4 Field Service Regulations - Haig's doctrinal development

There is a general assumption that Haig, if he did not write *Field Service Regulations (1909)* (*FSR*), at least influenced and supported the concepts that it described. There is no evidence to support this theory in researching the genesis of *FSR*. This chapter searches for evidence that, before 1914, Haig was considering the tactical conundrums, arising from weapons development, which preoccupied Henderson, and those who subsequently picked up and developed his ideas; and whether he supported their conclusions. There is considerable evidence that he did not. Nowhere in his personal or official writings between 1898 and 1912 is there evidence of support for the detail of the doctrine, except arguably, in his diary entries in the early days of the South African War.

FSR, Part I, was developed over many years by consensus. Central to the debate were Roberts, Henderson, Hildyard, Douglas, Rawlinson, Wilson and Hutchinson. Haig should have significant engaged with at least one of these individuals, if it is to be argued that he had any impact on it. Nicholson, Grierson, Smith Dorrien, French and Robertson are more peripheral, but implemented *FSR* with conviction in England after 1909.

To 1899

There are many biographies which detail Haig's early years from his birth in 1861, and there is little of controversy in the detail.[1] In 1884, Haig enrolled in the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, at the age of 22, and in 1885, he entered the cavalry, joining the 7th Hussars, going to India with them in 1886. He became Adjutant in 1889, his first staff job. He was promoted Captain in 1891, when he took up the post of Brigade Major to General Sir George Luck, Inspector General of Cavalry. He moved on in 1892, being attached to the Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, Bombay, where he was given command of a Cavalry Squadron. He was, by this time, an effective and well-regarded cavalry officer. He resolved to demonstrate his undoubted dedication to a military career, and improve his chances of career progression, by passing through the two-year Staff Course at Camberley.

So, in late 1894, he returned to England to take the exam which would qualify him for entry. This is a significant moment in Haig's life. For the next four years, he was mainly an academic soldier. He first studied French cavalry tactics, writing a brief thesis on the subject, while Aide-de-Camp to Sir Keith Fraser, Inspector General of Cavalry at the War Office in London; and, in 1895, he visited Germany for two months to study the cavalry of the Imperial German Army, writing another report. During this period, he also worked on the draft of a 'new *Cavalry Drill Book*, which Colonel John French had

[1] For instance, Duff Cooper, *Haig,* (London, Faber and Faber, 1935); Gary Sheffield, *The Chief, Douglas Haig and the British Army,* (Aurum Press, London, 2011); J. P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World* War, (Cambridge University Press, 2008); Gary Mead, *The Good Soldier, the Biography of Douglas Haig,* (Atlantic Books, London, 2014); G. J. DeGroot, *The Pre-War Life and Military Career of Douglas Haig,* (PhD, University of Edinburgh, 1983).

begun, but left unfinished on his promotion to the position of Assistant Adjutant General.'[2] It was published as *Cavalry Drill* in 1898.

In addition, he would have closely studied Edward Hamley's *Operations of War*, which was required reading for entry to Staff College.[3] In fact, he would have studied it twice, since he was unsuccessful in his first application. This book was regarded as being in the forefront of military thinking. Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hamley had served, on the staff of the artillery, in the Crimean War between 1853 and 1856, but was mainly an academic or political soldier thereafter.[4] Strachan describes his book as being both 'mired in the tactical past and limited in conception', which is fair comment; and as 'the most obvious British precursor of Field Service Regulations Part I,' which is distinctly arguable. The two assertions do not sit easily together. He goes on to say that 'Hamley believed that …operations were a matter of planning and logistics, of choosing one's own line of operations, and mastering those of the enemy.'[5] Dighton more recently, says that the book is derivative, and presents 'strategy as essentially unchanging as campaigns fought decades apart [are] invoked to illustrate the same strategic principle.' He also says that the book avoids 'reference to changing technology or psychological factors.'[6] And that elegantly sums up why the book is deeply flawed. In the 1886 edition, Hamley grapples manfully with the impact of railways, but it is

[2] Cooper, *Haig*, p.46.
[3] Alexander Shand, *The Life of Sir Edward Bruce Hamley,* (Blackwood & Sons, London, 1895), p.120.
[4] *Encyclopædia Britannica, 1911*, Volume 12, p.896. His career is described in full.
[5] Hew Strachan, Operational Art and Britain, 1909–2009, in John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld, *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present*, ([2010] Oxford Scholarship on line, 2011), pp.100-101.
[6] Adam Dighton, Jomini versus Clausewitz: Hamley's Operations of War and Military Thought in the British Army, 1866–1933, *War in History*, 2020, Vol. 27(2) pp.184-185.

hardly useful to examine historic campaigns to illustrate this revolution in rapid transport.[7] The most striking feature of this turgid tome is how similar it is to Haig's own literary efforts between 1907 and 1912. He seems to model his academic writing on it.

At Staff College, Haig would have been taught by Henderson and Lawrence, both of whom were on the Hildyard Committee of 1902. This was his first opportunity to consider continental and all arms strategy in an academic setting. Both Terraine and Travers emphasise the importance of the next two years on his military thinking thereafter. The former suggests, unconvincingly, that he acquired there a 'sympathy' with 'the problems of the citizen army', that he would command in the First War.[8] The latter studied his lecture notes and argues that, lacking originality in strategic thinking, he developed not only a life-long adherence to the Napoleonic concept of a battle in four phases, the first phase featuring a strong (cavalry) advanced guard; but also an intractable reliance on a Clausewitzian definition of the necessary moral qualities of both himself as commander, and those of the troops under him.[9] This may be true, but it is not even close to *FSR* doctrine; and anyway, it is difficult to believe that Haig's ideas were shaped more by this short academic course than by later military experiences.

Of more moment to the subject under discussion is that there is no evidence that he developed friendship, or debated, with any of the independent thinkers who came to the

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[7] Sir Edward Bruce Hamley, *The Operations of War, Explained and Illustrated, Fourth Edition*, (Blackwood & Sons, Oxford, 1886), pp.8-51.
[8] John Terraine, *Douglas Haig, the Educated Soldier*, ([1963] Leo Cooper, 1990), p.11.
[9] Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground, The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918*, ([1987] Barnsley, Pen and Sword, 2009), pp.85-91.

fore in the army from 1903 to 1909. Of his year's intake, only Edmund Allenby, who is alleged to have had a 'difficult' relationship with Haig, Thompson Capper, who was killed commanding a division at Loos, and George Macdonogh, Director of Military Intelligence in 1916, achieved distinction for military achievements.[10]

On successfully completing the two-year course, Haig was rewarded with a posting to join Kitchener's army in the Sudan, necessarily taking a temporary posting in the Anglo-Egyptian army. So, from early 1898 till 1902, he was almost continuously at war, first in the Sudan, and then in South Africa.

The South African War

Haig kept a detailed diary during this war. In his first significant contact with the enemy at Elands Laagt on 21-22 October 1899, with French in command, it is instructive to analyse the skirmish, as described in his diary, with reference to *FSR*. The initial cavalry 'reconnaissance is not pushed home'. The next day, the main attack was an artillery one, the advance of the guns being 'covered by one squadron of the Natal Light Horse', but the Boers had better guns and were in strong positions, so the guns were withdrawn while reinforcements were summoned. The next day a coordinated attack was undertaken, initial resistance on the Boer left flank being successfully countered by four squadrons of the Imperial Light Horse, 'acting dismounted', before a strong infantry attack, closely supported by artillery, pushed the centre of the Boers line back, allowing an opportunity for a cavalry charge against the Boer right flank. French had

[10] Richard Olsen, Major-General Sir Thompson Capper, Spencer Jones (ed.), *Stemming the Tide, Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914,* (Solihull, Helion and Company, 2013), pp.191-192.

not allowed his cavalry advance guard to act independently, and he had authorised mounted elements of his force to fight dismounted. Similarly, at Intintanyoni, on 24 October, the 5th Lancers, 'by holding a Kopje' [small hill], prevented a Boer flank movement with rifle fire. On 29 October, Haig, as Chief of Staff to French, arranged for an artillery officer to reconnoitre for a suitable position before an all arms attack, and on 31 October, he is asking why two infantry battalions, who surrendered, at Cainguba, did not have cavalry to support them.[11]

Both French and Haig appear to have demonstrated, from the moment of their arrival in South Africa, pragmatic good sense in the handling of the all-arms forces at their disposal. Haig was not just following French's lead. It was he who principally liaised with the artillery in the above account, and 'he wrote in his 'Tactical Notes' in November 1899 : 'The use made by the Boers of their ponies to carry them to a position or positions from which to deliver a flanking fire upon attacking troops should not go unnoticed by us, and might sometimes be imitated by our Cavalry with good results in suitable country.'[12] The author of this diary had a mind-set entirely compatible with that of *FSR* which was published ten years later.

But this was early in the war, when the Boers still had a credible army. By the last year of the war, they did not, and the British army faced guerrilla tactics. Their opponents not only resorted to 'explosive bullets', which inflicted hideous wounds, but

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[11] Douglas Scott, *The Preparatory Prologue, Douglas Haig Diaries and Letters, 1861 to 1914*, (Pen and Sword, Barnsley, 2006), 20-31 October, 1899, pp.123-138. The veracity of the account of battle given in these diary entries has not been checked by the author against other contemporary accounts.
[12] The Marquess of Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919, Volume 4, 1899-1913*, (London, Leo Cooper, 1986), p.390.

also dressed up in ‘khakee’ British uniforms to escape detection, and snipe from close range. Any captured, so dressed, were ‘promptly shot’.[13] Like most guerrilla warfare, it was vicious and inglorious. French and Haig both remained resolute, but they cannot have enjoyed the experience. They were implementing a scorched earth policy, which caused desperate hardship to civilians. Both must have been scarred by their experiences. But Kitchener showed his appreciation of the job that Haig had done, by facilitating his appointment as Colonel of the 17th Lancers. It is in this context that he returned to England after the war, to find himself feted as a hero.

There were not many officers who emerged with credit from the South African War, but Haig and French were amongst that number. In 1902, Haig was initially posted to Edinburgh, confirmed in command of the 17th Lancers, and immediately appointed Aide-de-Camp (ADC) to King Edward VII, a position he held from 1902 to 1904. If one is to argue that Haig had any influence on the first edition of *Field Service Regulations, Part I*, entitled *Combined Training, (1905)*, this is a crucial eighteen months, since he was posted to India in late 1903, and did not return until 1906.

It should have been a triumphant time for Haig, but Duff Cooper, and others, describes his initial dissatisfaction with barracks, parade ground, and it seems, life in general.[14] He worked hard, and worked his men hard, careless of the muted complaints from his subordinates. ‘Although he was near relations and among friends, he did not go much into society,’ says Terraine.[15] Apart from his sister Henrietta, what little social

[13] Scott, *Haig Diaries,* 22 August & 3 September, 1901, pp.196-197.
[14] Cooper, *Haig*, p.95.
[15] Terraine, *The Educated Soldier*, p.33.

support he had, seems to have been provided by the hierarchy of Court life, as A.D.C. to King Edward VII. He became fiercely competitive on the polo field, and gradually mellowed, at least in Scotland, requiring selected junior officers in his regiment to accompany him on his weekly rounds of golf.[16] One hesitates to use the phrase, traumatic stress, but this sequence of behaviour seems to suggest that not all was well. The introverted Haig would certainly not have been immune to his past experiences.

In Britain 1902 to 1903

Both he and French were almost immediately called upon to give evidence to the Royal Commission, chaired by Lord Elgin. This was a Committee of Enquiry, simply establishing facts (and opinions). Both made reasonable statements about the cavalry, in the context of their recorded experience in South Africa. But, with Lord Roberts inclined to support those who wanted a fundamental review of the role of the cavalry in war, envisaging a force of essentially mounted infantry, the debate became personal and rather out of control. 'That two schools of thought could disagree so completely indicates the difficulty of basing army reform on shared military experience,' says Spiers.[17] French famously declared that the cavalry 'leader who gets down off his horses and begins firing is lost'. He was, in making this statement, envisaging a huge clash of cavalry versus cavalry on a continental battlefield,[18] but it does contradict his own practice in the early days of the South African War. There were further cavalry related

[16] Sheffield, *The Chief*, pp.53-54.
[17] Edward Spiers, The British Cavalry, 1902 – 1914, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 57, No. 230, (Summer, 1979), p.76.
[18] Anglesey, *History of the British Cavalry, Vol 4*, p.400. In evidence to the Royal Commission, 1903.

controversies; and both men, for a year or two, seemed to want to take on the whole military establishment, defending a romantic dream of cavalry action, characterised by a heroic charge, using cold steel, be it lance or sword. Was this a reaction from the squalid horror of the guerrilla war they had been forced to fight in South Africa? It seems not unlikely.

By 1903, Haig was involved in a re-drafting of *Cavalry Drill 1898*, which was to be re-issued as *Cavalry Training*. As DeGroot puts it, while Haig 'and his co-religionists argued the merits of antique weapons and tactics, their minds were diverted from studying the implications of technological developments upon military science;'[19] and in the heat of the above debate, the manual did not even reflect the tactics he and French had used in South Africa. 'There is not one word about Artillery or Dismounted Fire,' complained Roberts, justifiably, in 1903.[20] Roberts, asked Wilson to offer help in re-drafting the document, although this seems to have come to nothing. Wilson's edited diaries in 1903 - 1904 make no direct mention of Haig.[21] This is the closest that Haig came to any of those involved in the drafting of *Combined Training*. Anglesey says that an opening paragraph of it, on the cavalry, is a précis of the introduction to *Cavalry Training*, but goes on to say that *Combined Training* was 'largely the work of Rawlinson and Wilson'. [22] In 1902, through to 1903, Colonel Lawrence was the cavalry

[19] Gerard DeGroot, Ambition, Duty and Doctrine: Douglas Haig's rise to High Command, Brian Bond & Nigel Cave (ed), *Haig, a Re-Appraisal 80 Years On*, ([1999] Pen & Sword, Barnsley, 2017), p.47.
[20] Roberts to Kitchener, 24 September 1903, Roberts Papers, 7101/23/122/6, as quoted by DeGroot, *The Military Career of Douglas Haig*, p.241.
[21] Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell, *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson Bart., GCB, DSO, His Life and Diaries, Vol 1*, (Cassel and Company, London, 1927), p.56 and thereafter.
[22] Anglesey, *History of the British Cavalry, Vol 4*, p.386; Compare *Field Service Regulations, 1909, Part I*, p.14-15; and *Cavalry Training 1907*, (London, War Office, 1907), p.186.

representative on the Hildyard Committee, and it is he that would have been ensuring that conventional cavalry views were represented in it.[23] There is no evidence of any sharing of ethos between the two manuals. On 25 September, 1903, Haig noted in his diary that he attended a 'meeting of Officers under Presidency of Lord Roberts at War Office re Cavalry Questions. I strongly maintain that the chief method of action is the mounted role. He hotly opposes me.'[24] This was the last chance he had to vent his views. In October 1903, Haig was posted from Scotland to India.

It is difficult to understand why Haig's tactical ideas seem to have regressed in this period. It seems that he was brooding. His beloved cavalry was under attack. 'Radical' elements in the army were suggesting that the best role available, for an outdated arm, was that they should rediscover themselves as mobile infantry, willing to dismount and fight on foot. His main social life was mixing with young cavalry officers in the first flush of enthusiasm for their new career. In that context, it seems that he wanted to come out fighting, to robustly assert the traditional role of the cavalry. But it is important to appreciate that the concept of an independent aggressive cavalry force in the forefront of an army advance was, at least on paper, conventional thinking. It is official guidance in *Combined Training, 1905*, as quoted here, though by 1909 (*FSR, Part I*) this section had been heavily amended,

> *The front and flanks of a force of all arms moving in a hostile country should, wherever possible, be covered by mounted troops* [in] *…two distinct bodies :- The*

[23] National Army Museum (NAM) 8704/35/38, *Ellison papers*, letter, Ellison to Kenny, April 1903.
[24] National Library of Scotland (NLS), Haig papers, diary, 25 September 1903, as quoted by DeGroot, *The Military Career of Douglas Haig*, p.242.

independent cavalry [and] *The advanced guard mounted troops. The duties of the independent cavalry …are to reconnoitre and report on the country and routes of advance; to* ***oppose and defeat the enemy's horsemen****, and to cover the army so as to prevent the enemy gaining information regarding its movements;* [and] *to ascertain and report the strength, numbers and dispositions of the hostile forces,* ***interrupt their movements and undertake enterprises against their communications****.*[25] [Bold used to emphasise independent opportunistic offense.]

The method by which the cavalry would achieve these objectives is enlarged upon in *Cavalry Training, 1907*, based on Haig's 1904 edition. 'The first duty of the protective cavalry will therefore usually be to obtain a victory over the hostile cavalry', and 'in order to carry out its role of strategic reconnaissance, [it] …must have complete liberty of action, and must not be tied to the army.'[26] In these duties, they would answer only to the 'commander-in-chief', with whom they would not be in touch. This was not controversial in 1907. Travers, very elegantly, sums up the hold that this concept of a 'Napoleonic Advanced Guard' had on Haig's thinking right up to 1916, but he is not convincing when he asserts that this thinking was an addendum to *FSR, Part I, 1909,* rather than incompatible with it.[27] Harris also tries to reconcile the discrepancies between *Cavalry Training, 1907* and *FSR, Part I, 1909,* again without success; merely concluding that *Cavalry Training* was more pragmatic than its continental equivalents.[28]

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[25] Imperial War Museum (IWM), LBY WO 670, *Field Service Regulations, Part I, Combined Training, 1905*, (War Office, London 1905), p.106. See also pp.55&97.
[26] *Cavalry Training 1907,* (War Office, London 1907) p.194.
[27] Travers, *The Killing Ground,* pp.92-93.
[28] Harris, *Douglas Haig,* p. 47.

India, 1903 to 1906

Haig was appointed Inspector General of Cavalry in India in October 1903, and in that capacity, he organised a number of Staff Rides. The reports from these outings were collated into a book, issued in his name. *Cavalry Studies, Strategical and Tactical*, published in 1907, is a robustly retrograde tome.[29] Its aim seems to be to champion independence and aggression as the primary qualities of the cavalry; and, by doing so, to inspire the next generation of cavalry subalterns.

It is a book, very similar in style to Hamley's *Operations of War*, which Haig had studied between 1894 and 1896. In the manner of Hamley, Haig bases his *Studies* on previous military campaigns, all of which occurred in early to mid-nineteenth century conflicts, well before the introduction of quick firing artillery, or the regular use of machine guns. Haig saw army strategy as developing in a linear way through Napoleonic, and then Prussian military theorists, such as Clausewitz and Moltke, to the time the book was written. 'Large armies entail large numbers of cavalry,' he concludes; and 'cavalry …plays [note the present tense] a role in grand tactics whose importance can hardly be overestimated.'[30]

He did not confine his remarks to strategy. His tactical advice is equally clear. 'There can be no question as to how' the commander of the independent cavalry division should act if he saw any opportunity. He should concentrate and attack.[31] These assertions sit very uneasily beside the ethos of *FSR, Part I*, 1909, which recognises the primacy of

[29] Maj-Gen Douglas Haig, *Cavalry Studies, Strategical and Tactical*, (London, Hugh Rees Ltd, 1907).
[30] Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, pp.4-5.
[31] Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, p.61.

infantry in occupying ground to win battles, emphasising the necessity of all arms cooperation. The book also goes way beyond the guidance given in *Combined Training, 1905*, which emphasises that even the independent cavalry must abide by the strategy determined by the commander-in-chief of the whole army in a continental war.

> *'Let us sum up in a rapid résumé the services which this arm* [the cavalry] *ought to and can render. During the period of concentration, it conceals and protects the strategic front of the Armies; it indicates to the Commander-in-Chief the point where he ought to strike, and points out to him the objective. During the march to approach towards the enemy, it surrounds the columns with a vigilant network: it clears their path, raises and tears away the veil spread before them. On the field of battle, it surprises the hostile Artillery and reduces it to silence: it protects the head and flank of its own Army, covers its deployment, disturbs or retards that of the enemy. A little later it prepares the événement and takes part in the assault; in a few seconds it gathers the fruits of a long contest. Lastly, it completes the victory, or averts disaster: it undertakes the pursuit or covers retreat. In short, it intervenes in the prologue, in the principal act, and in the dénoûment. It both introduces and consecrates success.'*[32]

This romantic description of the glory of cavalry action has no resonance with the sober logic of *Part I* of the regulations, which he was, by some accounts, beginning to champion, even as he prepared this, its antithesis, for publication.

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[32] Haig, *Cavalry Studies*, p.18.

Haig as Director of Military Training, June 1906 to November 1907

Haig's return to England in 1906 was the defining moment of his early military career. Richard Haldane, as Secretary of State for War, was determined to impose reform on the army, and particularly to establish a professional and efficient General Staff, the concept of which was, after long negotiation, agreed by the Army Council in September 1906. But before that he had determined to embark on a long series of political battles to reform or abolish the militia, in favour of a proposed new Territorial Force, for home defence. He had need of a senior officer, supportive of his schemes, and willing to fight his corner within the army establishment, and, for reasons unrelated to his tactical acumen, Haldane chose Haig, identifying a senior directorate, that of Military Training, which became vacant on the retirement of Major General Frederick Stopford, for him to take up. Haig reports a letter he received in India from Lord Esher in March 1906: 'Mr Haldane was very anxious for me to come home and assist in schemes of reorganisation.'[33] Dunlop relates that when Haig arrived in London, Haldane, having failed to persuade the Militia to reform and accept the concept of a new Territorial Force voluntarily, was just beginning to confront them with the threat to enforce reform. There was considerable anger and resistance to Haldane's stance. In addition to proposing a new Territorial Force, Haldane wanted it to be an army of all arms, with artillery, a suggestion opposed, vociferously, and significantly, in terms of personal relationships, although surprisingly, given the content of *Combined Training*, by Lord Roberts and Henry Wilson, who doubted that such units could be adequately trained.

[33] Scott, *Douglas Haig Diaries,* letter to Henrietta, 28 March, 1906, p.249

'Haig made up his mind that the Territorial Force had to be of all arms, and regard for his technical ability convinced many waverers.'[34] As Director of Military Training, Haig had no responsibility for either *FSR, Part I,* or *FSR, Part II*. In 1904, all 'responsibility for officers' education had passed to a Directorate of Staff Duties. And only in 1907, was responsibility for officers' education passed to the Directorate of Military Training.'[35] It is probable, therefore, that Haig first learnt of the proposed content of *FSR, Part II*, by listening to debate in Army Council meetings in 1906. If Haig had asked, it is likely that Haldane, or Ellison, would have briefed him on it. And they would have emphasised that, in their view, the failure of the Army Council to adopt it was obstructive and reactionary. It was key to their administrative reforms.

But Haig was very fully occupied, that year, with other issues. He was dealing with the fallout from Haldane's proposals to abolish the Militia, and introduce the new Territorial Force.[36] This was difficult work, and he sent long detailed notes to Ellison, Haldane's secretary, sketching out provisional plans on how to organise the Territorial Force; and asking him for his comments and advice. These reports demonstrate Haig's talent for the meticulous consideration of administrative detail; but there is no reference to *FSR, Part II*, in this correspondence.[37] Nor indeed, were the arrangements to be made for the organisation of an Expeditionary Force, *FSR, Part II*, in draft, relevant to the

[34] John Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914,* (Methuen London, 1938), pp.269-272.
[35] The National Archives (TNA) WO 231, *Directorate of Military Training*, Administrative & Biographical Background.
[36] Dunlop, *Development of the British Army 1899-1914*, pp.269-272.
[37] NAM, 8704-35-475, *Ellison papers*, Haig to Ellison, summary of letters dated 1906, pp.2-3 and subsequently, full drafts of those letters.

organisation of the Territorial Force. *The Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill* was formally moved on 4 March 1907, and, after a bumpy passage through Parliament, received Royal Assent in July. Even after this, Haig still had much work to do, setting up the structure of the new force for its formal introduction on 1 April 1908, supported by the 'whole-hearted and practical' help of King Edward VII.[38] Well before that, in December 1906, Haig had also taken on the job of setting up a 'School of Economics' within the army, following a war stores scandal, featuring gross accounting incompetence, which broke just after he arrived in post in the August.[39] His workload was heavy. (He also had court duties and family responsibilities, his wife bearing him two daughters in quick succession.) He had no time for routine matters of War Office administration, nor for his nominal responsibility, that of military training.

According to Charteris, Haig was required, during his three years in London, not only to oversee 'the perfecting of the General Staff at home,' and 'the reorganisation of the second line of defence in the voluntary army', but also 'the organisation of an Expeditionary Force for service overseas', presumably *FSR, Part II*, and the 'introduction into the Army of a definitive school of thought and authoritative teaching in the science of war,' *FSR, Part I.*[40] However Charteris offers no supporting evidence to support his assertions. And Haig's edited diaries record that, from his arrival in June 1906 till at least March 1907, he was working almost exclusively on 'the voluntary army', though he did discuss the make-up of the new General Staff with Ellison,

[38] Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army,* pp.266-290.
[39] John Gooch, *The Plans of War, the General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916,* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), *p.108-109.*
[40] Brigadier-General John Charteris, *Field-Marshal Earl Haig,* (Cassel & Co Ltd, London, 1929) p.37.

Haldane's private secretary.[41] His diaries similarly suggest that he was still working on the 'voluntary army' particularly the artillery, thereafter; and that he was only closely involved in discussion around the make-up of the 'General Staff', and with 'the organisation of an Expeditionary Force', during the latter half of 1908, and into 1909.[42]

So, as for the 'introduction into the Army of a definitive school of thought and authoritative teaching in the science of war', there is nothing in Haig's diaries, or elsewhere, to suggest that Haig had anything to do with the development of *FSR, Part I,* that formalised this. Given its gradual evolution from Henderson's first draft in 1902, through *Combined Training, 1905,* he had had no opportunity to do so. And he had no further opportunity to do so in 1906 or 1907. Those historians, who assert that Haig did have such an opportunity, should ask themselves why the independent freedom of the cavalry advance guard is significantly curtailed in *FSR, Part I,* as against *Combined Training*.[43] On all the evidence, this is a change that Haig would never have allowed.

Haig as Director of Staff Duties, November 1907 to October 1909

When Hutchinson retired in November 1907, Haig moved from the Directorate of Military Training to that of Staff Duties. Finding that the latter had responsibility for 'all education', he immediately proposed that this responsibility, with the exception of the Staff College, be passed to the Directorate of Military Training, a proposal that was agreed by Haldane, and actioned immediately.[44] Since *FSR, Part I,* was primarily an

[41] Scott, *Douglas Haig Diaries,* p.254-263.
[42] Scott, *Douglas Haig Diaries,* p.281-286.
[43] See Chapter 2, Field Service Regulations, pp.20-22.
[44] NLS, Haig papers, 8 November 1907, as quoted by DeGroot, *The Military Career of Douglas Haig,* p.306; TNA, WO 231, *Directorate of Military Training,* Administrative/Biographical Background.

education document for officers, the responsibility for this was part of the package that was passed over to Sir Archibald Murray, the new Director of Military Training. Haig did, however, inherit administrative responsibility for *FSR, Part II,* which, in November 1907, was in limbo, awaiting formal ratification by the Army Council. Both *FSR, Part I,* and *FSR, Part II,* were ratified, in draft form, by the Army Council in January 1908; prepared for publication that year, final proofs being approved at Christmas 1908, and issued in early1909.

It is clear that Haig had no opportunity to, and did not, contribute meaningfully to the content of *FSR, Part I*. The next question, raised by the assertions of modern historians is whether he agreed with it. This is not a simple question. It is impossible to disagree with all of it. So, re-phrasing the question, did he agree with the concept of a document, covering all aspects of the training of young officers? There is evidence that he did. Haig, at a General Staff Conference, which he organised in early January 1908, 'read a paper emphasizing the need for a uniform approach on questions of strategy, tactics, organization and training',[45] which is what *FSR*, as yet unpublished, was intended to deliver. He agreed with the concept of a document which gave tactical advice.

Haig did, however, do some further writing on his own tactical philosophy, publishing reports on two 'Staff Rides' in 1909. These go even further than his book in reliance on the lessons to be learnt from 19th Century cavalry battles, as interpreted by the great Prussian military theorists. In the first, he emphasises 'the demoralising effect

[45] Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.115; TNA WO 279/18, Conference of General Staff Officers at the Staff College, 7th to 10th January, 1908.

of the charge and the terror of cold steel'; and concludes that the cavalry should enjoy 'the greatest independence of other arms in every kind of duty'.[46] This last is diametrically opposed to the ethos of both *Part I* and *Part II* of the 1909 regulations.

In the second, the solution to every problem he sets his staff officers is referenced back to the Napoleonic War, which ended in 1815, the American Civil War of 1861, and the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Problem XI required the cavalry 'to attack the enemy's artillery in order to allow the infantry to push their attack home'.[47] This is not all arms cooperation as demanded in *FSR*, or even the tactics he himself had used in South Africa. Gooch comments that the reports on these Rides 'did reveal an ominous faith in the effectiveness of cavalry attack on the part of the participating and directing staff',[48] but then goes on to give a selective quote, that does not reflect the philosophy expressed in the documents, though it is, arguably, consistent with *FSR, Part I*. Cavalry must 'keep close to the other arms who attack the hostile infantry and prepare the way for a decisive action of the Cavalry,' this at the height of a major battle. But the key issue here is not the physical proximity of the cavalry, but who is directing the onset of the 'decisive action'.

These rides took place only just after both parts of *FSR* were published in 1909, but not before Haig had had the opportunity to thoroughly familiarise himself with them. He had spent the late summer of 1908 revising in detail parts of *FSR, Part II*. In January 1909, following the ratification for publication of both parts of *FSR* in December 1908,

[46] TNA WO 279/27, *Cavalry Staff Ride of Director of Staff Studies, March 1909*, p.31.
[47] TNA WO 279/29, *Cavalry Staff Ride of Director of Staff Studies, June 1909*, p.34.
[48] Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.117.

a *Memorandum on Army Training* was issued by the Army Council.[49] This document effectively orders the imposition of *FSR* as a doctrine on the whole army.

The document is long, and it is not signed; nor are the individual contributors, identifiable by differing writing styles within it, named. But the first section, after the introduction, was almost certainly written by Haig. It is in his style, and it covers 'advance to the Battlefield', a favourite topic. It references the Prussian campaign of 1870, another favourite. This, in itself, is the protest of a traditionalist, drawing attention to the fact that *FSR* is not only a tactical manual, which was conventionally devoid of references to military history; but was also being endorsed as a universal military textbook, which had always had such references. The section goes on to emphasise the importance of Clausewitzian spirit, again a favourite topic of Haig's. No other contributor makes any historical references; and, additionally, this section is the only one to express any reservations about the content of *FSR*. 'They definitely lay down the system of organization and training of the army' the contributor says, endorsing *Part II*, and *Part III*. (This latter deals only with marshalling war games and exercises, the final chapter of *Combined Training, 1905*, which had been separated out.) But then goes on to say that 'there is scope for hesitation and uncertainty in the interpretation' of some of the [*Part I*] regulations, which must be overcome by 'a moral and offensive spirit.'[50] In context, after discussion of it, this clearly refers to the curtailment of independent offence in the advance guard required in the new regulations.

[49] TNA WO 231/403, Memorandum on Army Training, 1908.
[50] TNA WO 231/403, Memorandum on Army Training, 1908, p.3 of 13.

Haig in India 1910 to 1912

In 1910, Haig left England to take up a new post as Chief-of-Staff to General Sir O'Moore Creagh, Commander-in-Chief, India. He arranged two major staff tours while he was there, and once again he had accounts of them published. It is worth, just briefly revisiting *FSR, Part I,* to be clear on how, in 1910 and thereafter, one would expect military exercises to be judged. One would expect that the manoeuvres would be assessed by compliance with *FSR*, and not by historical precedent. Particular attention might be devoted to ensuring that orders had been brief, allowing flexibility in the detail of their interpretation; that efficiency in the speedy dissemination of orders had been proven; and that orders had been formulated only after consideration of up-to-date intelligence by a collegiate staff team. In addition, one would expect evidence of aggressive intent and all arms cooperation at every stage of the manoeuvres.

Charteris, Haig's biographer, was present on both these tours.[51] His comments are germane, but this account will first confine itself to Haig's own writings.[52] Since there is progression in tone between the two tours, they should be assessed separately.

In the introduction to that pertaining to 1910, a staff officer (sic) writes that the Director (Haig) wanted to see manoeuvres that complied with '*Field Service Regulations*', and that demonstrated all-arms cooperation.[53] The exercises are then described, and at the conclusion of each, Haig writes a commentary. He starts his first

[51] TNA WO 279/526 & TNA WO 279/532, *Reports on Staff Tours, held by the Chief of the General Staff, India, 1910 and 1911*, list of participants.
[52] Charteris, *Field-Marshal Earl Haig*, pp.52-54.
[53] TNA WO 279/526, *Report on Staff Tour, 1910*, p.6.

commentary by agreeing the good sense of a universal 'system of war organisation', particularly relevant in India, given the differences between the army there, and that at home. Organisation, drill, training, and staff procedures should all conform with that in England, he says.[54] This is reassuringly supportive of both *Part II*, and the protocols outlined in *Part I* of the Regulations, picking up on the by now uncontroversial aspects of the documents.

As the exercise enters a battle phase, his commentary does cite *FSR, Part I*, on warfare, again picking up on Section 101, which deals with 'Advance to the Battlefield'. He emphasises the independence of the cavalry in this manoeuvre, but the regulations actually suggests that the independence of the cavalry is significantly constrained by orders from the commander-in-chief; and that once the main force is close to the enemy, this independence should be foregone.[55] He lays much more stress on the 'Advance Guard' than is implied in the regulations, emphasising its offensive capacity over several days 'in accordance with Napoleonic principles'.[56] Thereafter, he moves on to the 'wearing down', attritional, phase of the battle, again a Napoleonic concept, but recognising the importance of local fire superiority, utilising artillery, which is in *FSR, Part I*; as is his reference to the importance of communications on the battlefield. 'The Commander-in-Chief alone can decide to what extent each of the different portions of the force must commit themselves to the action', he says.[57] This is, in context, debatable,

[54] TNA WO 279/526, *Report on Staff Tour, 1910,* p.15.
[55] *Field Service Regulations, Part I,* p.128. (Page number of 1912 edition.)
[56] TNA WO 279/526, Report on Staff Tour, 1910, p.26.
[57] Is he saying that 'The commander most effectually insures [sic] his control over the activity of the units engaged on the firing line by assigning definite tasks to them'? *Drill Regulations for the Infantry, German Army,* pp.69-70.

implying that the army commander and the Commander-in-Chief are one and the same. *FSR, Part II*, allocates strategic responsibility to the latter, under political direction, but tactical freedom to the former.[58] In addition, Haig does not seem to be accepting that a commander needs advice and support; and there is no sense, in his commentary, of a split between the hierarchical administrative staff needed to organise the mobilisation and concentration of an army, and a more collegiate general staff, ensuring that the army is manoeuvred and deployed efficiently. He finishes by saying that 'Field Service Regulations and Manuals are in themselves of little value unless their teaching is connected by a general common doctrine inculcating initiative and cooperation.'[59] It is difficult to imagine any of his peers in England finding it necessary to make this statement. In short, the report demonstrates that Haig is trying to marry his own military philosophy with that of *FSR, Part I*, but struggling with the detail.

One year later, the report from the 1911 tour is structured differently. Again, it explores the practicality of mobilising troops within India, but it also covers a series of war scenarios which he had presented to his staff. The first part of the book sets out the tasks Haig has asked his assembled staff and senior commanders to address, followed by a summary of their conclusions. Chapter 4 of the book is a commentary written by Haig in sections, to adjudicate.[60] It reads as a history lesson in Napoleonic and Prussian military tactics. The first reference to *Field Service Regulations* comes after 14 pages of dense prose, and this is just two referenced reminders to put orders in writing, and to

[58] *Field Service Regulations, Part II, 1913*, pp.23-25.
[59] TNA WO 279/526, Report on Staff Tour, 1910, p.34.
[60] TNA WO 279/532, Report on Staff Tour, 1911, pp.27-55.

make reconnaissance reports in a standard way. He is well into the fourth task when he launches into a significant diatribe.

> *Certain critics of the British General Staff and of our regulations have recently argued that a doctrine is lacking. …The reasoning appears to be that, unless some such definitive doctrine is decided and inculcated in peace, action in war will be hesitating and mistakes will be made. The critics seem to lose sight of the true nature of war, and of the varied conditions under which the British army may have to take the field. It is neither necessary, nor desirable that we should go further than what is so clearly laid down in our regulations. If we go further, we run the risk of tying ourselves to a doctrine that may not always be applicable, and we gain nothing in return. An army trained to march long distances, to manoeuvre quickly, and to fight with the utmost determination will be a suitable instrument in the hands of a competent commander.*[61]

Haig is saying that *FSR* is not a 'doctrine'; and that *FSR* should not be modified to constitute one. The last sentence is also very clear. The commander will tell his army when, where and how to fight. (*FSR* requires the commander-in-chief to put the army where it needs to be, and then let it fight. It is a subtle, but key, difference.) And in the context of what has gone before, it is clear that he has no wish to accept the way of thinking that *FSR, Part I,* requires of him as Commander-in-Chief. As if to reinforce the point, it is back to Clausewitz, the French Imperial Guard in 1870, and the Russian army in 1814. On through the Austrian army in 1858, Napoleon in 1808, 1809 and 1813, and

[61] TNA WO 279/532, Report on Staff Tour, 1911, p.44.

on to the last three pages. There, at last, he makes reference again to the Regulations. But he is merely documenting complaints about the wording of three administrative paragraphs, as they pertain to India. It is worth quoting again what is effectively the first commandment of *FSR*. It 'should be so thoroughly impressed on the mind of every commander that, whenever he has to come to a decision in the field, he instinctively gives them their full weight.'[62] On this alone, Haig is found very significantly wanting. At this point, it is hard to argue that he was even supportive of, let alone, as one biographer of his has alleged, 'evangelical' in, his dissemination of, *FSR*.

One quality of a commanding officer he clearly does support is 'rapidity of decision'.[63] Indeed, Charteris emphasises that Haig considered it a primary virtue. Rapid decision making, without formally taking advice, is arguably a necessity for command of an independent cavalry brigade, when outlying units are constantly reporting back their reconnaissance findings. But it is potentially disastrous for a large all-arms force faced with a changing strategic situation and incomplete knowledge of enemy movements. Assessment of intelligence, and up to date planning of manoeuvre, are vital requirements if an all-arms force is to retain cohesion. There is no sense of these qualities being even considered in either tour. During 1911, General Creagh issued a general order, signed by Haig as Chief-of-Staff, to the effect that all officers should be 'conversant with' the regulations. Sheffield cites this as evidence that Haig supported

[62] *Field Service Regulations, Part I, 1912*, p.112.
[63] TNA WO 279/526 & 279/532, *Staff Tours, 1910 & 1911;* Charteris, *Field-Marshal Earl Haig*, p.54.

the Regulations.[64] In the light of the above, it seems more likely that this was an order from Creagh, aimed more at senior than junior officers.

DeGroot says that, in 1911, Haig 'took attacks on the FSR very seriously.' This assertion is only half true. *FSR, Part II, Organisation and Administration*, was, by now, uncontroversial. DeGroot quotes Haig's correspondence to Kiggell, his replacement as Director of Staff Duties at the War Office.[65] The first letter records Haig's reaction to a general criticism, by the Adjutant General, of an administrative regulation in *Part II*. Haig quite reasonably writes that if the Adjutant General does not like any part of the document, he should suggest specific amendments. But the second letter quoted pertains to tactics in case of war, as determined by *Part I*. Haig writes, somewhat defensively, that 'I have tried to preach 'the doctrine' [sic] as laid down in *FSR*. ...and have quoted chapter and verse so that the General Staff here may interpret the regulations in the way in which I believe is intended.'[66] Kiggell can only have bought the subject up in response to rumours that Haig was not totally engaging with the organisational and tactical implications of *Part I* regulations. There is a further hint, in the biography of Haig by Charteris, that the upper echelons of the British command, this time in India, had some doubts about the orthodoxy of Haig's thinking. 'The Viceroy went so far as to inform the Commander-in-Chief that in his opinion the study of foreign army organizations was unnecessary and dangerous.'[67] Why might he say that?

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[64] Gary Sheffield, The Makings of a Corps Commander: Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Haig, Jones (ed.), *Stemming the Tide*, p.115.
[65] DeGroot, *The Military Career of Douglas Haig*, pp.329-330.
[66] Haig to Kiggell, 27 April & 15 June 1911, (I/11 & I/15) quoted in DeGroot, *The Military Career of Douglas Haig*, pp.329.
[67] Charteris, *Field-Marshal Earl Haig*, p.56.

In 1910, Haig initiated 'a close study of the German Army. He compared the differences between the organization adopted by the Germans and that prevailing in Great Britain and in India.'[68] Duff Cooper draws attention to a 'formidable list' of books he had read that year in the end of his diary for 1910.[69] On this list are two books on German staff arrangements, Lieut.-Col. Baron von der Goltz, *The Nation in Arms, Military art and science*, (1887); and Spenser Wilkinson, *The Brain of an Army, A Popular Account of the German General Staff*, (1895). Also, on the list, are Moltke's *Projects for the Campaign of 1866 against Austria*, and Clausewitz, *On War*.[70] There is no evidence that he studied *Drill Regulations for the Infantry*, the German equivalent of *Field Service Regulations*, but it would have been surprising if he had not. It was published in English in 1907.[71] Because, by 1911, he was not confining his thinking entirely to cavalry. Severe paraphrasing of the passage from his 1911 Staff Tour report distils the essence of one of the points he is trying to make.

Certain critics of the British General Staff …seem to lose sight of the true nature of war, and of the varied conditions under which the British army may have to take the field. An army trained to march long distances, to manoeuvre quickly, and to fight with the utmost determination will be a suitable instrument in the hands of a competent commander.[72]

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[68] Charteris, *Field-Marshal Earl Haig*, p.53.
[69] Cooper, *Haig*, p.119.
[70] NLS Acc.3155/2, Douglas Haig Papers, Diary 1910, final pages. The list is written in one sitting, not book by book. It cannot be guaranteed that it was contemporaneous.
[71] *Drill Regulations for the Infantry, German Army, 1906*, translated for US War Department by Francis Behr, (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1907).
[72] TNA WO 279/532, *Report on Staff Tour, 1911*, p.44.

This seems to argue that battles in a continental war cannot be planned, since there are so many variables, as do the German *Drill Regulations, 1906*, which was briefly analysed in the chapter on British *Field Service Regulations*. 'No exact plan can be prescribed for a conflict.'[73] There are other similarities. Haig implies that a 'competent commander' would have no need to delegate, if he is wielding a well-trained and physically fit army, and if that army obeys the orders of their commander 'quickly'. This is exactly the message of the German Regulations, with their insistence that the army commander, who has strategic discretion, be on the battlefield, directing the leading divisions, and that his orders should be obeyed precisely. It seems, at this juncture, that Haig is rejecting the philosophy of *FSR* as a blueprint for military action in a continental war, on the grounds that it is too directive in its description of battle scenarios; and, also, crucially, on the grounds that it allocates too much responsibility to an ultimate commander-in-chief, who is not on the battlefield; too little to the senior general who is; and then allows for too much leeway in the interpretation of orders by front-line middle ranking officers further down the command chain. He is instead embracing the general philosophy, if not the detail, of the German *Infantry Drill Regulations*, which allocates total responsibility to the general up with the fighting troops, and demands the unquestioning obedience of his subordinates. Charteris also says that Haig 'strove to teach that no stereotyped system of strategy could be accepted as invariably the best, or indeed the only, solution of the ever-varying problems which would be presented in the course of modern warfare.'[74] In contrast, the rest of the British

[73] *Drill Regulations for the Infantry*, p.69.
[74] Charteris, *Field-Marshal Earl Haig*, p.53.

army was being taught that there was such a stereotypical system, and that it was flexible enough to deal with all eventualities. This is a crucial distinction.

It is worth noting that Charteris also says that Haig accepted, in principle, that 'a small force, faced with the advance of an overwhelming enemy' might well have to 'devote its whole energies to disengaging itself from the threat by a rapid and skilful withdrawal,'[75] again identifying one of several solutions, and again resonating with the German regulations which suggest that the front-line commander-in-chief should decide 'whether he will refuse combat by marching away.'[76] Refusing combat is not part of the ethos of *FSR. Part I*, although a fighting retirement was entirely acceptable.[77]

It is important to remain sceptical of Charteris. He is not above sinking to revisionist inaccuracies. But there can be little doubt that Haig was, in 1911, questioning the applicability of the British regulations to any impending continental war; and in doing so, he was not only prescient, but the only really senior officer in the British army of the time who articulated, albeit somewhat incoherently, his concerns.

England 1912 to 1914

Haig returned to England in 1912, and was promoted to Lieutenant-General in order to take over as GOC, Aldershot, commanding the only 'Home Corps' based in England. This was a crucial post, and it seems inconceivable that it was generally known that he was opposed to enforcing the tactical precepts of *FSR Part I* in his own commands. In fact, he was generally regarded as a modernist. This reputation, in England, was based

[75] Charteris, *Field-Marshal Earl Haig*, p.54.
[76] *Drill Regulations for the Infantry*, p.68-69.
[77] *Field Service Regulations, Part I, 1912*, pp.95-98.

on his work between 1906 and 1909 in pushing through the army reforms, including the publication of *FSR*, at Haldane's instigation. Two fairly specific pieces of work at that time are also significant. As part of the detail of the creation of the Territorial Army, a significant area of debate was the quality of artillery training, which was widely perceived as inadequate. Haig got sufficiently involved to inspect different units of artillery to compare the competence of regular batteries against those of the Militia, as it was in 1907; and subsequently chaired a committee into *Royal Field Artillery Mobilisation Arrangements at Home*, which reported in 1909.[78] This would have implied that he had an interest in all arms cooperation, (such as he had demonstrated in South Africa). It certainly confirms his attention to detail.

He had also, as Director of Staff Duties, advocated a greater role for the Staff College. 'Haig's administrative achievements in the formation of a British General Staff' were 'considerable', says DeGroot. He enlarged the intake of the Staff College at Camberley, broadened the employment prospects of graduates, and banned the right of senior generals to choose their own staff.[79] This would have had a considerable impact on the upper echelons of the army, being closely in tune with *FSR* in their emphasis on professionalism and good staffing arrangements.

On becoming GOC, Aldershot in 1912, he would have been expected to build on these principles. He now had the opportunity to organise his own staff, along the lines suggested by *FSR, Parts I and II*, and to build an efficient command structure. However,

[78] TNA WO/32/6776 *Royal Field Artillery Mobilisation Arrangements at home, 1909*.
[79] DeGroot, *The Military Career of Douglas Haig*, pp.307-311.

his ideas on officer training do not inspire confidence. He chose 'Napoleon's 1805 campaign' 'for special study by officers in the winter of 1912-13' and 'instructed divisional commanders to select officers to deliver lectures on' 'the chosen campaign.'[80] This is a strange choice if he was attempting to foster debate on tactics or staff organisation with reference to *FSR*.

He participated in the army manoeuvres of 1912, and in the army exercise of 1913.[81] French, as Director of the former, makes it clear that one of its aims was to test the tactics and organisation displayed 'in conjunction with *Field Service Regulations*'. A number of problems were detected, but he pointedly praised Sir James Grierson, Haig's opponent in the exercise, for his compliance with them.[82] Haig's performance, by contrast, was regarded as pedestrian. In 1913, Haig and his Corps, this time directed by French, also came off second best. One of the aims of this latter exercise was to trial a new *Staff Manual (War)*, published in 1912, building on the principles expressed in *FSR, Parts I and II*. In the event, slow transmission of orders and poor communications between formations were put forward as explanations for their lack-lustre performance, and blamed on this document.[83] But *FSR, Part I,* explicitly defines the staff structure required to address these problems; and Haig 'indirectly admitted that staff work in his

[80] Andrew George Duncan, *The Military Education of Junior Officers in the Edwardian Era*, (Ph.D. University of Birmingham, 2016), p.108, referencing NLS Papers of Field-Marshal Earl Haig, ACC 3155 No 91a. Aldershot Command, Instructions Regarding Individual Training, 1912-1913.
[81] TNA WO/279/47 *Army Manoeuvres, 1912*; TNA WO/279/52 *Army Exercise, 1913*.
[82] TNA WO/279/47 *Army Manoeuvres 1912*, p.53,55; Simon Batten, "A School for the Leaders": What did the British Army learn from the 1912 Army Manoeuvres? *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 93, No. 373 (Spring 2015). An excellent account, though he fails to address *FSR* in any detail, (p.46) and thereby slightly misses the point. He does usefully address compliance with cavalry doctrine (p.44).
[83] Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.121.

corps had been a problem, stating that it was "fifty per cent more effective" as a result of the exercise.'[84] There must be doubts, even at this early stage, whether his staff structure was fit for purpose.

The choice of French to lead the British Expeditionary Force on the outbreak of War in late July 1914, with Haig as one of his corps commanders, was uncontroversial, given their relevant experience, current appointments, and the political trust they had earned. Only French, Smith-Dorrien and Haig had held the post of GOC Aldershot, commanding the Home Corps, since 1900, and it was one which required political engagement, being firmly in the public eye. 'The liberal government as a whole was undoubtedly in French's debt after his willingness to stand by his duty at the time of the Curragh incident in March 1914. Haig too was in credit with the liberals, particularly Haldane, whose reforms he had greatly assisted.'[85]

But of far more moment, in August 1914, was how sincerely, if at all, Haig had accepted *FSR* as his guiding philosophy of command. It was to be hoped that he had addressed the structure of his own staff to enable good decision-making, based on properly sifted intelligence and slick communications, as required by *FSR*. It was impossible to be a good infantry general in the British army unless this staff structure was in place. And if he had not set up this staff structure, then appointing him to direct an infantry corps in battle was a ghastly mistake.

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[84] Sheffield, *The Chief*, p.116, citing The Times, 30 Sept. 1913, p.4, and 20 Sept. 1913, p.10.
[85] Beckett, Haig and French, Bond & Cave (ed), *Haig, a Re-Appraisal 80 Years On*, p.52-55.

Haig in 1914

Haig's poor performance in August 1914 nearly caused disaster. He did not comply with *FSR*, and his staff was not fit for purpose. In order to say this with certainty, it is merely necessary to analyse the performance of I Corps and its subordinate units, as recorded in their war diaries, with reference to *FSR*. The experiences of all units, as recorded, can be cross-referenced with relative ease. Little reliance needs to be put on personal diaries, reports, or post-war 'memoirs', though they can be assessed in the light of the primary evidence.[86] Such an analysis has been done for the Battles of Mons and Le Cateau, and it confirms the above statements.[87]

Indeed, the analysis re-writes history. French has been generally castigated for being ineffective and out of touch during the Battle of Mons. But he was simply following *FSR*. His job was to give 'brief' orders to his corps commanders, which he did. Smith-Dorrien's interpretation of these instructions is crystal clear.[88] Having done this, French was required to consider strategic threats to his army, including the obvious one of encirclement from the west. *FSR* demands that 'a commander even of a large army should rarely omit to reconnoitre personally.'[89] So he went to Valenciennes, on the morning of the battle, to review the readiness of both French and British units in that sector. He returned to his Headquarters, and monitored strategic developments. Terraine

[86] Such as NLS Acc.3155/98, Douglas Haig Papers, Aug 1914, pp80-94; TNA WO 95/588/4, I Corps Staff, 1914, First Army Corps Report through to 29 August; Sir Horace Lockwood Smith-Dorrien, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service*, (New York, E P Dutton and Company, 1925); E L Spears, *Liaison 1914, a Narrative of the Great Retreat*, (London, William Heinemann Ltd, 1930), etc.
[87] David Hutchison, *Mons, an Artillery Battle*, (Warwick, Helion Press, 2018); Le Cateau, unpublished.
[88] TNA WO 95/630, II Corps Staff, a plan of battle agreed with GHQ, 23 August 1914, p.75.
[89] *Field Service Regulations, Part I, 1912*, p.117.

says that French 'issued no written orders between 11.55 pm on August 21st and 8.25 pm on August 24th'.[90] In fact, GHQ issued more than 30 orders (numbered OA62 to OA 95) between these times. French fulfilled his role as strategist to the battle, and the campaign, in full compliance with *FSR*. Smith-Dorrien, commanding I Corps, fought a masterly battle, in total compliance with *FSR* and GHQ instructions. The men under his command were so confident under his handling, that they fought two gruelling battles in four days, achieving their tactical objectives in both. Wilson, as Assistant Chief-of-Staff at GHQ, in his direction of the 4th Division, under Major-General Thomas Snow, used FSR with equal effectiveness.

Pure operational analysis of Haig's handling of I Corps reveals his general disregard of *FSR*. This was not all negative. Haig, alone amongst British senior generals, decreed that 'artillery forms the skeleton of battle. …. the commander must reserve for himself the choice of the artillery position and indicate to the artillery commander what cooperation he expects from him.'[91] He instructed his brilliant artillery commander, Brigadier-General Henry Horne, incidentally a staunch supporter of *FSR*, to use his charm to persuade his less experienced divisional artillery commanders to coordinate the field of fire of their combined forces.[92] This was *FSR* plus, *FSR* borrowing from *IDR*. It was in a small way revolutionary. Problems arose at the interface of divisions in II Corps, where there was no such cooperation. But Haig's non-compliance with *FSR* in other respects was near disastrous. He tried to wrest strategic control of the battle from

[90] Terraine, *Mons, the Retreat to Victory*, p.88.
[91] *Drill Regulations for the Infantry, German Army*, p.72.
[92] Hutchison, *Mons, an Artillery Battle*, pp.62-63.

French, liaising directly with General de Mas-Latrie, commanding the French 18th Army Corps, to decide on his own strategy.[93] He ignored almost all GHQ orders.[94] He tried to fight the battle without any reliance on a properly constituted staff, and therefore without accurate intelligence information.[95] He ignored command pathways, issuing ill-thought-out orders to individual infantry brigades, with such frequency, that he almost lost control of his whole corps.[96] And by the evening of 26 August, he had lost the confidence of his senior officers.[97] He was not commanding with reference to the doctrine by which they had been trained.

In summary, it can be concluded that there is no evidence to support the view that Haig influenced *FSR* pre-publication. And not only that, there is no evidence that he either implemented FSR in his own commands, or observed them himself, post-publication. All the evidence suggests that he refused to accept that they applied to him. The historiographical implications of this finding are considerable.

David Hutchison, December 2020

A full bibliography is appended to this set of chapters. Whilst all these chapters can be considered to be in the public domain, reference to them should acknowledge the contribution of the author.

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[93] NLS, Acc. 3155/98, Douglas Haig Papers, p.82. For another example, compare Operation Order 7; as in TNA WO 95/1/2 General Staff, 25 Aug 1914; with I Corps action order for it: G122; as in TNA WO 95/588/1, I Corps Staff, 24 Aug 1914. Also, see TNA WO 95/588/4, I Corps Staff, 1914, First Army Corps Report through to 29 August.

[94] See GHQ orders, OA57 & OA62 and I Corps response; Hutchison, *Mons, an Artillery Battle*, pp.55-61, and associated references to unit diaries. Also, Operation Order 7, as above.

[95] Compare TNA WO 95/588, I Corps Staff; TNA WO 95/629/4 II Corps Intelligence; WO 95/1227/1 1 Division; TNA WO 95/1283, 2 Division. All for August 1914.

[96] TNA WO 95/588/4, I Corps Staff, 1914, pp.6-9 of First Army Corps Report; TNA WO 95/1227, 1 Division; TNA WO 95/1283, 2 Division; TNA WO 95/1274, 3 Infantry Brigade; TNA WO 95/1343, 5 Infantry Brigade; TNA WO 95/1352, 6 Infantry Brigade; and lesser units.

[97] Royal Artillery Museum, MD/931, Captain, later Major, J L Mowbray, transcribed diary, Aug 1914, pp.5-9; this is a good place to start. His account is supported by reference to all relevant war diaries. Hutchison, unpublished on Le Cateau.