

Boer Wars

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(Redirected from Boer war)

The **Boer Wars** (known in Afrikaans as Vryheidsoorlog (lit. "freedom wars")) were two wars fought between the British Empire and the two independent Boer republics, the Oranje Vrijstaat and the South African Republic (Transvaal Republiek).

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Boers in combat (1881).

First Anglo-Boer War

Main article: First Boer War

The First Anglo-Boer War (1880–1881), was a rebellion of Boers farmers against British rule in the Transvaal that re-established their independence. The conflict occurred against the backdrop of the Pretoria government becoming increasingly ineffective at dealing with growing claims on South African land from rival interests within the country.

Second Anglo-Boer War

Main article: Second Anglo-Boer War

The Second War (1899–1902), by contrast, was a lengthy war—involving large numbers of troops from many British possessions, which ended with the conversion of the Boer republics into British colonies (with a promise of limited zelf-bestuur). These colonies later formed part of the Union of South Africa. The British fought directly against the Transvaal and the Oranje Vrijstaat, defeating their forces first in open warfare and then in a long and bitter guerrilla campaign. British losses were high due to both disease and combat. The policies of "scorched earth" and civilian internment in concentration camps (adopted by the British to prevent support for the farmers/Boer commando campaign) ravaged the civilian populations in the Transvaal and the Oranje Vrijstaat.

Controversy and significance

During the later stages of the Second Boer War, the British pursued the policy of rounding up and isolating the Boer civilian population in concentration camps, one of the earliest uses of this method by modern powers. The wives and children of Boer guerrillas were sent to these camps, which had poor hygiene and little food. Many of the children in these camps died, as did a large minority of the adults.^[*citation needed*] This attracted hostility from, in particular, the German Empire.^[*citation needed*]

This led to a change in approach to foreign policy from Britain, which now set about looking for more allies. To this end, the 1902 treaty with Japan in particular was a sign that the British Empire feared attack on its Far Eastern empire and saw this alliance as an opportunity to strengthen its stance in the Far East. This war led to a change from "splendid isolation" policy to a policy that involved looking for allies and improving world relations^[*citation needed*]. Later treaties with France ("*Entente cordiale*") and Russia, caused partially by the controversy surrounding the Boer War, were major factors in dictating how the battle lines were drawn during World War I.^[*citation needed*]

The Boer War also had other significance. The Army Medical Corps discovered that 80% of men presenting for service were physically unfit to fight.^[*citation needed*] This was the first time in which the government was forced to take notice of how unhealthy the British population was.^[*citation needed*] This strengthened the call for the liberal reforms of the first decade of the twentieth century.^[*citation needed*]

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Further reading

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Boer women and children in a British concentration camp.



Lizzie van Zyl who died in the Bloemfontein concentration camp.



The burning of a Boer farm.

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Journal articles

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Relevant Historical Fictional Films

- Breaker Morant

External links

- Sources for the Study of Sheffield (UK) and the Boer Wars (<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/libraries/archives-and-local-studies/publications/boer-wars>) Produced by Sheffield City Council's Libraries and Archives.

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Categories: Boer Wars | Edwardian era | Victorian era

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