



Subject: The Significance of the Gallipoli Campaign to New Zealand

Background:

In order to understand the significance of Gallipoli to New Zealand some background is in order. Revisionist history and a lack of contextual knowledge has confused the campaign in the public memory and shrouded it in myth and legend. The people of 1915 saw the world in much different terms than we do in 2013.

In 1907 New Zealand became a Dominion and this capped a outpouring of nationalism and patriotism that had developed through until then. This was a proud moment for the colony and placed us a rank above the colonies and on a par with Australia, Canada, and Newfoundland. This was also known as the 'white dominions'. The government had replaced the Union Jack with a new national flag, introduced *God Defend New Zealand* as the national anthem, and created the New Zealand coat of arms. These steps reinforced our sense of nationhood. But we still retained strong links to Britain through a shared culture and sense of belonging. It is not unusual to find in the letters of those New Zealanders who travelled to Britain referring to it as home even though they had been born in New Zealand. The New Zealand that joined the war in 1914 was a proud part of the Empire and would have no hesitation in committing its forces to the conflict under British command and control. For the most overt pre-war example one cannot go past the purchase of a battleship for the Royal Navy in 1909 that ended up as a battlecruiser HMS *New Zealand*. When it was purchased the cost was equal to £2 & 3 shillings for every man, woman, and child alive in New Zealand.

The First World War as a Maritime War

This overt focus on the land war forgets that the shape and course of the First World War was determined by maritime factors and in fact the war was decided at sea rather than on the Western Front. This is not to deride the war on land or the importance it had in the eventual victory of the Allied Powers but that victory was built on maritime force. The land war in some ways was restricted to certain geographical areas, for example the Italian Front and the Sinai-Palestine area. In contrast the war at sea was fought in the Arctic, off Norway, the Baltic Sea, North Sea, Atlantic, English Channel, Mediterranean, Adriatic, Black Sea, the Dardanelles, the Aegean, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, the Pacific, off South America, off the eastern coast of Africa, along the River Tigris and even in New Zealand waters.

Maritime issues shaped the First World War and in a maritime war, geographical location is everything. The sea causes a nation to be formed and then be nourished as it develops. The first thing to note is that New Zealand was part of a maritime entity called the British Empire. This maritime entity was called the British Empire but it is both informal and voluntary and is linked because of trade and coaling stations rather than by force and control of territory. Distance has a different meaning for someone in New Zealand than someone in continental Europe for instance. The ease of movement is terribly important and both movements by land or by sea have disadvantages and advantages. It is not easy for an army to move

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across the sea if it does not have a strong navy to support it. France and Russia could have collapsed in 1914-1915 but that would not have affected Britain because it was not cut off from resources in the shape of men, armaments, munitions, and food. Contrast this with Germany and Austria-Hungary that were cut off from resources that could not be sourced from within greater Europe.

This commercial system which could be described as a worldwide maritime alliance is linked by sea rather than overland transport. By July 1914, the British Empire was at its zenith. The fundamental fact of life is that it is easier to move people and good by sea. Before air travel moving people by sea was the only way to get to another country and even today it is still cheaper to move goods in bulk by sea. New Zealand and her sister dominions are directly involved because the sea connects you to other countries. Because Britain ['home'] is on the other side of the world does not matter and for maritime entities distance does not seem to exist as the sea is the different thing as it reduces distances in a very important sense.

The First World War is the last naval war in which the battleship, for so long the heart of the naval striking forces, was paramount as the main instrument of sea power. This supremacy was to be challenged by the submarine.¹ Projection of power, protecting sea-lanes of communication [SLOC], and merchant shipping are critical tasks for a navy. The threat to global commerce by inference with cargo ships has real world implications. The lessons of the war are still relevant today. When asking maritime questions about the war some of the answers are not exclusively navy, but will deeply involve navy nevertheless. For example, one of the forgotten aspects of the war at sea is that there was a constant flow of coastal convoys travelling around British ports carrying raw materials for industry. These had to be escorted and protected from mines and U-boats. Moreover, the navy and civilian fleets fit together as a whole and this included the fishing fleets and immigrant vessels.

The British Empire was drawn into the First World War because of the threat of the Imperial German Navy to the SLOC of Empire. However, it is often forgotten that the German fleet was created for purely domestic reasons and to bolster the image of the Kaiser to his subjects. In the German armed forces, the Army was dominant and the naval service a secondary force. The Germans knew that the Empire's maritime source of strength could not be broken and had to resort to the U-boat war and ran the very real risk of dragging the United States into the war. As it so happened, that the German provocation was such that it forced President Wilson, an avowed neutralist, to declare war in February 1917. Britain in 1914-1918 through her position and superior numbers commanded the "the surface of the sea."² This was countered by the German superiority in the U-boat war that for the most part pursued a *guerre de course* [literally "war of the chase."]. Germany failed to win the war against Allied and neutral shipping and "this allowed the strategic aspects of sea power to play a decisive part in deciding the outcome of the war"³ on the land as well as the sea. Why? Because the "economic aspects of sea power became increasingly important in the conduct of war"⁴ and because achieving a decisive result on land across all fronts proved elusive until July 1918.

Up until 1914 Britain did not think a war would happen because trade matters and why a nation would cut itself off from trade and international markets. This goes to Britain's maritime view – it is about trade not war. What makes a prosperous nation is trade and that trade is a vital matter to a vibrant economy. For Britain, trade was valued above militarism

¹ H.P. Willmott, *Sea Warfare: Weapons, Tactics and Strategy*, Strettington: Antony Bird Publications, 1981, p. 34.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

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which was the predominant culture in Imperial Germany. There are accounts that in 1913 the German foreign office advised the Army to start a “defensive” war in 1914 or risk losing the Kaiser and the current system of government. Britain did not understand this because Germany is run on different lines to the British approach to politics. A view of the German approach to empire is sufficient to underpin this. This was more obvious in 1914 when the large amount of shipping being loaded with goods for export. In New Zealand’s case our wealth was in the agricultural products we produced for Britain. In Australia’s case it was the mineral resources. But both nations could only earn wealth by shipping those agricultural and raw materials by sea. Thus both nations have a very immediate interest in the fact that their shipping is protected and can voyage to the world’s markets. It is not accidental that the RAN is bought ships rather than armies. The Australian government were not fools. Mahan pointed out that the sea made possible a global economy and if you remained connected you would prosper and if you were cut off from it you would wither.

The Empire is the world wide web of 1914-1918. The ability of the maritime powers to borrow on the international markets and to source the raw materials they need resulted in a more efficient war economy. That access to world markets is crucial. Forced trade is inefficient than open trade. For example Britain could be supplied with meat from her Empire including New Zealand which second only to Argentina in supplying meat to Britain. On the other hand supply of German withered. After eating most of its livestock in the first three years, Germany looked to its occupied lands for supply. The reaction of the inhabitants was to kill and eat their livestock which left Germany has a major shortage of meat by 1917.

Looking at the First World War battles on land is the most obvious place to see the pattern of the war or you can ask, what caused the war and what was the shape the war took between 1914 and 1918? This shape of the war is dictated by what happens at sea and the Royal Navy has a lot to do with how the war is shaped as the dominant naval force in Europe. What is the shape of the war? Look at the Second World War and the Napoleonic Wars. In each case, Britain’s freedom from invasion matters. The Germans could not jump the channel and end the war despite beating Russians and French. If the worst had happened in 1914 and Britain was pushed out of France, it would have remained in good economic shape and could have chosen the place and time to re-enter Europe. The stress of the Somme for Britain in 1916 means they had the option of a truce and then improved their position before resuming operations. Britain could also look to move around and secure positions if things went disastrously in Europe. For the French, as Norman Freidman remarked, they would have to start learning German quickly.

Gallipoli – A Maritime Campaign

The question facing the British Empire in 1914 is how do you fight the war as a maritime power? The comfort is for Britain that it cannot be invaded although that did not stop the British Army diverting scarce resources for home defence in 1914-1915. Having a maritime option means that there is no operation however stupid can hurt your chances. Having the ability to be maritime power enables a nation love around and secure positions from which to strike at the enemy in strategic ways. Thus we have the AIF and NZEF in Egypt by the end of 1914 to defend the Suez Canal from the Ottoman Empire. The Dardanelles and Gallipoli campaign is an obvious example of maritime power and cooperation in the First World War that is not prominent because the land campaign overshadows the naval part. Considerable naval cooperation in this campaign is an good example of early network-centric warfare. For example, reflect that the landings were assisted by the navy. The landings of 25 April had naval midshipmen guiding the boats onto the beaches. During the campaign large landing craft known as “Beetles” were used to resupply. The navy was able to land Indian troops and animals on the peninsula to enable the logistical work that supported the front lines. There is

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the unseen network of logistical support that behind the New Zealanders holding positions facing the Turks. Everything needed had to cross the beach and the wounded and sick had to be evacuated by sea.

If you are not a maritime power these ideas can be ludicrous. However, being a maritime entity allows you engage in high risk, high payoff operations and Gallipoli is such an example where the payoff could have been huge. If the Allies had broken the Turkish hold on the Dardanelles they could have supplied Russia with arms to enable her to maintain her war effort. In turn, Russia could have sent her products out to the world markets via the Black Sea ports. Why do you think France sent men to fight at Gallipoli? It is because they realised the advantage of having that access to Russia and the knocking of Turkey out of the war and impact on the prospects of the Central Powers that would have. What would have been the payoff if the campaign had succeeded? It would have likely meant that Russia have not fallen into revolution in 1917. Access to world markets would have paid for the Russian war effort and armed effectively her armies. A lack of arms is one of the reasons the Russians collapsed in 1917.

Gallipoli was not a stupid idea cooked up in London to kill New Zealanders. It had real strategic goals by using maritime power to find a new way to face the Germans and is a sound military reason for using the mobility conferred by seapower. If the Dardanelles had been forced and the Ottoman Empire knocked out of the war, the Allies could have sent fleets up the Danube. This would have opened a new front and increased the pressure on Austria-Hungary to keep fighting. That would also have a direct effect on the German effort on the Western and Eastern fronts. Maritime warfare links every part of the global war and can affect land warfare thousands of miles away from the naval operation.

New Zealand at Gallipoli

As it can be seen, New Zealand was at Gallipoli due to the maritime power of the Empire and the control of shipping that was in place. Although New Zealand had sent away contingents to fight in the Anglo-Boer war in 1899-1902, our effort in 1915 was seen as a truly national effort.

The first step towards Gallipoli was the reorganisation of New Zealand's defence. The numerous volunteer forces were disbanded by 1909 and the country organised into four regions:

- Auckland [incl. Northland, Waikato, King Country]
- Wellington [incl. Taranaki, Manawatu, Wanganui, east coast of the North Island]
- Canterbury [incl. Christchurch, Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast]
- Otago [including Dunedin, Southland]

Recruitment, equipment, training was organised along the then current British Army so that in time of need, the New Zealand forces could integrate into British formations smoothly. Further to this infantry and mounted rifle regiments⁵ were organised around the four regions. Supporting services such as engineers and artillery were organised nationally and men taken from all regions to form the field companies and batteries.

The 8,000 New Zealanders who left Wellington in October 1914 were the flower of their generation, all volunteers and keen to go and help the Old Country face the foe. The force consisted of four battalions of infantry [Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago] and four

⁵ The Australians called their mounted rifles the Light Horse. But in terms of organisation and equipment the New Zealanders and Australians were identical.

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mounted rifle regiments [Auckland Mounted, Wellington Mounted, Canterbury Mounted and Otago Mounted]. They were accompanied by supporting arms. This was the largest force that the newest Dominion had despatched for war. The whole nation followed the progress of their men closely. A contemporary account stated that their "physique could not be improved on [and] they are all as keen as possible, and will...render a very good account of themselves if the conditions encountered give them a fair chance."⁶ This powerful mix of national pride and commitment only heightened the significance. Added to this was the tremendous cost. Of the 8,556 New Zealanders who landed on Gallipoli, 7,447 were killed or wounded.⁷ Many of these men also suffered from disease as well. The 2,700 men who were killed during the fighting when compared to the deaths suffered on the Western Front do not seem that high but it had a great impact at home. In a nation of only one million, the cost was spread over the community from Cape Reinga to the Bluff.

It is also a feature of the remembrance of New Zealanders that we treat this doomed campaign as such an important event in our nation's history. In some ways this overshadows some of the significant military victories that the New Zealanders took part in. It is no coincidence that the landing was marked as a national day of mourning and remembrance. It is also part of the New Zealand psyche that we treat this day as one of commemoration and remembrance rather than the nationalistic celebratory approach as our Australian cousins adopted. For other Dominions, the Armistice Day [11 November] is the commemoration of the losses of the war but it never gained any traction in the national culture.

Why Gallipoli?

There were sound strategic reasons for landing on Gallipoli. The idea was that the ANZAC Corps and the British/French operation at Cape Helles could seize the peninsula, clear out the defences and let the Royal Navy through. That was the plan at least. As it turned out the campaign was one of missed chances, frustration, insipid command, and lack of supplies which led to a humiliating failure. But such is the risk run by a commander attempting a high-risk, high pay-off operation.

The Royal Navy had tried and failed to force the Dardanelles and needed land support to suppress the Turkish coastal defences that blocked the strait. Both the New Zealanders and Australians had been kept in Egypt after Turkey declared war in November 1914. At the time, the BEF in France could not spare a single man as they were fighting for their lives around Ypres. After successfully defending the Suez Canal in February 1915, they were a force available to General Ian Hamilton to attack Gallipoli. Thus the New Zealand infantry and mounted rifles were joined with the Australians to form the ANZAC Corps. The term 'Anzac' was the creation of a junior soldier in the headquarters when reports and the organisation of the Corps was being finalised. It stuck and is a term so loaded with meaning for New Zealand and Australia. The fact that the features of Gallipoli were named after New Zealanders also made it more intimate to those at home. This was our first major part in the First World War and one of which the Dominion was extraordinarily proud. It became part of our national myth although not to the same degree as the Australian experience in the post-war years. But wherever you go in New Zealand, on any war memorial you will find men who gave their last full measure of devotion on Gallipoli recorded.

⁶ Major Fred Waite, *the New Zealanders at Gallipoli*, Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1919, p. viii.

⁷ *ibid.*

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How did Gallipoli affect Maori and Pakeha Relations?

By the turn of the century the Maori race was considered to be a dying race. However there was a growing movement to rebuild and recover from the tragedy of the New Zealand Wars and the subsequent dislocation of the iwi facing land confiscations. In 1902 a Maori Mounted Corps was proposed to recruit 5,000 Maori volunteers. After four years of effort it came to nothing. In 1911, when compulsory military training was introduced, the government decided not to apply the regulations to the Maori population. At the outbreak of the war Prime Minister William Massey believed that as Maori were free citizens of the British Empire, Maori men should have the privilege of fighting for the empire.⁸ This reluctance to recruit indigenous peoples in the white Dominions was not uncommon. In contrast France had no problem with recruiting and deploying large formations of colonial troops from her various territories in France on the Western Front.

Old wounds were still raw as in the case of the Waikato tribes who did not take any active part in the war. The popular history of Gallipoli does note that with the outbreak of war that the Maori's marital instincts would be aroused and they would seek to join in the effort.⁹ Iwi responded in different ways to the outbreak of war. Some did not want their young men to go while others willingly offered men for service. The bulk of the men came from the 'loyal' tribes such as Arawa. Maori were told that they could volunteer for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Approval for Maori to join the NZEF had to be approved in London. First permission was given for a 200-man contingent to serve as a garrison in Egypt but after New Zealand objected to the amount it was raised to 500. There was never any intention of using Maori as combat troops and it was almost certain that London never intended for this to happen.¹⁰ This paradoxical attitude was common in 1914 and did persist until 1918. For example, after the Armistice in 1918 the Maori Pioneers were prohibited from entering Germany with the NZ Division as their presence, it was felt by Haig and the British government, would be unacceptable to the Germans.

A Maori Recruiting Committee [MRC] was formed in late 1914 and in February 1915 518 men were sent from New Zealand for Egypt. It had been intended to send them to Samoa but it felt that relations between the Samoans and Maori would result in violence. Upon arrival in Egypt, and despite their commendations for their turnout and performance, they were sent to Malta to act as garrison troops. The severe losses suffered by the ANZAC Corps in the landing and subsequent battles to establish a foothold on Gallipoli changed the place of Maori in the war. The British Government requested that the garrison be transferred to Anzac Cove as replacements. This decision would cause many problems at home and for the MRC. Some of the tribes had only let men go on the basis that they would serve as garrison troops. The MRC was also concerned that combat would require a stream of replacements which would be problematic. The men themselves were enthusiastic to participate and very willing to do their part. This suggests that the relationship between Maori and Pakeha was stronger overseas than perhaps at home. The commonality of military service certainly underscored the relationship.¹¹

The Maori Contingent of 477 men arrived on 3 July 1915. They would serve in the front lines until they were withdrawn in December 1915. Out of the 477 who landed, only 134 remained to be evacuated, and fifty men had been killed in action. They served under senior pakeha officers with no issues of ill discipline at the front line. To assure discipline, at the company

⁸ Ian McGibbon (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Zealand Military History*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 302.

⁹ Major Fred Waite, *the New Zealanders at Gallipoli*, Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1919, p.2.

¹⁰ Ashley Gould, 'Maori and the First World War', *The Oxford Companion to Zealand Military History*, Ian McGibbon (ed.), Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 296.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 296-297.

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level, Maori were appointed as officers. This did not always prove efficient as four Maori officers were returned home as being unable to command men.¹² There were also intertribal issues in camp and clashes between senior officers and the junior Maori officers. Some of it was down to ignorance of tribal politics and culture. The casualties that the contingent suffered in the August offensives almost proved a breaking point in Government-Maori relationships at home. The Maori contingent was so reduced in numbers that the decision was made to split up the men into platoons and attaches them to the Infantry battalions. Where possible, iwi and hapu groupings were respected. This caused outrage amongst the iwi and the MRC who felt betrayed by the decision to send men into combat and now the threat to tribal identity and loss of mana. A rift formed between the Maori MPs and the Minister of Defence James Allen. This showed a divergence in understanding of the military situation and a lack of cultural awareness from the government. In the context of 1915, it is perfectly understandable.¹³

The withdrawal of the Maori contingent marked the end of the front-line combat service of Maori in the First World War and was a test of cultural relationships and understanding. The part Maori played in Gallipoli is sadly not that well known. Their contribution was equal to their fellow soldiers in the NZEF. They suffered the conditions on Gallipoli and played their part. There was never any issue with their combat performance. Their part deserved to be better known and it gets lost in the history of the campaign. It would also have consequences for the rest of the war. The casualties suffered on Gallipoli made the government revisit the part Maori could play. As a result, with the formation of the NZ Division in 1916, a pioneer battalion was part of the organisation. Three companies of Maori were organised as pioneers. The reason was it was less risk of casualties and soothed the MRC and iwi back home. General Godley, when forming the pioneers, appealed to the mana of the men and asked them to play their part. This was overwhelmingly supported by the men and the pioneer battalion gathered an excellent reputation in France. It is no coincidence that respect was paid the men in 1919 and the Maori pioneers were the only formation from the NZ Division that was sent back to New Zealand after demobilisation as a whole unit. Lastly, the lessons of the First World War were applied when the Second World War broke out. The formation of the 28th [Maori] Battalion was a much smoother process but it was built on the understandings of how to get the best out of Maori formations. The legacy that was forged in Gallipoli was carried on by the descendants of the 500 men of the Maori Contingent.

¹² Three of the officers would join the Pioneer Battalion in France and serve with distinction which perhaps reflects cultural issues rather than capacity for command.

¹³ Ashley Gould, 'Maori and the First World War', *The Oxford Companion to Zealand Military History*, Ian McGibbon (ed.), Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 297.

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