division, the 29th - and even that offer soon withdrawn by Kitchener - (plus the 30,000 ANZACs ‘in case of necessity’) to support the naval attack.(WC1ii, 179-181)

And, thus, finally, it was this troops shortfall which led to the purely all-naval assault, an attack due to begin on February 19, - that is, in just three days time! - well before Lord Kitchener’s actual release of the 29th division on March 10. (WC1ii, 188-9)

Now, had that strategy been successful, it might have been a most ‘economical’ operation, ships alone penetrating the Straits to the Sea of Marmora, threatening and (if necessary) bombarding Constantinople to force the Turks to sue for peace ‘on our terms’. Yet it was indeed an overly bold move, especially as it appeared to take no account of Turkey’s Dardanelles’ defences, built over the years with the assistance of the *British Naval Mission* and *The Imperial Ottoman Docks Company* set up by Vickers and Armstrongs. (N-B, 350; AA, 95, 135)

That plan was to bring Turkey’s navy up to date by providing it with modern ‘dreadnoughts’, cruisers, destroyers and submarines, - along with other armaments that could protect the Dardanelles - search-lights, trawlers, land-based torpedo-tubes, torpedoes and mines. (N-B, 190-1; AA,95)

So a baffling miscalculation here is that all of this must have been especially well understood by Britain’s First Sea Lord, Admiral Fisher, and Winston Churchill, who’d been the Admiralty’s First Lord since 1912. The dismal sequence of events is well described in Alan Moorehead’s book, *Gallipoli* as well as in Churchill’s extended account. (AM, 33-59; WC1ii)

OK then, lets look at the All Naval Assault:

Now, for this assault the Anglo-French navies came up with an impressive array of battleships, Britain with 14, including 2 semi-dreadnoughts, a battle cruiser, and the newly-completed *Queen Elizabeth*; the French with 4 battleships and their auxiliaries. (AM, 44) The attack began, as expected, on February 19, 1915, with a prolonged bombardment of the Turkish protective forts. Under this cover mine-sweepers were to clear a channel up to the

Narrows, but due to bad weather and short winter days progress was slow, especially as the sweepers had problems making headway against the one-way current generated by rivers entering the Black Sea. Nevertheless, they had advanced six miles without encountering any mines. (AM, 45)

And casualties were said to be “trifling”. Moreover, following Admiral Carden’s message of March 2 indicating he expected to reach Constantinople ‘in about 14 days’, the mood at Admiralty and War Council became one of “elation”, many doubters wanting to be associated with the enterprise, Lord Fisher speaking of taking command of the next stage.(AM, 46) Also profound was the effect on potential allies, the attitude of the ‘Christian Balkans’ States’ changing remarkably.(WC1ii, 199) Most stimulated was Greece’s Prime Minister, Venizelos, he offering 3 divisions, an offer soon increased to 5! And as Churchill commented, - “*Behind all lay Bulgaria and Roumania, determined not to be left out of the fall of Constantinople and the collapse of the Turkish Empire.*” So all seemed set for an extraordinary ‘multilateral triumph’, but then on March 3 came the spoiler, Russia’s Foreign Minister announcing that: “*The Russian Government could not consent to Greece participating in operations in the Dardanelles, as it would be sure to lead to complications.*” And notwithstanding Venizelos’ attempts to gain Russian agreement to a smaller Greek force, that too was refused so that Greece’s King Constantine, feeling rebuffed, withdrew his support for the compromise, - this finally causing Venizelos together with his cabinet to resign. (WC1ii, 200-4)

But the failure to gain Greek support was not the only problem because Admiral Carden’s estimate of 14 days proved far too optimistic. The difficulty was in underestimating the Dardanelles’ defences. You see, while the firing of Turkey’s shore batteries had little affected those on the battleships, it had had profound effects on the crews of the close-in unprotected minesweepers. Indeed, these ‘sweepers’ were very much the Achilles Heel of the operation because, unlike naval ships, they were highly vulnerable North Sea fishing trawlers! Indeed, more than that, their crews were civilian North Sea fishermen!! (AM, 46; WC1ii, 261)

And while these fishermen had said they were prepared to risk being blown up by mines, they had not agreed to work under shore gun-fire. Moreover, although Churchill directed that these civilians be replaced by volunteer naval personnel: “*From March 3 onwards the progress of Admiral Carden’s attack became continually slower.*” (WC1ii, 205; AM, 46-7) And further, by this time with all the difficulties, Admiral Carden had become so highly stressed that Admiral De Robeck had to take over the assault set for March 18.

Now, to get past the Narrows beyond Chanak, all would depend upon

clearing a band of water five miles long and scarcely a mile wide. The entire Anglo-French naval force was to take part, no battleship to venture into waters not cleared of mines.(WC1ii, 223-4; AM, 50) So from early on March 18th., the battleships advanced firing until all shore batteries were silenced. At 4pm, from the mouth of the Straits, Admiral de Robeck directed some 6 sweepers in, but, met by heavy fire, all eventually were forced to retire.(AM, 53)

Moreover, the prospects of success were greatly diminished when a number of battleships returning to the mouth of the Straits were sunk or severely damaged. As de Robeck reported: “*We have had a disastrous day owing either to floating mines or to torpedoes from shore tubes fired at long range. HMS Irresistable and Bouvet sunk. HMS Ocean still afloat, but probably lost. HMS Inflexible damaged by mine. Gaulois badly damaged by gunfire. Other ships all right, and we had much the best of the forts.*” (WC1ii, 241) Ah, to be so able ‘to look on the bright side’!

For reasons which escape me, Admiral Keyes, looking back, wrote: “*I had a most indelible impression that we were in the presence of a beaten foe. I thought he was beaten at 2 pm. I knew he was beaten at 4 pm – and at midnight I knew with still greater certainty that he was absolutely beaten; and it remained for us to organize a proper sweeping force and devise some means of dealing with the drifting mines to reap the fruits of our efforts.*” (AM, 56) And while he, Churchill, and others would have persisted in the all-naval assault, Admirals de Robeck and Wemyss, meeting with Major-General Sir Ian Hamilton, decided on the absolute necessity of changing tack. In their judgement the purely naval efforts simply had to be set aside in favour of urgent preparations for a military campaign, one to be led by Hamilton.(WC1ii, 242-3)

Thus, finally we come to the Third option, the least-favoured and ever-so-rushed Military Campaign

However, towards this military campaign, again what extraordinarily unreal optimism! For long, Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, aiming to retain *all* experienced British troops for the Western Front, had insisted on the practicality of the all-naval assault, characterising it as “*...only a cruise on the Sea of Marmora..*”. On that assumption, and believing that the Australian troops in Egypt would be quite sufficient for any military support, he had held off agreeing to the release of Britain’s 29th division until March 10! Moreover, although it was known that military support *would* be needed at *some* stage, Kitchener did not appoint General Hamilton as his military Commander-in-Chief until March 12!

Having given Hamilton, the brief message: *“We are sending a military force to support the Fleet now at the Dardanelles, and you are to have command.”*, Kitchener sent him off the following day, he arriving at the Dardanelles on March 17th (WC1ii, 208); - but since no military preparations had been in train, Hamilton faced a truly daunting task.(WC1ii, 239) Both he and Churchill noted the state of disarray which had to be faced. As Hamilton recorded, *“Here am I still minus my Adjutant-General, my Quartermaster-General and my Medical Chief, charged with settling the basic question of whether the Army should push off from Lemnos or from Alexandria. Almost incredible really, we should have to decide so tremendous an administrative problem off the reel and without any Administrative Staff. I must wait for the 29th division....”* - Yet the much-needed 29th division was not due to arrive until the first week in April! (see WC1ii, 240) April!!

Indeed, there seemed abroad a sense of total unreality. As Churchill wrote: *“When Lord Kitchener undertook to storm the Gallipoli Peninsula with the Army, he was under the impression that a week would suffice to prepare and begin the operation, He was astonished at the date of the military attack having to be put off so late as April 14, and he sent there and then from the Cabinet room the following telegram to Sir Ian Hamilton:-*

‘I am informed you consider the 14th April as about date for commencing military operations if fleet have not forced the Dardanelles by then. I think you had better know at once that I consider any such postponement as far too long, and should like to know how soon you will act on shore.’ ” (WC1ii, 249-50)

(That brings to mind a scene from ‘Blackadder’, Stephen Fry as the absurdly inflated woolly-headed red-tabbed General on the Western Front – an image we might have thought only *half* true!) Hamilton’s reply was pertinent, yet since the invasion went ahead on April 25, 1915, that is, just 6 weeks from Hamilton’s appointment on March 12, then clearly *far far far* too little time was left for anything like adequate preparation.

And here it should be further emphasised that the same lack of preparation applied to the preceding naval assault. Not only the issue of Britain having previously strengthened Turkey’s Dardanelles’ defences, but the plan’s Achilles’ Heel. Indeed, as Churchill later admitted, the force of mine-sweepers was, to quote him: *“...inadequate both in numbers and efficiency. There were only available twenty-one trawlers, whose speed was too slow for sweeping against the current. These were manned by fishermen, unsupported by trained and disciplined naval personnel”* (WC1ii, 261)

So, lets now consider some of the Military, Political and Human Outcomes

All too clearly, in no sense was Gallipoli a successful campaign for *any*

involved. Before long, like the European Fronts, it too became stale-mated, the troops of both sides dug into largely immovable lines. Even the smallest advances – and there were many attempts -- were made at awful cost. Again, as in France, the advantages lay with the defence. Not only were the ably-led Turks defending their homeland but, with ample warning, they were well prepared on totally familiar territory. Further, they had heavier artillery and perhaps even more critically, they had at least three times the number of machine guns.(DW, 219-20)

Again it was a case of bizarre overconfidence. You see, despite the fact that British firms, initially the Maxim Gun Co. Ltd.(1884), then Maxim-Nordenfelt (1888) (both linked to Albert Vickers) were manufacturing the revolutionary 600-shot-per-minute Maxim gun in Britain, that company was at the same time selling its production rights internationally to all, including Krupps (1888). And whereas by the onset of WWI the British Army had some 2,000 of these re-named ‘Vickers’ guns, Germany had 50,000 - 25 times as many! (AA, 44-6, 57, 69; DW, 219-20)

At all events, the overall effect of the Gallipoli stalemate was that while the Turkish defenders were unable to dislodge the invaders, the Allies were equally unable to dominate the Straits to allow their navy’s ships to pass and capture Constantinople. So the totally counter-productive campaign lingered on, the men of both sides suffering terrible hardship and casualties for 8 miserable months until, come winter with its heavy rains and blizzard snows, the decision was finally taken to evacuate on January 1, 1915.(MG1, 377, 381)

Well, the cost in lives of this mutual failure was very high, more than 28,000 British, 10,000 French Colonials, 8,000 Australians, 2,431 New Zealanders and ‘more than’ 66,000 Turkish soldiers killed.(MG1, 369;CBi, 380)

And notwithstanding these losses and the lack of anything that could be described as ‘success’, given more young men, Hamilton would have continued. This may seem hard for us to understand, but we may get a glimmer of what had long driven Hamilton from his 1905 writings in “A *Staff Officer’s Scrap Book*”(IH1), and from his *Gallipoli Diary*.(IH2) For example from the latter: “*Once in a generation, a mysterious wish for war passes through the people. Their instinct tells them there is no other way of progress and escape from habits that no longer fit them. Whole generations of statesmen will fumble over reforms for a lifetime which are put into full-blooded execution within a week of a declaration of war. There is no other way. Only by intense suffering can the nations grow, just as a snake once a year must with anguish slough off the once beautiful coat which has now become a straight jacket.*” (IH2, Chapter 2)

Charles Bean's historical assessment of Gallipoli's outcome for Australians (CBI, 166-201) was not well appreciated by Churchill. Here I'll quote Churchill's response "*The writer of the Australian Official History has thought it right to epitomize the story in the following concluding sentence:- 'So through a Churchill's excess of imagination, a layman's ignorance of artillery, and the fatal power of a young enthusiasm to convince older and slower brains, the tragedy of Gallipoli was born'.*

It is my hope that the Australian people, towards whom I have always felt a solemn responsibility, will not rest content with so crude, so inaccurate, so incomplete and so prejudiced a judgement but will study the facts for themselves." (WC1ii, 122)

Well, one can only hope they (including 'we') will – and if you need any help, I've referenced all sources through the text, complete to page numbers.

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