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Victories are Not Enough

Samuel J. Newland Dr.

VICTORIES ARE NOT ENOUGH: LIMITATIONS OF THE GERMAN WAY OF WAR

Samuel J. Newland

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My sincere thanks to the U.S. Army War College for approving and funding the research for this project. It has given me the opportunity to return to my favorite discipline, Modern German History, and at the same time, develop a monograph which has implications for today's army and officer corps. In particular, I would like to thank the Dean of the U.S. Army War College, Dr. William Johnsen, for agreeing to this project; the Research Board of the Army War College for approving the funds for the TDY; and my old friend and colleague from the Militärgeschichliches Forschungsamt, Colonel (Dr.) Karl-Heinz Frieser, and some of his staff for their assistance. In addition, I must also thank a good former student of mine, Colonel Pat Cassidy, who during his student year spent a considerable amount of time finding original curricular material on German officer education and making it available to me. I greatly appreciate a valued colleague, Dr. Tony Echevarria, who took a considerable amount of time reviewing this monograph and providing suggestions for its improvement. Credit as well goes to Mr. Rich Baker, Military History Institute, for helping me with some bibliographical problems and serving as a great research resource. Finally, credit must be given to the Chairman of the Department of Distance Education, Dr. Clay Chun, for encouraging and supporting research, writing and publication, something that a scholar genuinely appreciates in a department chair.

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Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave, Carlisle, PA 17013-5244.

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FOREWORD

Since the early stages of World War II, militaries in general, and the U.S. Army in particular, have studied the German way of war, specifically as practiced in the 20th century. While acknowledging that Germany—and before that nation came into existence, Prussia—produced some excellent armies, major problems with the German way of war must not be ignored.

Even the casual observers should have noted that, despite the military prowess of Germany, it lost both of the major wars of the 20th century. This Letort Paper, authored by Dr. Samuel J. Newland, explores the reasons why a nation with such a strong military reputation was unable to win its wars and achieve its goals. He emphasizes that military power, tactical and operational brilliance, and victories in the field can easily be squandered if a nation has failed to set achievable goals and develop strategies to reach them. This failure, which led to Germany's defeat in these wars, should not be lost on modern nations as they proceed into the 21st century.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
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SUMMARY

Since the early 1940s, the students of military operations in general, and from the United States in particular, have studied German military operations. While some of these studies have dealt with the wars of the imperial era, particularly the Wars of German Unification (1864-71), much more study has centered on the wars waged by the Third Reich from 1939-45. From these studies, lessons have been extracted, and military doctrine has been influenced. Regrettably, however, as the German way of war has been studied, too often those studies have focused on the tactical or the operational levels of war. The exploits, the victories of German operational leaders such as Erwin Rommel, Heinz Guderian, and Eric von Manstein have been traditional favorites. And while the Germans have clearly influenced warfare on this level, even the casual observer should have noticed that the Germans fought two major wars in the 20th century and lost both of them, the second with disastrous consequences. Thus the question emerges, What was wrong with the oft-studied German way of war?

A significant factor in their military failure can be laid at the top with both their civilian and military leadership. For while the Germans have excelled tactically and operationally, they have exhibited significant weaknesses in developing achievable goals for their nation and appropriate strategies for achieving these goals. In the time that stretched from the beginning of the 1860s until the end of World War II, Germany only had one brief period when it could bask in the glory of the European leadership it so desired. That brief period was from 1871 until 1889 when Otto von Bismarck was Chancellor. Following Bismarck (and Chief of the German General Staff Helmuth von Moltke), the German record of setting achievable goals and developing and following logical strategies is poor.

This Letort Paper is designed to explore these issues and provide an overview of the development of Germany as a nation and German military thought in the 19th century. It examines the origins of modern German military thinking and the concepts promoted by some of Germany's key military and political leadership.

It emphasizes that, if a nation is unwilling or incapable of designing logical strategies, tactical and operational victories in the field will come to naught.

INTRODUCTION

> From Thomas Carlyle to Martin Van Creveld, Prussian-German Prowess has attracted more than its share of homage from soldiers and military historians alike.
>
> Holger H. Herwig[1]

This Letort Paper is written to examine the claimed German "genius for war," whether it exists and, if so, at what levels. This question has long intrigued the author who is, by his academic education and major interest, a German historian. Beyond the writer's own intellectual curiosity, the question has significance for the U.S. Army. Consider, for example, that since the end of World War II, the U.S. Army has expended considerable energy studying the German way of war. These studies include numerous publications produced at Fort Leavenworth, as well as such impressive projects as the multiple interviews and monographs completed by German officers from 1945 to 1954, working in cooperation with Headquarters, U.S. Army Europe. These Army studies cover a profusion of topics from strategies and campaigns in all theaters where the German Army fought during World War II, as well as obscure topics such as the utilization of canines by the German Army. They also cover the full spectrum of warfare from theater level operations to anti-partisan operations in the Balkans and Russia.

Despite the passage of some 60 years, German doctrinal concepts such as *Auftragstaktik* and examples of battles and campaigns are still studied at military educational institutions, and some are included in U.S. Army doctrinal and instructional materials. The title of Colonel T. N. Dupuy's Book, *A Genius For War . . .*, seems to best sum up the rationale for many military writers' fascination with German military practices.[2]

The fascination with German military prowess is not just a "military thing," a fascination by soldiers about other soldiers. Indeed, serious historians, pseudo historians, and military buffs have added, seemingly weekly, to the bulk of studies on the Army fielded by the Third Reich, causing the shelves of respectable military libraries to creak from the sheer weight of these publications. The

intrigue with the successes, leadership, and tactics of the German Army also has been shared by the military establishments of other nations, providing a student of German military history who wishes to achieve proficiency in this field of study with a daunting task.

In addition to the literature of the past 50 years, mainly focusing on the military of the Third Reich, publications continue to emerge on the German conduct of World War I, the Wars of Unification, and the wars fought by Frederick the Great and his immediate successors. In particular, the history of the National Socialist State and military doctrine, as well as its impact on political processes and the leadership ability of key senior German officers, continues to intrigue students of the military art. This fascination shows no signs of abating.

This paper is designed to explore German military practices and their origins, and analyze the weaknesses in the 19th and early 20th centuries of Prussian/German military thought. It emphasizes the importance of national political and military leaders responsible for higher levels of strategy, developing logical and sequential plans and strategies. The first 80 years of Germany's existence indicate that, no matter how proficient a nation's forces are on the battlefield, if senior political and military leaders have not done solid strategic planning and have not developed achievable goals, the efforts of its military forces will likely fail to produce the desired results.

Although many militaries have attempted to analyze the competencies of the German military and even emulate some of them, particularly on the operational level of war, too often the failings of the German Army have not been studied properly. Most military authors recognize any number of German capabilities on the tactical and operational levels of war. Conversely, during the 20th century, the Germans have employed their forces in two major World Wars and, despite their well-documented capabilities, have been defeated, the second defeat being an overall calamitous event for both the nation and its citizens. This causes students of military history to ask, what was missing? How is it that a nation that has dominated 20th century military thought has been unable to win its wars? Or stated another way, if there is, in fact, a German genius for war, why didn't it produce victories rather than defeats in the wars of the 20th century?

Many authors have studied this issue and attempted to identify German shortcomings. Popular military historian Kenneth Macksey concluded, though the Germans had "many admirable attributes, talents and skills . . .," that "Germany's military methods so widely respected were overshadowed by arrogance, excess, rigidity of mind, bullying, and a blindness to the lessons of history."[3] Geoffrey P. Magargee took a more balanced approach. Looking at the post-war German officers' assertion that Hitler had bullied them into impossible military campaigns over their protests, Magargee stated:

> Hidden below that superficial argument, however, lies the Germans' fundamental inability to make sound strategic judgments. This was a problem with deep historical roots that, at the very least, stretched back to Schlieffen and the senior officers and officials of his era. With almost no exceptions, the Nazi-era military and government were devoid of people who could correctly balance means and ends in order to come up with a realistic strategic plan.[4]

Whether one totally agrees with his assessment, Megargee has highlighted an important fact. Most of the flaws in the German way of war were evident before 1914, long before Hitler's entry into military affairs. The flaws are thus ones of considerable duration and have origins in the imperial period, rather than in the tragic National Socialist era. Adding to the misunderstanding, many students have been "taken in" by the memoirs, the interviews of senior German officers who, after World War II, claimed that the German Armed Forces were robbed of many of their rightful victories by Hitler's interference in everything from strategic to tactical decisions. This postwar revisionist line by key German generals would lead one to believe that most of the flaws in the German way of war were tied to the National Socialist era and Hitler's interference in military matters.[5] In fact, this writer's research indicates that from 1870-1945, four significant problems existed within the German political/ military system. All deserve careful examination by serious students of the military art.

First, from the mid 1860s, German military thinkers planned for and relied on the concept of a short, speedy victory to achieve their major goals. Planning for the short war acknowledged that Germany's warmaking capabilities would not likely support long wars of

attrition. And the concept of short, speedy decisive wars was based largely on the experiences of 1864-71. Despite this recognition, twice in the 20th century, Germany became involved in lengthy attritional conflicts, both producing disastrous results for that nation.

A second problem deserves careful consideration. If a country's political and military leadership has not engaged in the necessary strategic planning and established achievable objectives, no matter how tactically or operationally proficient that country's military is, successes on the battlefield likely will be squandered. In short, military victories are not enough and should not be viewed in isolation! Obviously this problem is not exclusively a military issue since a nation's national security strategy normally should be developed through the political system with military input. When this does not occur, there is a serious disconnect. As succinctly described by Major General, a.D., Christain O. E. Millotat, "Sheer military virtuosity cannot compensate for the lack of political direction and National Strategic objectives."[6]

Third, and closely related to the previously-mentioned problem, from the early 1890s until 1945, the military leadership consistently intruded into the political side of the German national security process. In part, this was due to the political leadership systematically failing to develop a logical national security strategy. The military leadership, particularly members of the famous (or in the opinion of some, infamous) General Staff, intruded into the political realm and, in essence, developed political as well as military priorities for the German government. With their excessive involvement in this important process, most of the solutions to Germany's strategic problems appeared resolvable by the use of the military, rather than the political instrument of power.

Fourth, in a closely-related problem, the history of Germany from the beginnings of the Second Reich (1871) through the *Gotterdamerung* of the Third Reich[7] shows an inability to recognize the value of using multiple elements of power to achieve the nation's goals. The writer acknowledges that this descriptor, elements of power, is rather recent terminology.[8] Conversely, for generations many political and military leaders have recognized intuitively that alternate methods exist to achieve a nation's political goals other than through waging

war. As the ancient Chinese philosopher of war, Sun Tzu, stated, ". . . Those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle. They capture his cities without assaulting them and overthrow his state without protracted operations."[9] In Germany, however, even though the political element was often used—whether it was chicanery on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War, negotiations on the eve of World War I, or at Munich—a distinct tendency on the part of the Germans was to gravitate, all too quickly, to blunt coercion and to ignore all but the military element of power. In particular, once conflicts started, the other elements of power were pushed aside unceremoniously, and the Germans all too quickly pursued their goals by using almost exclusively the military element of power.[10] War was viewed as the professional domain of the military, and the military seemed to ignore the concept that a nation can, in fact should, use concurrently or simultaneously several elements of power to achieve its goals.[11]

CHAPTER 1

IMPERIAL ROOTS OF THE PROBLEMS

> Two great soldiers, Helmuth von Moltke, the Elder, and Alfred von Schlieffen, dominated Prusso-German military thinking from the mid-19th century into the First World War and beyond. They taught and practiced a mode of offensive warfare that adapted to the industrial age Napoleon's precept to seek prompt decision by battle, and in battle seek to destroy the enemy.
>
> Gunther E. Rothenberg[12]

The roots of German military greatness and the basis for its failures lie deep in the 19th, rather than the 20th century. When the subject of military failures is discussed, many Germans quickly gravitate to the 20th century and a discussion of Hitler, whose progressive interference in military matters becomes a classic example of how the military was led to failure.[13] Granted, from the earliest stages of World War II, Hitler, with only the perspective of an enlisted soldier, meddled in matters far above his capabilities. Conversely, it is far too easy to blame an obviously evil dictator, a madman, for Germany's military failures rather than to analyze the root causes of these failures. To blame one man, who's "Thousand Year Reich" only endured for 13 years, is far too simplistic. To understand the origins of Germany's military failures, one must first understand at least some rudiments of modern German history and its military and political traditions.

This paper will refer to a "German way of war," a term that begs definition. The German way of war owes much to Napoleonic warfare. Key elements in Napoleon's practice of warfare were rapid movement of his forces followed by the concentration of large bodies of troops to seek a quick decision on the battlefield, using tactical and operational excellence to destroy the enemy force. In the last half of the 19th century, German military leaders significantly enhanced Napoleonic offensive warfare. This enhancement consisted of using railroads, telegraph, and repeating rifles—products of the new industrial age—to make this type of warfare more rapid and lethal, more decisive. This German way of war emerged in the 1860s during

the Wars of Unification, and would continue to be used until the waning stages of World War II.

Germany, among the major European powers, is a distinctly modern creation. In the immediate post-medieval world when modern nation-states such as Britain and France emerged, Germany was a series of fragmented states that seemed to have little opportunity to unify as a nation-state under a single sovereign. Prior to 1871, some 300 states and fiefdoms existed, ruled by princes and, at best, minor nobility, rather than a nation. Thus, while a people called Germans have existed as an identifiable group for thousands of years, Germany, the nation-state, has existed only for approximately a century-and-a-half, making it a decided newcomer among the modern nation-states. Complicating this problem of multiple political entities, these semi-feudal states also were economically autonomous, thereby restricting, if not stifling, economic intercourse.[14] Since as a unified nation-state it is, in many ways, still in its infancy, Germany's recent emergence on the world scene may explain some immaturity on the world stage.

Complicating any effort to unify these states, at the beginning of the 19th century two countries vied for the leadership of the German people. The largest and most influential of Europe's German-speaking countries was the Hapsburg Empire, dominated by Austria. This empire was ruled and administered by a veneer of German officials, but its population included a number of other peoples who conceivably could not claim German origins. Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Poles, and Croats were included in this number, to name only a few. Though it was an essentially polyglot state, the Hapsburg Empire tended to dominate central European politics and, to a large extent, the politics of the German states. In fact, from the 1815 Congress of Vienna, which forged the agreements ending the Napoleonic Wars, until the Revolutions of 1848, its leader's (Prince Klemens von Metternich) brand of conservative politics dominated Europe.

In the same period, to the north of the Hapsburg domain, the second leading German state and the Hapsburg's direct competitor was the increasingly influential Prussia. This state was noted for its military prowess rather than its cultural or commercial excellence. The Prussian military had enhanced its reputation in the wars waged

by Frederick the Great and most recently in the Napoleonic Wars. In fact, the German army, relying heavily on Prussian traditions, retained this aura of military preeminence into the early 20th century. The reader should note, however, that the Prussian army was in many respects a dual-purpose entity. It had, in addition to its role to defend the state, a significant domestic role, i.e., preserving the existing social order and the Hohenzollern-led state.[15] Still, the roots of a unified Germany's military greatness, and at the same time its failures, emerge in the post-Napoleonic period from Prussia rather than from the Hapsburg Empire.

The movement for a unified Germany emerged in the late Napoleonic era. In the wave of nationalistic feeling that swept Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, German nationalists were significant among the discontented European groups who believed their aspirations had been ignored by the reactionary settlements forged by the Congress of Vienna during 1814-15.[16]

While acknowledging their grievances, the many divisive issues that separated the various principalities in the first half of the 19th century were so numerous that Germany seemed more of a dream for dreamers, for visionaries, rather than a realistic possibility.

The creation of a modern, unified Germany and the philosophical and experiential basis for the German way of war resulted from a series of wars (1864-71) initiated by Prussia. Unification was not accomplished through a political or diplomatic process.[17] As its critics frequently point out, war forged the German state, rather than a diplomatic or political process.[18] The leading military officer of the Prussian army, Helmuth Von Moltke, justified this approach, widely accepted in Prussia, stating:

> A world historical transformation of German condition, such as that which occurred in 1866, could not have come about by peaceful conventions and decrees. Action was required—pressure on the inside, war on the outside. One of the many German states had to become powerful enough to carry along the rest of them.[19]

In short, rather than through diplomacy and politics, revolutions and revolutionaries, German unification would have to be forced, not negotiated, and would be led by those more comfortable in uniform, instead of those wearing coat and tails.

Ultimately Prussia, which was actually an on again-off again supporter of German unification, would take the lead in the effort to unify the German states. Understanding Prussia, the core influence on Germany's political and military traditions from the mid-19th century until 1945, and its role in the unification of Germany is essential to understanding the German way of war. Prussian military thought, particularly in the wake of the Wars of Unification (1864-70) and its military campaigns during the same period, is the foundation of both modern Germany and German military thought.[20]

The largest obstacle to unifying the German states was opposition from neighboring European nations. For various reasons, strong opposition to a unified Germany under Prussian leadership existed. Prussia, after all, was synonymous with militarism as well as autocratic rule. France, already a major power and for several centuries a unified nation, opposed the formation of a strong German nation-state on its eastern flank. France's mid-19th century emperor, Louis

Napoleon, also had hopes of extending his nation's borders to its "natural" boundary, that is, the Rhine River. That obviously would place a substantial number of Germans under French rule.[21] Such a move placed France in conflict with Prussia, which had expanded westward toward that same river and, by this time, included a province on the west bank, the Rhineland, which was coveted by Louis Napoleon.

Even more serious for German nation-state proponents was the opposition of the Hapsburg Empire. This empire and its dominant German elite strongly opposed the emergence of a German nation-state; that is, one that was led by Prussia and excluded or minimized the participation of the Hapsburgs. Even within German nationalistic circles, there was a sharp divide about what should be included in a unified Germany and who should lead it. This question resulted in a serious rivalry between the two major German states, Prussia and the Hapsburg Empire. With two of the three major continental empires (the other being Russia) in opposition to the formation of a united Germany, establishing a German nation-state, again, was no small task.

An abortive attempt to unify Germany under a constitutional government occurred during the Revolution of 1848, but reactionary forces stopped this.[22] The unification of 1848 was led by liberal political leaders. Since the liberal elements had limited experience with the political process, had limited power, and faced enormous political obstacles, their attempt to create a unified and more democratic state ultimately failed. Given the significant obstacles preventing unification, it was unlikely that it would have been accomplished in a timely fashion using the traditional diplomatic or political processes. In particular, the opposition of the major continental powers, particularly France and the Hapsburg Empire, made a diplomatic solution to this process somewhat dubious. As a further complication, between 1848 and assumption of William I to the throne in 1861, the popular enthusiasm for German unification cooled considerably.

The successful unification, the extension of Prussian power, and many of the elements of the German way of war have their origins in the new Prussian leadership that came to power in 1858. In that year, William I assumed the role of Regent for the Emperor

of Prussia.[23] As regent, William ruled Prussia for the physically and mentally ailing Frederick Wilhelm IV. Curiously, upon ascending the throne, William's primary interest was not focused on the issue of unification. Rather, he was most concerned in reforming and expanding the Prussian Army, a factor that ultimately would be key in the unification process.[24] His interest in the military was likely due to the fact that, despite his political position as King of Prussia, William was, by education and nature, a soldier, a position for which he had been well-trained. Nonetheless, he should not be dismissed as being indifferent or opposed to the unification of the German states. In reality, some of his early comments indicate he recognized that unification was important, and that Prussia would have a leading role in it. As early as 1849, he wrote:

> Whoever wishes to rule Germany must conquer it . . . That Prussia is destined to lead Germany is shown by our whole history, but it is a matter of when and how.[25]

The writer is quick to point out that prior to becoming Emperor, William's proposed "conquest" was through example and strong leadership, not military campaigns. The above-cited quote is significant because it best shows his real interest, the promotion of Prussian power. Prussian strength and leadership would then bring about the unification of Germany and at the same time would enhance Prussia's power. Whatever the motivation, Prussia had set a clear azimuth; its Emperor intended to lead the Germans, or more clearly dominate the German unification process.

Upon becoming King, William was faced with a significant problem in achieving his primary goal for Prussia, i.e., military reform. To accomplish his plan for expanding and strengthening the Prussian army, he had to contend with dedicated and organized opposition in parliament.[26] When he submitted his plan to the Prussian Chamber of Deputies, however, the deputies refused to pass it without amendments that would have, in William's opinion, neutered his proposal. The King was so irritated and frustrated that he even considered abdication. It was, however, in this atmosphere that he selected a new Minister President for Prussia, Otto von Bismarck. German unification and a decidedly autocratic approach to dealing with parliamentarians will be associated with his name forever.

CHAPTER 2

LEADERS IN GERMAN UNIFICATION: FOUNDERS OF TRADITIONS

> His [Bismarck's] motive for expansion was not geopolitical, but nationalistic for the greater glory and power of Prussia and the Hohenzollern dynasty.
>
> Otto Pflanze[27]

> Moltke was both an exceptionally skilled organizer and a great field commander, employing rare powers of reasoning and administrative competence to solve an apparently deadlocked strategic or operational situation. This made him the most important military thinker between the fall of Napoleon and the First World War.
>
> Gunther E. Rothenberg[28]

The subject of German unification is, for all time, strongly tied to the name Otto von Bismarck. The name Bismarck should also be associated with exceptionally brilliant and talented political and strategic leadership. By background, Bismarck was a member of an old, but not particularly distinguished Pomeranian Junker family. When he came to power in September 1862, Bismarck, who had achieved fame and notoriety as a reactionary delegate to the Frankfurt Assembly, had been essentially "waiting in the wings" for a number of months. The King had hesitated to appoint him simply because he did not trust Bismarck. Despite his sovereign's initial reticence, Bismarck would prove to be unflinchingly loyal to the Crown and to Prussia. Furthermore, the first few years of the Chancellor's tenure would show that both Bismarck and the Emperor were clearly in pursuit of similar "ends." Both were committed to retaining and extending the power of Prussia and preserving the Hohenzollern dynasty. Thus, as accurately described by one of Bismarck's biographers, Otto Pflanze, "His (Bismarck's) motive for expansion was not geopolitical, but nationalistic for the greater glory and power of Prussia and the Hohenzollern dynasty."[29] Bismarck and the King, however, initially appeared to have different priorities for achieving their mutually accepted ends.

As noted by numerous writers, as early as the 1850s Bismarck, who was regarded as an ultra-conservative but not as a German nationalist, came to appreciate the power of nationalism as a significant strategic weapon that could reinforce Prussian strength and foreign policy.[30] In fact, during and immediately after the revolutions of 1848, Bismarck recognized and reported on the potential of properly mobilized German public opinion as a weapon that Prussia could use against liberal forces then in control of the Frankfurt Assembly.[31] Recognizing the potential power of German nationalism, Bismarck was very willing to use nationalistic ardor for his own purposes. Conversely, in the mid and latter 1850s, the nationalism of 1848 had no immediate utility because nationalistic ardor had cooled. If one were to read the writings of some of the post-1870 German nationalistic historians, the reader would be led to believe that after 1848, the German states were a seething nationalistic caldron, waiting anxiously, pressing for yet another chance to form a nation-state called Germany.[32] In reality, however, after the failed revolutions of 1848, nationalistic ardor and the move for unification had suffered a temporary hiatus. Nonetheless, it would be Bismarck who would appreciate the power of German nationalism to overcome the resistant loyalties of many Germans to their local principalities.[33] In fact, it is not an exaggeration to state that Bismarck "hijacked" the cause of nationalism from the German Progressives and utilized it to strengthen the power of Prussia and the Hohenzollerns.[34]

In the Army War College's terminology, as used in its strategy analysis system, the overall goal, the "ends," pursued by both William and Bismarck were the maintenance of the Hohenzollern monarchy and the leadership/dominance of the German states by Prussia. A complementary element of this goal was that Prussia, not the Hapsburgs, would lead the German states. Both Bismarck and William witnessed and participated in the struggle between Austria and Prussia over who would lead the states, particularly during the calamitous events of 1848-50. Both recognized that unification—the development of nation-states—was a strong movement in Europe, and both were determined that Prussia must take the lead in German affairs, rather than Austria. In Bismarck's opinion, the maintenance or enhancement of Prussian and Hohenzollern power and the preeminence of Prussia in German politics would have to

be achieved through Prussia's pressing its role as a leader of the German states. Ultimately this would mean a confrontation with another state, Austria, for it was loathe to surrender the leading role it had enjoyed in the German states for centuries.

Having a solid agreement on the basic goals for Prussia, the achievement of these goals would not be so simple. The obstacles to unification were daunting. The two major continental powers—France and the Hapsburg Empire—had strong objections to a unified Germany and/or a stronger Prussia. Nor was Russia keen about such a prospect. It was unlikely that diplomacy alone would succeed in unraveling the "Gordian Knot" of who would lead in the affairs of central Europe or who would lead the on-again, off-again movement to unify the German states under one sovereign. If Prussia was to be the leader, a sound strategy to accomplish this, a committed sovereign, and a wily, a shrewd political leader would be necessary. This leadership would come from Bismarck.

When he became Minister President of Prussia, his policies offered many positive and refreshing elements. Though he was regarded as a conservative, even an ultra-conservative, he had political leadership skills that are often overlooked. First, he never wavered from the goals that both he and his sovereign had set. Throughout his tenure, there was a remarkable continuity in his goals. At the same time, he showed his willingness, his ability to compromise—that is, when it served his purposes—and when compromise did not undercut his goals. This is in contrast with the extreme ultra-conservatives, like Edwin von Manteufel, who were more than willing to deal with recalcitrant parliamentarians by having the army turn its guns on them and drive them from their building. Bismarck avoided this type of drastic response. Instead, he would use diplomacy, chicanery, or coercion to stifle the opposition, rather than an iron hand. During his tenure in power, he had no qualms about blatantly co-opting some of the opposition's programs or ideas and promoting them as his own.[35] His ability to maneuver and his tactics under fire from the opposition resulted in numerous successes which prompted repeated conversions from the opposition to Bismarck's guidon.[36]

Above all, Bismarck's hallmark and significance for this monograph centers on his ability to focus clearly on his goals and his consistency in retaining them throughout his tenure in office. His

aims, the extension of Prussian power and the maintenance of the Hohenzollern monarchy, were clearly shared with those of his sovereign. He possessed an additional talent; he was exceptionally perceptive and intuitive as a politician and diplomat. While he was a politician, not a soldier, he did not shrink from using the military element of power to achieve his political goals.

Otto von Bismarck, initially Minister President of Prussia, and later Chancellor of Germany. (Author's Collection)

For Bismarck, the first test of his leadership and his determination under fire would be in support of William's interest in reforming and expanding the Prussian military. Rather than evict the Parliamentarians and lock the doors to their chambers, he reinterpreted his powers and that of his sovereign and obtained the means—the finances—to accomplish his sovereign's goal. Simply, after attempting to reach a peaceful accommodation with parliament over the approval of the budget, Bismarck ignored the deadlock, the royal bureaucracy continued to collect revenues without parliamentary approval, and the government and the army continued to function without interruption.

Though this was a successful tactic, he could not continue simply to confront the opposition with such coups. Rather, it would be more logical to employ tactics to neuter and, in some cases, convert members of the liberal opposition within the Progressive Party. Thus, to erode both Austria's leadership role in German affairs and to begin the process of robbing the liberal elements of their nationalistic banner, in 1864 he involved Prussia and Austria in a war against Denmark over the territories of Schleswig-Holstein. Though Austria and Prussia were allies in this lopsided victory over the Danes, Prussian prestige and leadership in the German states were elevated because Prussia engineered the war. As an added benefit, the joint Austro-Prussian administration of the two duchies provided a potential backdrop for conflict between the Austrians and the Prussians. That

conflict, inherent in the dual administration of Schleswig-Holstein and which supported Bismarck's anti-Austrian posture, came to a climax in 1866. In a calculated dispute over the administration of the duchies, Bismarck, for the second time in the same decade, led Prussia into a war.[37] This war was designed to strip Austria of its role as a leader in the politics of the German states and clearly put Prussia into a leading role.

The war was a quick and decisive victory over Austria, a 7-weeks war. Prussian troops went into motion on June 15, 1866, and the decisive battle—Königgrätz—was fought on July 3. Although many of the independent states of the German confederation supported Austria, Prussia won through superior leadership on the field and with an army that clearly appreciated the advantages of mid-19th century technology.[38] At this juncture, however, a conflict emerges between practitioners of the German way of war. Bismarck, mindful of his goals, shared by the King, wanted to defeat Austria's military forces and, through the defeat, force Austria to bow out of the politics of the North German states. He did not, however, wish to humiliate, to defeat totally and occupy Austria. To do so could potentially create a desire for vengeance by the Hapsburg Empire or cause a power vacuum to develop in this region.[39] Neither would it be in Prussia's interest. Prussia still had to live in central Europe after the War and needed at least Austrian acquiescence in a likely future war with France, a nation that stood squarely in the way of Prussian ambitions. As Bismarck so succinctly wrote:

> If we are not excessive in our demands and do not believe that we have conquered the world, we will attain a peace that is worth our effort. But we are just as quickly intoxicated as we are plunged into dejection, and I have the thankless task of pouring water into the bubbling wine and making it clear that we do not live alone in Europe, but with three other powers that hate and envy us. [40]

Thus, peace with some sort of honor was desired with and for Austria.

This strategically and politically wise decision on Bismarck's part was not well-received by elements within the military establishment. From the army's perspective, even though Königgrätz was a tremendous victory, a substantial part of the Austrian army remained

intact. Austria was not defeated until its army had been destroyed. Within the military community, a clamor also was heard to annex key areas and occupy other parts of the Hapsburg lands, to include Vienna. In this contest of wills, Bismarck won perhaps in part because his sovereign, William, had not been eager to go to war in the first place because he disliked the idea of fighting a kindred nation. While Bismarck was setting the pace for political and diplomatic action in Prussia, the thoughts and traditions of the emerging Prussian military leadership should also be explored.

Helmuth von Moltke

Helmuth von Moltke, often referred to as Moltke the Elder, dominated Prussian military practice in the 1860s. This officer, who effectively became field commander of the Prussian army on June 2, 1866, seemed an unlikely candidate as military leader of the Prussian army. Though born in Parchim, Mecklenburg, on October 26, 1800, Moltke began his military career in Denmark, largely through the insistence of his father. After a brief career in that country's service, he resigned from the Danish army in 1822 and joined the Prussian army, certain that there were better chances for career advancement there.[41] Moltke was an extremely intelligent officer who had a serious and studious disposition. With his scholarly interests, including a deep appreciation for the classics and a talent for languages, he seemed more likely to be an academic rather than a soldier. Nonetheless, he pursued a career as a soldier, and his talents were evident when high scores on entry exams resulted in his admittance to the General War School in 1823. From then until the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War, he held numerous positions in the Prussian army. His assignments, however, were as educator, historian, or staffer, not as a commander of military units in the field.[42] Yet this officer, who began serving in an age when horse-drawn artillery and black powder weapons were the standard, would, through his writings and his command style, have a major impact on the Prussian/German conduct of war from the 1860s until the end of the Third Reich.

Moltke's intellect, sharpened by years of study, permitted him to understand clearly the challenges facing Prussia, particularly if it chose to exercise the military element of power. He recognized that Prussia, a nation with totally open borders and not truly a major power, faced significant challenges from larger and more powerful nations. Prussia was limited in terms of resources. It did not have significant manpower reserves, like Russia, that would permit it to lose or sacrifice significant military formations while it built up its forces or planned military responses.[43] Thus, battles of attrition were not a feasible tactic for Prussia. Nor could it trade ground for time, as could the Russian Empire, because its land area was too small. With limited resources, Prussia would have to engage its enemies and wage its wars in a different, perhaps more efficient, fashion.

Moltke held an approach to war that had some similarities to Carl von Clausewitz, who Moltke openly acknowledged as one of his philosophical mentors (even though they did not ever directly work together).[44] Thus, in true Clausewitzian style,he recognized the changing, dynamic nature of war and, as a result, disliked doctrine or establishing dogma on how wars should be waged, how battles should be fought.[45] In his thoughts he consistently emphasized that set "cookie cutter" approaches to the flow of actions on the battlefield were not at all appropriate for the Prussian army. Thus he stated, "In War, as in art, we find no universal forms; in neither can a rule take the place of talent."[46] Simply, hard fast doctrinal solutions were not desirable for modern warfare. Thus, "Universal rules (i.e., doctrine) and the systems built upon them therefore can have no possible practical value."[47] While a commander obviously should have a strategy in mind, the strategy had to be flexible in order to take advantage of opportunities that would certainly occur on the battlefield, once the first shot was fired.[48] Consequently, well-trained and experienced officers who were able to improvise and who had the authority to take independent action based on the emerging situations were necessary, rather than doctrine-driven officers.

If for no other reason, the ability of commanders to analyze the situation and act independently provided an important element to the battlefield, what we today would call a force multiplier, speed. Through speed and decisive action, a nation could achieve victory. Moltke was convinced that to win wars, the key element to achieve

a nation's victory was the destruction of the enemy force through battle on the field by conducting rapid and decisive campaigns. In his writings he noted:

> Victory in the decision of arms is the most important moment in war. It alone breaks the enemy's will and forces him to submit to our will. Neither the occupation of a certain piece of terrain nor the capture of a fortified place, but only the destruction of the hostile fighting force will be decisive as a rule. It is therefore the most important object of all operations.[49]

Once a nation chose war, annihilation of the enemy's armies was the route to victory, not the exercise of any other element of power.

Moltke understood the role of politics and national policy in war. Clausewitz consistently emphasized that war must be based on the extension of a nation's politics or must be based on national policy. Moltke, while acknowledging this fact, added that politics and politicians had no place at all once the path to war was taken. In short, once the nation proceeded to war, Moltke believed that political leaders and their interests had to be removed from the conduct of war, leaving its conduct to the professionals, the military. Once the course of resorting to arms had been taken, politicians and politics would do more harm than good. According to Moltke,

> Policy must not be allowed to interfere in operations. In this sense, General von Clausewitz wrote in his tactical letters to Müffling (Frederich Karl Freiherr von, an officer partly responsible for the Prussian contribution to the victory at Waterloo): "the task and the right of the art of war, as opposed to policy, is mainly to prevent that policy from demanding things which are against the nature of war and out of ignorance of the instruments from committing errors in their use."[50]

The difference of opinion about the role of the political leader versus that of the military man came to the fore when the Prussian army went to war against Austria in 1866. When the war began, the 65-year-old intellectual Moltke, who had never commanded significant military formations, was at the military's helm. Using technology—the railroads—for the necessary speed to mobilize and move his troops, the telegraph for communication, and the Prussian needle gun for its proven firepower, Moltke began conducting the types of

operations the Germans would become famous for in the following century. With speed and determination, he set about moving his forces to the site of battle, concentrating his army, and focusing it on destroying the enemy force. His goal was the destruction of the Austrian army and the defeat of Austria. Though the famed battle of Königgrätz was a spectacular victory over Austria, a substantial part of its army escaped destruction. The Prussian generals wanted its destruction and wanted Prussian troops in Vienna; a simple defeat of the army was not sufficient.[51] For Bismarck, however, the army's defeat enhanced Prussia's role in German affairs and advanced the stature of the Hohenzollern house. The achievement of these two goals clearly supported the long-term objectives of both William and Bismarck. The army's annihilation was unnecessary.

As was noted in a previous section, that war was necessary and that Moltke understood its goals were evident when he later wrote:

> A world historical transformation of German condition, such as that which occurred in 1866, could not have come about by peaceful conventions and decrees. Action was required—pressure on the inside, war on the outside. One of the many German states had to become powerful enough to carry along the rest of them. It was King William who, through the reform of the Prussian Army, created the power that secured unity and the resulting liberty for Germany.[52]

Moltke and his superiors clashed due to his beliefs about the role of the political leader once the first shot of a war was fired.[53] Because he felt that once the war started, the military commander should become the preeminent leader, Bismarck and Moltke strongly disagreed, initiating a conflict that would outlast both of them and would not be resolved throughout the Imperial period. As mentioned before, this initial conflict emerged when Moltke and most of his military colleagues were irritated about the political leadership denying them the opportunity to defeat totally the Austrian Army.

The conflict over the appropriate role of the politician and general became even worse in 1870 when, through carefully laid plans and outright chicanery, Bismarck drew the French into a war with Prussia. The excellent mobilization machinery of the Prussian army and its allied German states, sound tactics, and inspired leadership allowed Prussia to deliver a significant and rapid defeat

to the French Army at Sedan, a victory which also sealed the fate of Napoleon III. Remembering the disappointments of the Austro-Prussian War, Moltke and his senior staff at first held the Minister President of Prussia at arms' length. They had never forgiven Bismarck for his "betrayal" after Königgrätz and for keeping them from a complete victory over Austria. Bismarck was excluded from military conferences, which were attended only by the Generals and the King of Prussia. Both Bismarck and the Minister of War Albrecht von Roon were kept in the dark about military plans. This problem again emerged at Sedan, when Moltke, conducting his own negotiations with the French, attempted to impose harsh peace terms on the surrounded French army. As the French were preparing to break off negotiations, Bismarck stepped in to restart and negotiate the surrender.[54] Bismarck wanted to avoid the complete humiliation of France, but Moltke, representing the military point of view, proposed less than honorable terms for the French.[55]

The dispute arose again when the French refused to surrender, and the Prussian Army surrounded Paris. Bismarck wanted to bombard Paris to force the French to surrender, but the military leadership was opposed to using siege guns. With the Army and the Chancellor at odds regarding the extent of the Army's power during wartime, on January 25, 1871, William settled the matter. On that date he issued a directive that required Chancellor Bismarck to be informed of military operations and have the opportunity to comment on them. Furthermore, William clearly told Moltke not to correspond with French authorities over surrender/peace terms until the sovereign determined whether the Chancellor should be informed/involved.[56] Thus, it would be Bismarck, the political leader, not Moltke and the military, who would negotiate terms with the French. Once again, a political leader and one who (in the military's opinion) had already squandered some of their successes with his interference again outmaneuvered them.

Despite this philosophical disagreement, which at times was bitter, the end result of Bismarck's political and diplomatic maneuvers and Moltke's military skills was a unified Germany. Though Bismarck prevailed over the generals, the dispute over the military's role once hostilities started was never completely settled. Instead, this controversy continued to simmer over the next 2 decades. The limits

on the military's role in foreign relations and in politics began to reemerge in the early 1880s. That the political leadership lost in this conflict is evident by the preeminence of the military in the period 1914-18. Without a skillful and a determined political leader, the German experience was that the military would likely dominate politics.

The question remains, however, how or in what ways did the entire unification episode, and the leadership that promoted it, contribute to, or perhaps lay the basis for, the German way of war? As the contributions are considered, remember that the way of war that has been analyzed is not so much a German way of war, but rather a Prussian. Unified Germany was also a Prussianized Germany in terms of its political and military traditions.[57] The military tradition proves by far the easiest to trace, particularly if one begins with Moltke, who held the position of Chief of Staff of the Prussian General Staff from 1857-71 and then Chief of the German General Staff from 1871-88. In his writings, he recognized some of Clausewitz's basic teachings and clearly admitted that Clausewitz's writings had a significant impact on his thoughts. For example, in his comments on strategy, he directly quoted Clausewitz, when he stated "Strategy is the employment of battle to gain the ends of war."[58]

Moltke, however, is most significant for the way of war he espoused and practiced, what he termed *Bewegungskrieg*, wars of movement. His way of war was to conduct operations where his armies would move rapidly, concentrate, and strike at the heart of the enemy. The goal was to destroy its army or its will to resist, and quickly conclude the war.[59] His were wars of tactical and operational victories that supported the goals and the political strategies developed by the crown and the political leadership (Bismarck).

He recognized, like Clausewitz, that defense was a stronger form of warfare.[60] At the same time, he believed that the best defense a country could have was a well-trained mobile field army with which to wage offensive war. As he stated, "The advantages of the offensive are sufficiently known. Through the offensive, we lay down the law of action to the opponent. He has to conform his measures to ours and must seek the means to meet them."[61] To use this offensive army to best defend the country, Moltke believed the superior method to defeat and annihilate an enemy army was through the use of a

flank attack or envelopment. "The best guarantee of success of an attack over the defense lies in a flanking attack and the simultaneous advance of all of our forces against the enemy's flank and front."[62]

Moltke, who for 31 years held the position of Chief of Staff of the most capable military force in Central Europe, essentially formed and nurtured military thought in Germany in these formative years. After the Franco-Prussian War concluded in 1871, the new united Germany entered a period of peace that lasted over 40 years. During this period, the military and political leadership had the opportunity to ponder how best to defend the new nation. Moltke, who recognized that Germany could not endure long wars, continued to be an avid proponent of the short war/decisive battle and of the use of flank attacks to destroy the enemy force. Although he believed that any prewar plans could not outlast the first shots of a war, he also felt that the nation's military leadership had the responsibility of planning for likely military contingencies. Thus, after his last great victory, the Franco-Prussian War, he developed and repeatedly revised plans to defend the new German Empire for the remainder of his career.

In many respects, through his writings Moltke provided the foundation for German military thought until the end of World War II. Likewise, his belief in the preeminence of the military over the political leadership once hostilities began would become the accepted practice under William II as Germany planned for and waged World War I. History shows that this element of Moltke's teachings would have disastrous consequences for Germany and the world.

A final significant element for the Wars of Unification is that too many saw the operational, the tactical victories in isolation. Thus, the defeats of Prussia's adversaries, which proved the power or the military prowess of Prussia, and the stunning victories at Königsgrätz and Sedan, seemed to obscure an important fact. The military conducted and won these campaigns in support of the goals and the political strategies developed by Bismarck and agreed to by his sovereign. As noted by Holger Herwig, in years to come, a newer, post-Moltke generation:

> The "demigods" of the General Staff, to use Bismarck's term, were indeed a new breed. Unlike the elder Moltke, they ignored the great philosophical questions and studiously avoided deep analysis of statecraft and historical

forces. Instead, they drew their experiences from Prussia's victories over Denmark, Austria, and France.[63]

The euphoria of wartime victories also obscured the fact that a well-developed set of achievable goals, logical national strategies, and good political leadership were as important as military prowess in ensuring the future security of a united Germany.

Through his victories and his writings, Moltke, the sword of unification, had laid the foundation for modern German military thought. Conversely, the contribution of Bismarck, the political leader, must not be overlooked. Bismarck was not a political philosopher, but rather a determined politician who diligently sought the accomplishment of the goals mutually agreed upon with his sovereign. He carefully guided Prussia into the leadership role in the unification of Germany. Once the Franco-Prussian War concluded in early 1871, he diligently pursued the security of the new German Empire, protecting it from internal threats (the socialists and liberals) and from external enemies, namely the French. He knew that a war of *revanche'* was likely since French nationalists seethed over the bitter defeat of the Franco-Prussian War and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. Like Moltke, who for the remainder of his career consistently planned for a possible war on two fronts, Bismarck consistently watched France and worked through diplomacy to isolate the French. Though their methods and approaches to the problem were different, they recognized the same threat and sought to promote a secure united Germany.

In many respects, despite the fact that Bismarck's uncanny political abilities gave him and the German nation many successes, his overall impact as it relates to the German way of war is mixed. His unique style of politics, referred to as *realpolitik,* showed an almost total disregard for any standards of ethics. Furthermore, in the example of the infamous Ems dispatch which led to the Franco Prussian War, Bismarck was simply dishonest.[64] In addition, Bismarck, though not a soldier, did not hesitate to wage war, that is, if it was to Prussia's advantage. He could be incredibly talented and polished as a diplomat, but if diplomacy did not produce what was required for the good of Prussia, then coercion or war were paths taken without any hesitancy, as 1864, 1866, and 1870 show.

The future German political and military leadership failed to learn from or ignored significant lessons from Bismarck and his Emperor. The first and foremost lesson was the importance of setting achievable, realistic goals, within the means of the new German state. William and Bismarck never wavered from their aims of maintaining the power and prestige of Prussia and of the house of Hohenzollern. Too many German leaders also failed to appreciate Bismarck's insistence on keeping the military in its appropriate role in the state, even in the time of war. Moltke and his associates repeatedly tried to dominate the issues of both war and peace during the conflicts of 1864, 1866, and 1870, but Bismarck prevailed.

Finally, future German generations did not understand that even when a nation has the power, the military and economic strength that the German Empire had in the last quarter of the 19th century, such power should not be flaunted. Moderation and diplomatic finesse are still perhaps even more important for the powerful.[65] Under Bismarck, the new German Empire learned to walk a precarious line; Germany became the strongest economic and military power in Europe but avoided seeking the territorial expansion of the new German Reich. While the old balance of power in Europe was shattered, in a sense Germany became the master balancer of power in central Europe, sometimes courting rulers and their countries, in other situations isolating them. When the Balkans threatened to erupt in war in 1877, the conference to settle the issue was not the Congress of Paris, or Vienna, but the Congress of Berlin.

In all situations, Bismarck successfully protected and advanced the interests of the new German Empire. From the start of his reign as Minister President of Prussia until his resignation as Chancellor, forced by a new and impetuous Emperor William II in 1890, Bismarck dominated the political scene in Germany and often in Europe. Bismarck, however, held his cards close to his chest, and the complexity, at times duplicity, of his political schemes were beyond many of his associates. Ultimately, it was Moltke's handpicked successor as Chief of Staff, Alfred Von Waldersee, and the new Emperor, William II, both of whom were unconvinced of his strategies and unable to fathom the complexity of European politics, which brought about Bismarck's exodus from appointive office.

CHAPTER 3

A RUDDERLESS SHIP OF STATE: GERMAN SECURITY POLICY AFTER BISMARCK

> The staggering course of the First and still more the Second World War no longer permits the question to be ignored whether the seeds of later evil were not already present in the Bismarckian Reich.
>
> Hans Kohn[66]

Though the methods, strategies, or "ways" are not in keeping with today's standards of international conduct, the successes of Moltke in the military realm and Bismarck as a political leader cannot be denied. In merely a decade, their combined talents had unraveled the Gordian knot of German unification, strengthened Prussia and its Hohenzollern monarchy and, for 2 additional decades, produced in Europe what might be termed the *Pax Teutonica*. This chapter briefly considers the postwar goals developed by Bismarck and the strategies he used to achieve them. It also examines the decay of a well-developed national security strategy once Bismarck and his sovereign were no longer in charge of Germany's policies.

Though Moltke, more than Clausewitz, had formed the basis for the German way of war, we must remember that this way of war, as exhibited in the campaigns of 1864-71, was only successful through the attainable goals and strategies established by Bismarck. As the writer repeatedly has emphasized, Bismarck and his sovereign had moderate and achievable goals. The writer understands that some would question that Prussia's goals were "reasonable," given the prosecution of three aggressive wars to achieve them. Certainly French writers could be irritated by such a claim. Conversely, the writer, while readily recognizing German excesses in both the Second and Third Reich, stands behind this statement. After all, success did not spoil either Bismarck or William, pushing them for excessive territorial demands comparable to the expansionistic plans that were devised by the leadership of the Third Reich. They established their goals—the enhancement of Prussian power and the maintenance of

the Hohenzollern monarchy—and once these were attained, they sought neither additional territory nor hegemony in Europe.

Bismarck was successful and, in many respects, Germany's famed victories produced tangible results for the new nation because he sought and attained a reasonable compromise for German ambitions. After 1871, Bismarck continued this moderate path and avoided seizing additional territory in Europe for the new German Empire. He did not seek to impose Germany's approach to politics on the other European nations. In essence, this approach to Germany's role in Europe clearly emerged after the Franco-Prussian war, but it was formalized during Bismarck's famed "retreat" to Bad Kissingen in June 1877. Away from the pressures of Berlin and internal and external crises, the Chancellor considered the domestic and foreign challenges that faced him and the German Empire.[67] The potential foreign threat that loomed on Germany's horizon was an anti-German coalition similar to that which had faced Frederick the Great in 1756, and from which the latter only barely survived. The dread fear of both military and political planners was an anti-German coalition, likely led by France and allied with Russia, forcing Germany to wage a two-front war. As a result of this analysis, Bismarck defined the road ahead as:

> . . . no expansion, no push for hegemony in Europe. Germany was to be the strongest power in Europe but without being a hegemon . . . Next he identified a potential enemy: France. From that followed his course of action: to create "a political situation in which all powers except France need us." His basic axioms were first, no conflict among major powers in central Europe; and second, German security without German hegemony.[68]

Bismarck not only established these basic concepts for German security policy, he was able to follow these constructs with few exceptions and maintain a powerful and secure Prussianized Germany that would have a dominant role in Europe for the next 10-plus years. Though it was a military and political powerhouse and rapidly becoming an economic powerhouse, the unified Germany under Bismarck's tutelage did not seek to expand in Europe either politically or geographically.[69] Granted, in the early 1880s Germany did become involved in the race for colonies, causing it to grab

territories in Africa, the Pacific, and Asia. This brief engagement in the colonial race is more an aberration in Bismarck's career than something he willingly and enthusiastically embraced.[70] Internal political pressures caused him to join the colonial race reluctantly, rather than concentrate on goals and strategies that he had developed for a unified Germany.[71] Aside from his brief colonial excursion, Bismarck did not seek to be an obvious hegemon in Europe or to expand German power through territorial acquisitions in the colonial sphere.

Although Bismarck had devised an ingenious system for the security of a united Germany, it was **his** system and it depended on his immense political talents/insights. The writer has elected to praise Bismarck as a wily and astute politician, but the career of the "Iron Chancellor" also highlights a major problem with the political and military leadership of Imperial Germany. Despite all of his capabilities, Bismarck was not immortal. His tenure in office, like any political or military leader, was finite. In the course of modern German imperial history, Germany produced **only one** Bismarck. From his dismissal to the end of the Imperial period it is virtually impossible to find political or military leaders with his insights or his vision. Some of this problem may be attributable to the fact that Bismarck was a solitary actor on the political scene, formulating and even implementing Germany's policies according to his plans, his strategies. Many, if not most, of his plans were formulated in isolation, and often he did not utilize, consult, or inform his subordinates of his intentions or his actions. By nature he was not a mentor and thus never truly groomed suitable subordinates or a true successor that could so adroitly understand and manipulate European politics.[72] With his passing, a vacuum was certain to develop, that is, until a capable leader could emerge. Regrettably for both Germany and Europe, such an astute political leader never did emerge.

While in today's world of political correctness it might seem inappropriate to bemoan the passing of an avowed autocrat like Bismarck, one must, in fact, bemoan the passing of the world order he created after 1870. Consider that it is no exaggeration that Bismarck's diplomacy, in the wake of the Wars of Unification, made Berlin the center of European diplomacy for roughly 2 decades. Other than

during the Balkan crisis of the late 1870s, which Bismarck helped to resolve, Europe was at peace for the remainder of the century. Even when elements within the General Staff attempted to push Germany into war during the Bulgarian crisis of the late 1880s, Bismarck, in his waning years, masterfully defused this crisis.[73] Granted, tensions existed and crises emerged, but they were settled by diplomacy rather than by the sword.[74] The reasons for these successes were Bismarck's talents and that German goals—security strategy, as well as its foreign policy—focused on the sovereign's and Chancellor's shared goals. This resulted in a consistency in policy that brought stability to both Germany and Europe.

Another significant element for his success, often ignored, was his subordination of the Prussian/German military to civilian control. The attempts by the General Staff and by former military officers to devise strategies and plans that were in conflict with his designed European order were reoccurring, but while Bismarck was Chancellor and William I Emperor, the military was kept in its proper subordinate role. Conflicts still emerged between the Chancellor and the military, but William I, despite his life-long love of the military, normally backed down or acquiesced to the Chancellor. Once William I passed away and when Bismarck ceased to be Chancellor, this orderly world quickly unraveled.[75] Interestingly, it began to unravel over issue of how best to defend Germany.

The aged Otto von Bismarck and the New Emperor of Germany (author's collection)

Since the end of the Wars of German unification, Bismarck and Moltke had been concerned about a possible war on two fronts, with Germany being sandwiched between the French and the Russian armies. After the successful conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War, a significant amount of Bismarck's diplomatic energy was focused on preventing France and Russia from reaching any

accommodation. In Bismarck's world of interlocking alliances, Russia was an ally of Germany. This was initially accomplished through the Three Emperor's League (1873) that bound the three monarchies—German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian—together and excluded Republican France. When friction between Austria-Hungary and Russia made this alliance unstable, Bismarck negotiated a secret alliance between Russia and Germany referred to as the Reinsurance Treaty (1887). Although some of Germany's leadership, to include Moltke, was convinced that Russia was a long-term threat, during Bismarck's tenure, skillful, at times devious, diplomacy kept the German and Russian alliance intact and maintained the isolation of "revolutionary" and democratically minded France.[76]

Nonetheless, Moltke stewed about the recovery of French military capabilities, Russian military strength, and, in the event that Russia and France became allies, the best strategy to fight a two-front war. The modern technology he had used so well in the Wars of Unification and his understanding of the lethality of the modern battlefield, due to the increased firepower, made him uncertain that rapid and clear-cut victories—like those of 1866 or 1870-71—were still possible.[77] Perhaps it was no longer possible to achieve the 19th century general's dream—the destruction of the adversary's army. He also was certain that diplomatic initiatives alone would not be able to solve Germany's unique problem, i.e., being sandwiched between France and Russia and thus the necessity of waging a two-front war. By the 1880s, additional senior German military leaders expressed great concern about the inherent incompatibility of a German/Russian alliance. According to the senior military leadership, improved Russian military capabilities, as demonstrated by the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, meant that Russia had the potential of posing a serious threat to the German Empire.[78] In the opinion of many of Germany's senior military leaders—virtually all with General Staff ties—the aging Bismarck was failing to recognize the problem. Still, with his power and capabilities, Bismarck managed to keep the doubters at bay.

Bismarckian strategy was undercut and began to go awry both through the issue of the potential threat posed by Russia and through a second issue that never truly went away—the subordination of the military to civilian control. In the 1880s, these two issues in a sense

merged, causing Bismarck's diplomatic "house of cards" to collapse. The issue of civilian control centered on to whom the famed General Staff reported and what the role of its leadership was in advising the political leadership on Germany's strategy and on foreign relations. During the wars against Denmark, Austria, and France, Moltke chaffed against what he had regarded as unreasonable restrictions imposed by the Chancellor in the Army's war efforts. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Moltke and most of the key German military leadership felt that after the first shot had been fired, the nation's strategy, the conduct of the war, and negotiations to conclude the war should be left in the hands of the military. Furthermore, as chief of the General Staff, Moltke felt that he should be able to report directly to the Emperor on the conduct of the war and the prospects of peace rather than through the War Minister or the Chancellor. In Moltke's eyes, the chief of the General Staff and the Chancellor should be equal, with one controlling the military sphere, the other the political.

At the same time, there was not always a clear agreement between the General Staff and the War Ministry as to the limits on each office's authority, which also provided a source of conflict. Since the period of military reform at the early part of the 19th century, authored by Scharnhorst, *et. al*, all sections of the military administrative structure had been subordinate to the War Ministry, a civilian part of the government.[79] This system was, to say the least, unique. For example, the development of German military policy was the responsibility of the sovereign, the Minister of War, the Naval Office, the Admiralty Staff, and, finally, the Reich Chancery. The War Minister was an active duty officer who, though a serving military officer, had responsibilities to both houses of the German parliament. At the same time, this officer was responsible to the Emperor for the preparedness of the Army. The General Staff, whose prestige had grown consistently during the middle part of the 19th century, had no real legal authority to direct any of the military entities mentioned above and had no official role in the formulation of the nation's security strategy. It had become more powerful through an evolutionary policy and its prestige, rather than through statutory change. The General Staff's prestige soared as a result of the Wars of Unification and, despite its military capabilities clearly proven

between 1864-71, it was increasingly uncomfortable due to its lack of legal status in the governmental structure and its subordinate role to this unnecessarily confusing military/civilian bureaucracy.

Despite the maze of military, nonmilitary, and pseudo military entities, sometimes the system functioned well. During the Wars of Unification, Moltke, as Chief of the Prussian General Staff, worked well with his trusted colleague, War Minister General Albrecht Roon. Moltke felt personally and professionally responsible to keep Roon informed, but he did not deem providing information and plans to the minister to be a legal responsibility. Roon, though a general officer and a friend, had to be kept in his place because his line of responsibility was to the civilian government, not the military in general, or the General Staff in particular.

In the years following the Franco-Prussian War, Moltke, as a national hero, was successful in adding some additional powers to the General Staff, but the correct chain of command between the Chief of the General Staff and the Emperor and the issue of the subordination of the General Staff to a civilian authority were contentious. In many ways the political currents in the 1870s and 1880s may have made the pressure for a more independent General Staff—with direct access to the Emperor—even more pressing. In the eyes of the ruling class, the rising demand in the *Reichstag* for democratic changes made the Prussian/German army in general and the General Staff in particular seem like a bastion of stability.[80] The General Staff was, after all, a well-organized and well-trained group of officers which schooled its future leaders and perpetuated its values. Given the successes of the Wars of Unification, the General Staff seemed to offer the best hope as the strongest link, the Imperial Guard of the Hohenzollern monarchy. In short, the General Staff as the *crème del la crème* of the army was a dependable bulwark for the monarchy against what appeared to be the rising tide of both socialism and the democratization of the Second Reich.[81]

In the early 1880s, the military leadership that supported a more independent General Staff achieved several significant victories. First, by Imperial Order on March 8, 1883, the Division of Personnel of the War Ministry was abolished and the responsibility was shifted to the Military Cabinet. Following this action, on May 24 of the same year,

an Imperial Order gave the Chief of the General Staff and his Deputy direct access to the Emperor.[82] Even though this would appear to be an obvious example of the General Staff slipping away from proper "civilian" control, these changes did not alarm Bismarck, who was a civilian, rather than a military officer.[83] The "Iron Chancellor" seemed willing to allow an increase in the General Staff's autonomy, since it served as an imperial bulwark against the liberals and socialists with whom the Chancellor consistently sparred and against whom he waged a consistent low intensity conflict.

In all likelihood, Bismarck tolerated these military incursions into his realm because through his power, his persona, he was still able to maintain civilian control over the military. Through General Staff intrigues, however, the potential for major problems between the Chancellor and the General Staff had increased significantly. Only Bismarck's power, the Emperor's tendency to back him, and Moltke's understanding of the Chancellor's power averted major conflict. Even the casual observer would recognize the avoidance of a conflict was the result of Bismarck's persona, rather than through parameters set by either statute or imperial decree. Conversely, all of this would change, as would the key personalities involved. By the late 1880s, all of the principals—William I, Bismarck, and Moltke—were in the twilight period of their lives, and without comparable strong leadership, the ability of civilian authority to resist military intrusions into the realm of strategy and national security policy would fade.

Moltke retired as Chief of Staff in 1887, at the advanced age of 88. Still sharp witted and astute, he was increasingly concerned about the possibility of a war, a war on two fronts. In preparation for his retirement, Moltke gave a classic speech to the Reichstag. Although he is best remembered for making war, for his role in the Wars of German Unification, in this period of his life he genuinely was concerned about a future war which Germany might be unable to win and could cost the country its gains from the wars of 1866-71. Thus he issued a strong warning to the deputies and military leaders gathered there: "woe be unto those who set Europe aflame and who first ignites the powder keg."[84] Unfortunately, a new aggressive group of military and political leaders were not listening.

Approaching a long overdue retirement, Moltke had groomed General Count Alfred von Waldersee as his successor. Waldersee was a talented and experienced military officer but one who did not recognize his limitations. Bismarck, who came to dislike and distrust him, stated that Waldersee never knew "how to restrict himself to his military calling."[85] Though a soldier, he aspired and conspired to move into the political realm where he believed he had considerable talent. Waldersee even had aspirations to become Chancellor when the Bismarck retired. Due to his political ambitions, he was quite different from his mentor who was never regarded as a statesman nor was he ever recognized as an important political thinker. Moltke was a soldier through and through. The months following Moltke's retirement show that Waldersee should have followed his mentor's lead.

As Chief of Staff, Waldersee, like Moltke, sincerely believed that Russia was an ever-growing threat due to its increased military capabilities. It seemed to escape Waldersee that Bismarck's system was based on the concept that France posed the greatest threat to Germany, rather than Russia being a long-term friend or ally to Germany. In reality, an alliance with Russia was only a stopgap measure to prevent Russia from falling into the eager arms of France. Bismarck understood that, in the long term, an alliance between the German and Russian Empires was illogical. A treaty with the Russians served to keep Russia comfortable with its German neighbor, given the Russian discomfort with the growing power of the German Empire and distrust of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. An alliance with Russia was for Bismarck a necessity, since the failure to provide Russia with such a security blanket could very easily push it into an accommodation with France, a nation he had worked so hard to isolate.

Waldersee, however, lacked these strategic insights. He saw no virtue in such arrangements or perhaps was not astute enough to understand such concepts. Regrettably, he seemed to know more what he did not want, rather than what he did want, as it related to German security policy. Thus, as succinctly summarized by Gunther Rothenberg ". . . Count Alfred von Waldersee, who in 1888 became Von Moltke's successor, never formed a consistent strategic policy."[86] Thus, when the Reinsurance Treaty came up for renewal, he would

join a newly appointed Chancellor in opposing its renewal. In his opinion, the treaty only gave advantages to the Russians.

Waldersee's elevation to Chief of the General Staff surfaced another issue. Like many of his General Staff colleagues, he believed in the independence of the General Staff both from the War Minister and from any entity that had responsibilities to civilian authority. From almost the onset of his appointment as Quartermaster General in 1882, he began intrigues against the War Minister whose authority over the General Staff he sought to undercut. The neutering of the War Minister's powers, previously described, reached their climax in 1883 when the Chief of the General Staff and his deputy were granted direct access to the Emperor. This happened through a prearranged deal with the incoming War Minister, General Paul Bronsart von Schellendorf.[87] Bismarck himself was in sympathy with the sentiments of Moltke and Waldersee because he was concerned about the fact that a "civilian" ministry had an intermediary position between the Army and the Emperor.[88] What Bismarck, despite all of his insights, either failed to appreciate or underestimated, was the ability of the General Staff officers to undercut his diplomacy, his alliances, and his long-term strategy of preventing Germany from being faced with a two-front war. In all likelihood, he thought that he could outmaneuver them but, despite his advanced age, he failed to recognize how limited his tenure would be.[89]

A second major change in the German political scene as it related Germany's security strategy and civilian-military relations began with the ascension of Crown Prince Frederick to the throne in March 1888. Frederick III and his wife were rightfully regarded as friends of the liberal parliamentary opposition and were viewed with suspicion by the conservative elements within the military and the Prussian establishment. For certain, they were far less arbitrary in their approach than previous sovereigns or, for that matter, the Chancellor. With their democratic ideals, they seemed destined to put Germany on a decidedly different path.

Frederick, however, would never have the opportunity to make a significant impact on Germany because, at the time of his coronation, he had already been diagnosed with throat cancer. Seriously ill, he was unable to speak at his coronation and was destined to only rule for 99 days before his untimely death. To further complicate

the political scene, during Frederick's brief reign, Bismarck was still Chancellor, and he quietly but systematically undermined the new sovereign in all ways possible. Appointments and plans of the Emperor, and particularly those of the Empress who he genuinely disliked, were subject to his intrigues.[90] After an uneventful 99 days on the throne, Frederick passed away and, with his passing, the hopes of Germany's liberals quickly evaporated. The crown passed to his eldest child, Frederick William Victor Albert, better known in history as William II, or to American readers, Kaiser William. Father and son could not have been more different in personality or interests.

It is hard to describe accurately the new Emperor without appearing to be biased against him. At best, William was a unique individual. He was a bright young man—not yet 30 when he ascended the throne—and a dynamo of human energy. Had he been born in today's world, he might have been characterized as having attention deficit disorder or certainly as a hyperactive child. Virtually from the time of his birth, he was in constant motion, seemingly unable to sit still or focus on any one thing too long.[91] In addition to this excessive energy, whatever the cause, William was also physically handicapped. His left shoulder had been severely damaged in a difficult birth, causing his left arm to be visibly smaller and very weak. In addition to being excessively energetic, he seemed determined to prove himself to be equal, if not superior, to other men. Thus, he relished the life and the trappings of soldiering.[92] He loved and excelled in the physical and mental challenges of the hunt and of outdoor life. As Emperor, he was known for his incessant traveling all over the globe, causing his subjects to refer to him as the "*ReiseKaiser,*" the traveling Kaiser. He had an unbelievable range of interests and could be extremely charming to friend and foe alike. When faced by serious crises, however, his responses were all too often not reasoned or diplomatic. Instead, the Emperor often replied with off-the-cuff comments and, all too often, irrational outbursts.

Prior to becoming Emperor, William's relationship with Bismarck had been extremely good because the elder statesman recognized the advantages of being attentive and complementary to the young prince. Once William took the throne, however, Bismarck failed to realize that the new Emperor would not be content to acquiesce

to the Chancellor's plans, as had his grandfather. The new emperor meant to be actively involved in the affairs of government and intended to rule and set policy, not acquiesce to his ministers. Bismarck had always acknowledged the Emperor's authority and frequently used this to his own advantage. Thus, when his critics questioned policies and practices, the old Chancellor reminded them that he could only set policy and establish priorities with the Emperor's consent. In short, he was stating that his ideas had already been given the Emperor's stamp of approval. Though he often used this tactic to shore up his position, in reality, as long as William I was on the throne, he normally had the Emperor's agreement or acquiescence to his policies. As was also his practice, when William began to formulate his own ideas on matters of policy which did not agree with his plans, Bismarck intrigued against the young Emperor and tried to ignore his plans and policies. The impetuous sovereign refused to tolerate such behavior, despite Bismarck's stature. By 1890 Chancellor and sovereign were clearly at loggerheads, and Bismarck, after a rather stormy meeting on March 15, 1889, resigned from office.

William II (author's collection)

When Bismarck lost William II's confidence and was forced to retire, the young and impetuous sovereign was soon faced with a significant decision that related to Germany's security, the renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty. Although William was originally inclined to renew the treaty, he had a newly appointed Chancellor, Leo Von Caprivi, who was inexperienced in the policial realm. Though a distinguished military officer and a capable administrator, Caprivi had limited knowledge about either domestic politics or foreign policy. He almost immediately was confronted by the Reinsurance Treaty but was at a decided disadvantage since he had not even seen its text. Thus he was easily convinced by elements in the Foreign Ministry that the treaty was not in Germany's interests. Caprivi, at the urging of officials in the Foreign Ministry, in turn convinced the

Kaiser that a renewal benefited Russia far more than it did Germany.[93] With Waldersee's opposition, as previously mentioned, the Kaiser did not renew the treaty. The Emperor and his chancellor discovered too late that there were, in fact, significant advantages for Germany in the treaty's renewal. If nothing else, it was a significant bulwark again the dread fear of both Bismarck and Moltke, a Russian-French alliance. Thus, despite Russian interest, Germany failed to renew the treaty and, through this action, destroyed Russia's security blanket.

With this mantel of security removed, the Russians began to seek accommodation with France. In 1890 the French and Russians drew up a military convention, which promoted a closer working relationship between the two countries. Collaboration was successful between Russia and France, and in 1894 relations warmed even further with the signing of a formal alliance. The dread fear of both Bismarck and Moltke had become a reality. Germany was sandwiched between an unfriendly alliance, raising the specter of a two-front war. Although the General Staff, aided by the Foreign office, had won their long hard battle in derailing a renewal of the alliance, in the end they were the major losers. Now German planners would have to develop a winning strategy for a war on two fronts.

Although elements within the Army's senior leadership like Waldersee were in part to blame for torpedoing the Reinsurance Treaty, the military, the new Chancellor, and the Foreign Ministry were all involved. Each had their own rationale for opposing the treaty. The Army opposed the treaty based on a perceived threat from the Russian Empire, a position held by both Moltke and his successor. With Russia's military capabilities on the rise and military spending increasing, if a war was to occur with the Russians, it would be better for it to occur while they were comparatively weak.[94] The real hotbed of opposition to the treaty's renewal, however, was the Foreign Ministry. Even as Bismarck had subordinated the military to his authority, he also dominated and often ignored the Foreign Office. The Young Turks of this office, led by Friedrich von Holstein, were convinced that Bismarck's efforts to integrate Russia into the mainstream of the European security system and keep it away from an alliance with France were doomed to failure. Freed from Bismarck's heavy hand, the Foreign Office advised against the renewal, and

Waldersee, an important voice in William's inner council, worked to convince the young and impressionable Emperor that renewing the treaty was not in Germany's best interest.[95]

This failure to renew the treaty was serious but not fatal for Germany's national security strategy. The problem was that neither the new Chancellor nor the senior military officers who opposed Bismarck's system developed a new comprehensive security plan or a set of guiding principles to replace the overarching principles established by Bismarck. Their focus had been on unraveling Bismarck's strategy, his complex system of alliances and agreements, but they failed to develop a logical system to replace it. Perhaps they had served too long under the firm and autocratic hand of this solitary actor on the world scene who stifled subordinates and whose schemes and strategies were often too complex for those around him. If these officers/officials had developed a workable alternative strategy that satisfied Germany's security needs, it would have been another matter, but they offered no clear azimuth to chart the future course for Germany. Likely they failed to appreciate Bismarck's concept of being the hegemon, sitting in the cockpit of the European craft, but without exhibiting the arrogance that comes with the seat of leadership.

"Dropping the Pilot"
Punch, March 29, 1890
(author's collection)

Equally important, under Bismarck and William I, the political leadership had used the military to attain their basic goals, but at the same time kept the military at bay.[96] Bismarck, the political leader, maintained firm control of the nation's national security strategy and sought to retain the gains of the period of 1864-71 but without posing additional threats to his neighbors. This formula was as logical in 1890 as it was in 1877. The problem was that Bismarck was gone!

Once Bismarck no longer controlled Germany's destiny, the country's security strategy became exceptionally difficult to determine.[97] That William

wanted a powerful and secure Germany is beyond a doubt, but his policies and those of his political and military advisers were not clearly focused, nor were they based on political realities. It is unfortunate for Europe in general and Germany in particular that William II never had his own retreat to Bad Kissingen where he thought through and established his achievable goals for the nation. This, however, would have been too much to ask. To give thoughtful and analytical consideration of precisely what his goals were for Germany and how these could be accomplished was simply out of character for the new Kaiser. He had neither the will nor the discipline to accomplish such an organized approach and, at the same time, he did not have an experienced politician like Bismarck to moderate his whims. That he desired the new and increasingly powerful German nation to achieve its place in the sun is evident from the onset of his reign, but specific goals and policies or logical strategies to achieve this were often ill-conceived and lacked reality.

Was Germany destined to descend on the slippery slope toward 1914, once Bismarck had departed and the young Emperor increasingly was involving himself in both military matters and matters of state? Not necessarily, but Bismarck's retirement, the coronation of a new Emperor, the increase of the General Staff power, and the absence of clearly enunciated goals caused Germany's security strategy to slowly but steadily go awry. Had Germany's failure to renew the Reinsurance Treaty been an isolated instance, perhaps Germany could have recovered. It was, however, the first of many significant errors. To further compound the problem, the number of players who affected Germany's security policy began to burgeon. Beginning with the Reinsurance Treaty fiasco, the Foreign Ministry, which Bismarck had always dominated, began to affect the country's security policy. The ministry found the alliance with Russia to be an unnatural act since, in terms of both military power and commercial competition, alliance with an emerging potential enemy made little sense. Bismarck's other alliances and secret agreements and diplomacy were simply too complicated for the officials in this ministry, some of whom had long disagreed with his policies. They favored the Triple Alliance, which brought together three "natural" allies: Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary. In addition, the Foreign

Ministry believed that beyond the Triple Alliance, a more logical alliance for the German Empire was closer ties to, and hopefully, in the end, an alliance with Britain.

German attempts to draw closer to Britain resulted in even more complications for Germany's post-Bismarckian era. To win British favor, they negotiated a colonial territorial settlement in Africa with Britain that was unusually generous to the British.[98] This land give-away was done in the hope that this would be one of many agreements with the British that would involve the island nation in continental politics and in support of German plans. For the first 3 years of the 1890s, the Foreign Ministry worked to promote closes ties with Britain, ties which they hoped would result in Britain edging toward a bona fide alliance with Germany. In this venture, they were totally unsuccessful. The Foreign Ministry and the Ambassador to Britain, Paul von Hartzfeldt, failed to understand the British. In the 1890s Britain was not at all interested in becoming entangled in continental alliances. This was not completely an isolationist approach, rather it was because the British were very much involved in colonial affairs, as well as with internal issues. Therefore they sought to avoid any entanglement in continental affairs. After several attempts at wooing the British, it finally became obvious that the Island kingdom was not interested, particularly if it meant embroiling it in European squabbles.

Even as attempts continued at wooing the British, Paul Kayser, chief of the Colonial Section of the Foreign Ministry, further confused the main thrust of German policy. He believed that Germany could enhance its status among the world powers by being the international arbiter in disputes over colonies, a role accepted with significant enthusiasm by the Emperor. While on the surface such an initiative seemed to have some degree of merit, in reality it merely spelled more trouble for the Germans. Because the world's two major colonial powers were France and Great Britain, this tactic was a sure recipe to fuel the ever-burning anti-German fires in France and, at the same time, irritate, if not alienate, the British. After all, to be an arbiter requires significant diplomatic skills, and if these skills are not present, the arbiter can become the target of the disputant's wrath.

To confuse the overall thrust of foreign policy even more, Germany made concurrent, though belated, attempts to repair the damage to

relations with Russia, which had resulted from the failure to renew the Reinsurance Treaty, in hopes of negating the French/Russian rapprochement. As a final complication, the Emperor, ever impetuous and seldom patient, became concerned about the German diplomacy and security issues. He became increasingly involved in foreign affairs; and, after watching the muddled diplomacy, he, too, became part of the crowded field of those dealing with diplomacy and strategy. Although initially interested in better relations with Britain, he soon wearied of courting his cousins in London and determined that the British were not all that dependable, not really worth the effort.[99] Then he involved himself personally in an attempt to repair relations with the Russians. Since little progress was evident with one side of his family, the British cousins, he promoted a friendship with another cousin, Czar Nicholas II, attempting to reverse the previous falling out. In this initiative, he was no more successful than his ministers.

William II with his cousin "Nicky" (Tsar Nicholar II) on board the *Hohenzollern*. (Author's collection)

The crowded world of foreign affairs, alliances, and security policy became even more complicated because William allowed or promoted more military input into the development of his policies. Even though the military—specifically the Chief of the General Staff—already had direct access to the Kaiser and thus had the opportunity to affect directly Germany's security policy, the Kaiser added more military input and more complexity. In 1889, shortly after becoming emperor, he put his military advisors together into what was called a "royal headquarters," a military organization consisting of aid-de-decamps, adjutants, and assorted others, all under their own commanding general, which even further linked the emperor to military advisors. With the adoption of the Constitution of 1849, the emperor had specific military powers, but William II took his military authority and his ties to the military even further than his grandfather, William I had.[100]

Adding to the militarization of security policy as well as irritants to British/German relations was the influence and naval programs of Admiral Alfred Tirpitz. His influence in German security policy increased considerably from 1890-1914. He had an obvious entrée' into the inner circles of government because he knew Leo Caprivi. Both he and Caprivi, Chancellor from 1890-94, were Naval officers by background. In fact, prior to his entry into the political realm, Caprivi had been in charge of the German admiralty (beginning in 1883). Thus, the two men had a common background and a similar view of German security. Tirpitz became a significant figure because he had a clear but dangerous vision for Germany's security policy. Tirpitz was the apostle of expanding the German Navy, building a high seas fleet that would put Germany in direct competition, if not conflict, with Great Britain. The Navy was a military element that had been virtually nonexistent through the 1864-70 Wars of Unification. It began a significant expansion in the early 1890s once William II became emperor.[101] The young impressionable Kaiser had a life-long love affair with the German Navy. For him, the Navy, with its powerful capital vessels, was visible proof of the power and authority of the German Empire which could be projected around the world.

Tirpitz, who would ultimately become Secretary of State of the Imperial Naval Office, sought to build a battle fleet that was comparable to the British fleet. Though it likely would be smaller in the overall number of vessels, he thought that the German fleet, with the latest in the technology of the period, would actually have superior capabilities. Tirpitz was convinced that Britain, in fact, posed a significant stumbling block in Germany's drive to its place in the sun.[102] In his opinion, the only way Germany could achieve the desired great power status was to develop the power, that is, a fleet that the British would respect. Thus, from the onset, the construction of a powerful high seas fleet was directed against Britain; it was not merely a

The Emperor, Tirpitz, and Moltke (the younger).

generic program for the purpose of expanding/extending Germany's power or to protect its own fleet. Tirpitz believed that if and when a naval confrontation took place, it would likely occur in the North Sea and, if Germany was up to the task, would be a cataclysmic battle in which British sea power could be destroyed.

The naval race and the efforts of the Foreign Ministry to serve as a mediator in colonial conflicts meant that the Germans were becoming an irritant to the British in two separate arenas. Despite this fact, even as they pursued courses that were bound to irritate the British, elements within the Foreign Ministry held the hope, even the desire, that Britain and Germany could reach an amicable agreement on their respective places as world powers in the soon-to-arrive 20th century. Thus, a flirtation of sorts continued between the British and the Germans, with the latter playing an on again-off again wooing game yet, at the same time, establishing a sufficiently high cost for friendship. Mixed signals from Berlin further complicated the picture as to what type of arrangements the Germans sought between the two nations. This dangerous and amateurish game of diplomacy continued into the first decade of the 20th century.

What becomes obvious at this point is that the military element of power was becoming much more significant in forming, or at least affecting, German security policy. Brigade General Dr. Günter Roth, formerly Chief of the Bundeswehr's Military History Research Office, explained this by stating the increasing influence of the German military:

> . . . was the fault of Bismarck's successors, who carelessly squandered his legacy. The first Chancellor's alliance policy, aimed at establishing a balance of power, was not continued, and the German Reich all of a sudden found itself encircled from all sides and isolated. The politicians now looked like defaulters with a bankrupt estate on their hands. The vacuum was filled by the generals.[103]

Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz who added to the German strategic dilemma in the two decades before the outbreak of World War I. (photo courtesy of USAMHI)

In the author's opinion, it is inaccurate to state that the military had to step into this role because of a vacuum in civilian leadership. At the same time, it is also an error to simply point a finger at the military—specifically the General Staff—and accuse them or the senior leadership of diabolical schemes, which made them the significant force in formulating Germany's security policy and its military strategy. In reality the blame should be shared.

The difficulty in assessing the military's role is due to the ineffective political leadership at the national level. The Chancellor's office, in particular, was exceedingly weak. Germany had come into being as a united country through the plans and strategies devised by Otto von Bismarck. Once this process was completed, Bismarck, as Chancellor, dominated internal affairs, determined what was necessary for the new nation's security, and devised strategies relating to foreign relations to keep Germany's enemies at bay. Long-term security problems and the threat that faced Germany—a war on two fronts—were averted through the complex but effective system of alliances developed by the Chancellor. Once Bismarck resigned, it was impossible to find a nonuniformed political leader who had the capabilities of either effectively carrying on the Chancellor's policies or developing a consistent azimuth that would allow Germany to enter securely into the 20th century with the stature it desired. Granted, with the new ebullient Kaiser, it would have been difficult to find a political leader who could have controlled or manipulated him.

Not only was there not another Bismarck waiting in the wings, there was not a Moltke. Although Moltke chaffed under the civilian control (i.e., Bismarck) of the military, he recognized the value of diplomacy when it came to a nation realizing its goals, and he knew that Bismarck had the confidence of the crown. He was well aware of the value of utilizing elements of power other than the military to achieve the nation's goals. Given his experiences in the Wars of Unification, and in particular the Franco-Prussian War, he was concerned that the technology available on the battlefield might make short and conclusive wars, wars that resulted in the destruction of the enemy's army on the battlefield, unlikely. Though he stewed about and planned for a future conflict, he was uncertain that wars

like those fought from 1866-71 would give Germany future victories. Conversely, he was certain that diplomacy alone could not solve Germany's strategic dilemma, particularly as it related to France.

After the Bismarck/Moltke era ended, diplomacy and any type of serious strategic thought appeared to expire, as did the terms of office of these two men. As mentioned previously, the Foreign Ministry pursued its schemes, some of which bore little relationship to reality, and few of which produced anything tangible for German security policy. The Chancellor attempted to deal with alliances and potential conflicts, internal and external, but seemed to have no long-term plan concerning how best to improve Germany's security. While civilian authority wrestled with half-baked schemes or retreads of Bismarck's alliance system, in the military arena there was a group of aggressive officers who, like Moltke, believed that diplomacy alone could not solve Germany's defensive dilemma. Unlike Moltke, they believed, even in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, that quick and decisive victories could replicate Moltkian-style victories. Thus, through the military means alone, Germany's dilemma of a war on two fronts was solvable. The acid test of their theories would not come until 1914.

Without the Chancellor's participation, although he had no inclination to participate anyway, they began to plan for the next war, again with no clear national security strategy. Taking Moltke as a pattern, they began planning for swift campaigns to defeat France, then Russia, using technology, as had the master, and using the favored tactic, flanking maneuvers or, better yet, envelopments to destroy the enemy's forces. Was there a goal, a clear azimuth for Germany comparable to what Bismarck had established in 1877? Was the increasingly militarized policy/strategy goal still promoting policies that were for the good of a greater Prussia/Germany and the maintenance of the Hohenzollern dynasty? Was Germany still seeking no additional territorial gains and attempting to be the hegemon of Europe, without appearing or seeming to be the hegemon? Or was it to return to the position of being in the cockpit of the European vessel, as Germany had been between 1877-89, serving as the arbiter of Europe? Or did anyone, to include the Kaiser, know for sure?

As the civilian leadership wallowed in indecision and impractical schemes, the military became increasingly significant in planning.

The question must be raised, how well was the German officer corps prepared for such tasks, i.e., strategic planning and influencing foreign policy? This factor deserves a careful examination.

CHAPTER 4

THE EDUCATION OF AN OFFICER CORPS

> Tactics reigned supreme in Prussia. The system concentrated on the nuts and bolts of the military profession.
>
> Holger H. Herwig[104]

As the German military establishment began to involve itself more in the nation's strategy formation, two factors should be considered: German officer education, and overall experience level of the officer corps. From the mid-19th century until the eve of World War I, German officer education was largely focused on the tactical level of war and gave officers few, if any, opportunities to study strategy and strategy formulation on the highest political and military levels. Since the German military establishment was, in fact, based on the Prussian military establishment, a look at the evolution of the Prussian officer educational system, its curriculum, and how its educational system functioned is important.

The Prussian educational system had its origins in the Napoleonic period. Napoleon's successes in the early part of the 19th century resulted in several serious defeats for the Prussian army. These defeats were so catastrophic to the nation that some questioned whether a strong and independent Prussia would continue to exist. In the midst of these defeats, a cabal of reformers, to include Baron vom Stein, David Gerhard von Scharnhorst, August Gneisenau, Hermann von Boyen, and C.V.G. von Grolman, worked to initiate a series of major reforms for the Prussian army, including the selection and education of officers. This reform movement was nourished through the establishment of the *Militärische Gesellschaft* (Military Society) in Berlin in 1801, a voluntary association that had comparable organizations in other German cities.[105]

A key individual in educational reform was David Gerhard von Scharnhorst. This officer was an outstanding performer on the battlefield and a deep thinker. He had only been appointed to Prussian service in 1801, but he quickly became a major player in the reform

movement. His interest in officer education resulted in Scharnhorst's establishment of an academy for young talented officers in 1804. Its existence, however, was brief for, after the disastrous battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806, the academy was closed. In the following year, the officer education program was scrutinized carefully. As a result, reforms were instituted that laid the foundations for the Prussian/German educational system.

The reforms to the Prussian system went beyond merely the schools and their curriculums. The changes included both officer selection and education. The reformers promoted the philosophy that leadership potential and academic talent, not class, should be the basis for selecting the Army's leadership.[106] In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, officer appointments were given to the upper and noble classes, regardless of the appointee's capabilities.[107] The rising middle class, who had much talent to offer, was regarded with suspicion. Due to this mistrust and based on class, middle-class citizens were not considered suitable for positions of leadership. The traditional Prussian officer corps was opposed to opening officer appointments to the middle and lower classes because any such move would decidedly threatened their privilege and, as a result, the issue of who or what classes could be selected for leadership positions was not totally resolved until after 1918.[108] Despite the resistance of the privileged classes, the reformers actively promoted the concept that ability, not class, should be a major consideration for appointment and advancement in the Prussian Army.

A significant reform in officer education occurred in 1810 with the founding of a new military academy in Berlin. The Academy, which was initially named the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule*, provided a rigorous 3-year education to a small group of officers—initially 50, later reduced to 40—who studied, among other subjects, geography (as it related to military applications), artillery physics, chemistry, and both tactics and strategy.[109] Though it was a military school, it was intended to be a military equivalent of Humboldt University, which opened in Berlin the same year. Thus, the curriculum was both specialized—providing military science topics—and, at the same time, included what could be termed academic subjects like the sciences, literature, and foreign languages. In the Scharnhorst era, an important part of the revised curriculum was providing a

new generation of officers with a higher level of scientific training—in essence a broader education—than military topics alone.

The curriculum for this new school reflected the educational philosophy of Scharnhorst, the school's head. He sought better educated, or in reality, more broadly educated officers. He was highly intrigued about how Napoleon's army, a people's or a revolutionary army that was not composed of professional soldiers, could engage professional armies on the battlefield and win. Since this defied conventional logic, nonprofessionals defeating professionals, he believed that to understand how this could happen, one had to understand the French and go beyond merely studying their tactics and military methods. Thus, in accordance with Scharnhorst's philosophy, the curriculum had more depth than just military and tactical subjects. Simply put, officers needed to be educated, not narrowly trained in pure or direct military skills.

It is probably no coincidence that a young lieutenant, Carl von Clausewitz, a promising officer who was a part of Scharnhorst's study group, would in his writings become an advocate of understanding war on a broader plane. Clausewitz would later become strongly associated in the minds of many students of military affairs with this newly established school for Prussian military officers.[110]

The better students in this academy proved to be an excellent recruiting ground for General Staff officers. One of the better-known reforms of the Prussian officer corps during this period was the reorganization of the General Staff in 1803. General Staff officers became a highly trained group of military who could effectively support their commanders.[111] The idea of having well-trained and well-educated officers on the staff of larger units and higher headquarters was important for reforming some of the problems in the Prussian army. With senior command positions held by officers of class and nobility, well-educated and talented young officers could serve an important function by advising the ill-prepared nobility on the art of war. As noted by Scharnhorst,

> Normally it is not possible for an army to simply dismiss incompetent generals. The very authority which their office bestows upon generals is the first reason for this. Moreover, the generals form a clique, tenaciously supporting each other, all convinced that they are the best possible

> representatives of the army. But we can at least give them capable assistants. Thus, the General Staff Officers are those who support incompetent generals, providing the talents that might otherwise be wanting among leaders and commanders.[112]

Scharnhorst's concept of an officer, who was both educated in the art of war and at the same time was given a broader education which was designed to provide a better understanding of the world and its problems, was the essence of his educational reforms. The overall purpose was to teach the officer how to think or, as stated at the time:

> Although the training is tailored to teach the student the special knowledge and skills corresponding to his future assignments, great store is set by combining the studies with the extended use of thinking in order to make the training of the mind the main subject of training.[113]

The system of education devised by Scharnhorst, which proved to enhance the strength of the recently reformed Prussian General Staff, assumed that the head of state, in this case the King of Prussia, would make the necessary political decisions and set the azimuth for the government. Then a ranking military officer would be given the task in the event of war of assisting the sovereign to achieve his political goals through the military instrument of power. Since the ranking military officer might hold his position due to nobility, rather than education or military experience, it would be the well-educated General Staff officer(s) who could assist the commander in achieving his and his sovereign's goals.

To achieve this level of expertise, the education, or training as it was called at the *Allgemeine Kriegsschule* (General War School), lasted 3 years. As mentioned previously, initially 50, later reduced to 40, officers attended lectures for essentially 9 months per year. Beginning in 1819, the school was placed under the Inspector General of Training and Education. Despite Scharnhorst's death in June 1813, the educational philosophy he promoted remained even after the end of the Napoleonic era.[114] The curriculum used between 1823-26 clearly shows that the concept of producing well-educated officers endured despite the passage of a decade.

Allgemeine Kriegsschule **Curriculum.**

First Year	Second year	Third Year
Analysis of Finites	Spherical Progonometry	History of Selected Campaigns
Topography	Essentials of Mechanical Science	Fortress Warfare
General History	Analysis of Infinites	General Literature
Statistics	Science of Fortifications	History of the General Staff
Artillery	Natural Science/Physics	Terrain Surveying
Tactics	Effective Strategic Development	
Terrain Surveying	Terrain Surveying	
Conversational French	Conversational French	
Horsemanship	German Literature	

Table 1. General War School Curriculum by Year, 1823.[115]

The curriculum blended military studies, mathematics, science, literature, and foreign language. The concept of developing a broadly educated officer was imbedded in the academy's curriculum while Carl von Clausewitz was director (1818-30) and was the philosophy while Helmuth von Moltke was a student at the General War School (1823-26).

Ultimately the General War School was intended to educate two different types of officers. First, it was designed to prepare officer candidates for their exams, and second, it also offered officers an opportunity to have a higher, more advanced education, including an emphasis on the sciences which Scharnhorst thought was important. Frederick Willhelm III, King of Prussia from 1797-1840, ultimately split these functions, establishing three officer schools. The first was in Berlin and the other two in Breslau and Königsberg. The General War School became an institution for educating more senior officers. In fact, as noted by one writer, the officers attending the General War School desired "to prepare themselves for higher and extraordinary tasks in the service." [116]

Once Germany grasped the guidon of unification and the Wars of Unification made a unified Germany a reality, the curriculum evolved slowly and subtly. One study, critical of German officer education during the Imperial period, charges that there was a gradual but consistent trend to focus the curriculum much more directly on

military matters. Thus, these changes eroded Scharnhorst's concept to provide selected German officers with a broad educational experience. As noted by the study's author:

> Prussian officer education actually declined in quality during the Imperial period. Despite the liberal beginnings of Scharnhorst, professional curricula throughout most of the 19th century, and especially during the imperial period, were increasingly confined to purely military studies. Providing a broad view of events, ideas, and people was, if not publicly scorned, determined by the army to be the business of secondary schools and universities, not the armed forces.[117]

An examination of the curriculum, however, calls this assertion to question. If, for example, the curriculum immediately following the establishment of the German Empire is examined, it still appears to follow the Scharnhorst model in that it emphasized a broader education for German officers. Philosophy, literature, history, and foreign languages were required, and the emphasis on science and math that Scharnhorst found important was also still present.

***Kriegsakademie* Curriculum, 1871.**

First Year	Second Year	Third Year
Formal Tactics	Applied Tactics	Military Justice
Military History	Military History (to 1815)	Military Hygeine
Arms and Ordinance	Permanent Fortifications	Military History to 1815
Field Fortifications	Military Surveying	Siege Warfare
Mathematics	Military Geography	General Staff Service
History	Military Administration	Mathematics
Geography	Mathematics	Geodesy (only with math option)
Physical Geography	History	History of Literature
Conversational French	Intro. to History of Philosophy	History of Philosophy
Conversational Russian	Experimental Physics	General History to 1840
	Conversational French	Experimental Physics
	Conversational Russian	Conversational French
		Conversational Russian

Table 2. War College Curriculum by Year, 1871.[118]

A review of the 1898 edition of *Die Aufnahme-Prüfung für die Kriegsakademie* (The Admissions Test for the War Academy), a book intended to prepare students for entry into the War College, also reveals a similar conclusion.[119] This preparatory text focuses on

the tactical level of war, ignoring the strategic level as well as the societal or economic factors that impacted the strategy of their state. Consistently in the literature of this German Academy of higher learning, the strategic level and the societal and political elements that impact on the affairs of the nation were conspicuously absent.

Even after the turn of the century, the curriculum at the war college retained most of Scharnhorst's concepts. The instructional program had the traditional math and science element that Scharnhorst so valued and even added a fourth foreign language, Japanese, to the curriculum. At the same time, philosophy and literature, present for decades in the instruction program, disappeared.

***Kriegsakademie* Curriculum, 1903.**

First Year	Second Year	Third year
Tactics	Tactics	Tactics
Military History	Military History	Military History
Arms and Ordinance	Fortification Theory	Siege Warfare
Field Fortifications	Field Intelligence	General Staff Service
Military Justice	Plotting	Naval Warfare
History	Transportation	State Administration, State and International Law
Physics	Military Hygiene	Mathematics
Physics for Mathematics	(or)	Surveying
Mathematics	History	French (or)
Physical Geography	Mathematics (or)	Russian (or)
General and	Chemistry	English (or)
French (or)	French (or)	Japanese
Russian (or)	Russian (or)	
English (or)	English (or)	
Japanese	Japanese	

Table 3. War College Curriculum by Year, 1903.[120]

What is most intriguing in this curriculum is the apparent expansion of tactical studies. Granted, most wars for the average military man relate to tactics, and most officers and their soldiers will have to fight either on the tactical or, at most, on the operational level of war. If the Prusso-German experience from 1864–71 is considered, as well as the tactical reforms from 1872-1906, it is perhaps logical that additional tactical instruction was deemed important for the new German army's leadership. During the Wars of Unification, the

Prussian/Moltke approach to war had focused on tactical victories that facilitated the achievement of strategic goals set by Bismarck and the crown. Many Germans credited the Prussian General Staff and the senior officer leadership with German victories, ignoring the role that reasonable goals and logical strategies played in this achievement. Thus, the laurels were given to the tactical commanders in the field and their overall commander, Helmuth von Moltke. As noted by one writer, "The Prusso-German army was an institution at once simple and complex, with a strategic culture largely shaped by the three short Wars of Unification against Denmark, Austria, and France."[121] This focus has caused the distinguished German historian, Holger Herwig, to conclude:

> Tactics reigned supreme in Prussia. The system concentrated on the nuts and bolts of the military profession. Its members were drilled in the theory and practice of the latest weapons, their implications for operations, and their advantages and limitations.[122]

The experience of the Wars of Unification, which emphasized the role of tactical victories—the defeat of enemy forces and the destruction of their armies—promoted a tactical culture and the pursuit and achievement of tactical victories in the field. In many respects, the pursuit of tactical victories became a strategy in itself. The senior German officer corps ignored Clausewitz, the key German strategist who is studied today at American military institutions. Clausewitz was considered more of a philosopher, a theoretician of war rather than a practitioner. General Wilhelm Groener, who was Chief of the War Office from 1916-17, indicated that in his reading he was "more occupied with books of the practical service, than with books on high strategy."[123] Of equal significance, Moltke the younger advised his son, who was preparing to enter the War Academy, to read Schlieffen's essays on Cannae, rather than Clausewitz. This was likely good advice, considering the tactical focus of the War Academy's curriculum.[124] Hans Delbrück, a later strategist whose life parallels the second German Empire and who was a keen critic of the lack of logical strategy by the officer corps, was ignored, criticized, and ostracized.[125] Thus, even as a later generation of German officers readily admitted that they had failed to read the turgid prose of

Mein Kampf, the Imperial officer corps of the late 19th and early 20th centuries ignored Clausewitz, who they deemed more a political philosopher. Instead, they studied more practical authors.

As the curriculum in the senior educational institution of the Prussian/German army is considered and criticized for its tactical focus, the question should be asked whether the curriculum at the U.S. Army's senior level institution was any better focused on the strategic level than that of the German institution. In certain respects, an exact comparison is somewhat difficult because the United States did not even have a senior institution until after the turn of the century. Such an institution was created through the educational reforms proposed by Secretary of War Elihu Root and put into place by War Department General Order #155. At the cornerstone laying of the War College in early 1903, however, Root in his comments was clear about what he considered the focus of the institution. He called for, among other things, the study of the "great problems of National Defense."[126] Furthermore, comparison is difficult because, at first, the Army War College avoided an emphasis on lectures and classes and instead had study groups which worked with the Army Staff on important issues for national defense. Although the curriculum content varied, depending on who was the president, enough references to strategic issues, to regional studies, and other higher level studies exist to state that the curriculum of this new institution was not one exclusively focused on the tactical level.[127]

The tactical orientation of the German military education system did not cause any noticeable problems immediately following the Wars of Unification. In the latter part of Moltke's and Bismarck's tenure, however, senior German officers, largely members of the General Staff, pressed to become more involved in matters of strategy, if not strategy-making itself. This resulted from the officer corps' unease over their perception that Bismarck failed to understand the dangers posed by an increasingly powerful Russia. This and the defense quandary that faced Germany in the 1880s, i.e, the possibility of Germany having to fight a war on two fronts, caused many General Staff officers, active and retired, to push for direct involvement in the development of German strategy.

Their desire to participate more directly in strategy development, if not lead in it, calls to question another problem for the German

military as well as the political leadership—a lack of experience as a world power. Consider that in the time frame from 1864–71, Prussia progressed from its role of one of the two leaders of the German states to that of the most powerful state dominating a unified Germany. It transitioned from being a strong player in the politics and military affairs of Western and Central Europe to being the most significant and powerful nation in those regions. In the latter part of the 19th century, it transitioned from being a continental power with a miniscule navy, to that of a major naval power competing with the British Navy on the high seas. The second wave of the industrial revolution, which hit Europe in the last third of the 19th century, would also propel Germany into the role of the economic giant in these regions. In short, in a period of less than 25 years, Germany came into being as a unified state and Prussia moved from being one of the German states to being the primary influence as the dominant player in European politics. As noted by one historian:

> Every nation-state is continually developing. Sometimes there are periods of rapid change when this development seems to get out of hand. During the late 19th century, Germany entered such a period. It was a time of essential schizophrenia: the state appeared at the same time monarchical and constitutional in its politics, agrarian and industrial in its economy and feudal and egalitarian in its society.[128]

The rapid change in the nation's status in Europe and the immense political, military, and economic power available to Germany came so quickly that the political and military leadership, with a few exceptions, did not have the time or the experiences to transition from being a European state to being the leading European power. In short, there was an immaturity in the nation's political and military leadership that would not have been present if the nation's development had proceeded at a slower or more measured pace.

Despite the lack of experience in being military leaders of a major power, key senior officers in Berlin, active and retired, with tactical and, at most, campaign level experience, chafed under the plans and restrictions of Bismarck's heavy hand. They sought to have a larger role in Germany's strategy development. Moltke, with his stature as a military hero and a military educator in his own right, perhaps could have influenced this emerging German military culture (and

its educational structure) because, despite his disagreements with the political leadership in 1866 and 1871, he understood strategic thinking. Conversely, though he recognized the importance of strategy, he seemed to be more comfortable in the tactical world and found tactics more important than strategy for the vast majority of the officer corps.[129] He was, after all, the epitome of the General Staff officer whose role was to consider the enemy that the German Empire might have to fight, and to develop and refine the war plans that would bring about German victory. He likely developed this understanding based on voluminous self-imposed studies of both history and military affairs, which he consistently undertook during his entire career. Even though this patron saint of German military thought acknowledged the role of war and how it could be used to achieve the policy goals of the government (sounding very much like Clausewitz), in practice he seemed much more comfortable with tactics and what is now called operational warfare. Besides, he found strategy to be logical and intuitive. In his own words, "strategy is the application of common sense to the conduct of war."[130]

Neither through education nor through the experiential base of its military and political leadership, was the young German nation prepared for its new role in the world. It came all too fast. Once the 19th century drew to an end and the 20th century emerged, the military leadership of Germany was increasingly unable to handle the challenges facing it. The influential military leadership viewed the world's political and military landscape almost solely from a military view, and neither experience nor education promoted an appreciation of national policy, strategy, or strategy formulation. Had the political leadership of the nation been more astute or more experienced, the military shortcomings might have been solvable. But it was not. The political leadership could not seem to develop a long-term set of goals and a security policy that would promote the long-range national interests of the nation. Even if it had, the mercurial and immature Kaiser, whose influence on both realms was not at all constructive, remained. None of these factors boded well for the newly emerging nation-state of the late 19th century or for the community of nations.

CHAPTER 5

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR DISASTER

> It has never been my "business to comment upon Grand strategy . . . there never took place during my entire period in office a sort of war council at which politics were brought into the military for and against.
>
> Theobald von Bettmann Hollweg, Chancellor[131]

What seems certain, national security strategy and strategy development floundered in the post-Bismarck era. With a new and impetuous Emperor, a weak Chancellor, and an increasingly rudderless ship of state, the most organized entity in Germany appeared to be the military. On the surface, the military establishment appeared to be stable, organized, and, in all, a dependable bulwark for the Emperor and Germany's social structure. In reality the military was not nearly as organized as it seemed. The Imperial military establishment, much like the government it served, was a Byzantine operation with intrigues, deals being cut, and careers made and terminated in an atmosphere that was often only constrained by the inherent limits of the individual's capabilities. Thus, the military dabbled in the business of foreign relations and alliances, often in isolation from civilian authority, and in the Chancellor's realm, which prior to 1889 had dominated both domestic and foreign affairs.

It is also relevant that, as the 19th century came to a close, there was not simply one German military establishment. By the 1890s, actually two very independent military establishments existed. As noted previously, the late 19th century had seen the rapid expansion of the German Navy. It had been a small and rather insignificant force in the heyday of German military victories, i.e., the Wars of Unification. A greater role for the Navy in the military structure of all major powers, to include Germany, had been significantly boosted by the writings of Alfred Mahan. The impact of Mahan's writings, the interest of Kaiser William in this visible evidence of Germany's growing power, and the political influence of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz meant that the German Navy was destined to become a significant part of the force structure. When Admiral

Tirpitz formulated his plans for the high seas fleet to defend against an enemy that his plans helped create (Great Britain), he and his naval colleagues worked in isolation from the Army and the civilian government on budgets, manpower projections, strategy, and war plans. The Navy, dominated by a group of aggressive officers, planned for a qualitative force that could wage a cataclysmic battle between Germany and Britain on the south central regions of the North Sea. Their planning was exclusively navy planning, which was never shared or coordinated with their Army peers.

The Army, too, continued its planning for a future war in isolation from their colleagues in blue. Its planning for the next war, initially accomplished by the elder Moltke, tended to follow his philosophy of war. Thus, the next war would be a short but violent war, a war of rapid maneuver, with Germany concentrating its forces and quickly and decisively defeating the French Army with a flank attack. With the French army destroyed, the German Army could then turn on the Russians and defeat this secondary threat.[132] The concept of massive single-wing envelopment, normally referred to as the Schlieffen Plan, is normally attributed to the Army's Chief of the General Staff (1891-1905), Alfred von Schlieffen. In actuality, the overall concept of this flank attack and envelopment owes more to Moltke than to Schlieffen.[133] Moltke promoted this type of indirect attack, particularly after witnessing the firepower which was employed in the Franco-Prussian War. He came to doubt whether victories like Königgrätz and Sedan were achievable any longer, given the emerging modern firepower on the battlefield. Still, there seemed little choice, and he continued to plan for and brood about a two-front war.


Alfred Graf von Schlieffen

After Moltke's retirement, Schlieffen studied and wrote about Germany's precarious situation and added his wisdom on how Germany's dread fear, a war on two fronts, could best be handled. His Cannae essays, published in the *Quarterly For Tactics and Military Science* (1909-13), showed a consistent interest in the concept of envelopment, and his 1909 essay, "War

in the Present Day," clearly demonstrated more of a studious nature than someone pursuing a singular method of waging the next war. Schlieffen actually considered a number of eventualities to defend Germany from its unique strategic dilemma and indicated a decided preference for defensive offensive operations.[134] His successors, however, clearly focused on the concept of single wing envelopment, ignoring the elder Moltke's reservations about the increasing advantages of defensive operations.

It is curious yet predictable, considering the Byzantine nature of German civilian and military politics, that as the Navy prepared for its North Sea battle and the Army attempted to defend against enemies on two fronts, no serious move took place to develop any type of a joint planning. Ironically, they even failed to agree on the issue of what constituted the major threat to Germany. For the Army, the major threat was from France and Russia, which had encircled Germany through their alliance. According to the Navy, the major threat to Germany was clearly Great Britain. Even when Britain succeeded in resolving its colonial issues in France, resulting in the *entente' cordiale* and the extension of this *entente'* to Russia in 1907, the two services still maintained their different perspective on the threat—and planned according to their perceptions. Despite the worsening situation for the German Empire, no serious attempt was made to create a board or a commission to provide the new nation with either a joint or at least a national approach to either military or strategic planning.[135]

In this respect, Germany was unique among the major western powers it would ultimately face in World War I. Great Britain had its Committee of Imperial Defence which coordinated defense planning. France had established its *Conseil superieure de guerre* as its coordinative body. Even the United States, only gradually acknowledging its major power status, recognized the significance of some type of coordination in planning among the services. Thus, in the wake of the Spanish American War, as a part of Elihu Root's reforms in 1903, a Joint Army and Navy Board was established. This board consisted of four officers from each branch and was chaired by Admiral Thomas Dewey. Their task was to develop the overall general principles for the defense of the United States and

its possessions, and to undertake the development of war plans in the event of a possible war with designated nations. While, as noted by Russell Weigley, "none of this strategic planning turned out to have much relevance to the war the country found itself in 1917," it was nonetheless a coordinated planning effort by two services, even though each had their own priorities.[136]

To complicate Germany's situation even further, at the start of the 20th century, the army's role in the new unified Germany was splint into two significant parts. Granted, an obvious role was to defend the nation, but from whom was still a question. The Prussian Army of the 18th century always had a domestic role of defending the state from its own people, i.e., the middle and lower class masses. The fear of the masses by the ruling class did not disappear in the post-Napoleonic era but continued throughout the 19th century. In fact, it was still an issue on the eve of World War I. After all, from the perspective of the ruling elites, the 19th century had seen two revolutions from the lower and middle classes, one in 1830 and the most serious in 1848. After unification had been accomplished, the consistent growth of liberalism and socialism in German political life threatened the social fabric and political structure of Imperial Germany. These events were clear evidence to the leadership that a bulwark was needed to maintain the country's social order. Between 1905 and 1913 there were several reminders of the importance—even primacy—of the Army's role in maintaining domestic tranquility. As Admiral von Tirpitz was planning his high seas fleet, which Germany could ill afford, and General Alfred von Schlieffen was writing analyzing Cannae and double wing envelopments, Kaiser Wilhelm informed then Chancellor (1905) Bernhard von Bülow that Germany could not afford to fight a war. Tying down the German Army in a war against a foreign adversary could endanger "the safety and property of its [Germany's] citizens in the face of the mounting 'red menace' (that is, the growing socialist party)."[137] As late as 1913, the new Chief of the German General Staff Helmuth von Moltke (the younger) was trying to obtain authorization for the additional troops needed to successfully stage the single wing envelopment known as the Schlieffen Plan. He was warned repeatedly by the German War Minister, Josias von Heeringen, of the Army's important role in quelling domestic disturbances and the dangers of opening the

army to democratization (by including more and more working class citizens).[138] Thus the question emerged, What was the prime role for the Army—defense against internal disorder or defense against external enemies? Did Germany have the resources to defend against both?

As a final insult to common sense, coordination in defense planning and strategy between the civilian and military authorities was nonexistent. The civilian authorities had in many respects set the stage for this problem by their inability to get their own house in order. From the time Waldersee became Chancellor in 1890, the Chancellor's role in working with the Emperor to develop goals and objectives and strategies to achieve these goals continually had diminished. The first failure in the German political realm was the inability of the Kaiser and his Chancellors to develop something akin to the rather symbiotic relationship that existed between William I and Bismarck.[139] The immediate post-Bismarck Chancellors were unsure of what they wanted, except that their goals and strategies would not follow Bismarck's. Thus, they bumbled and bungled, attempting to chart their own course, but without taking a compass along on their diplomatic journeys. By the time of Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg's Chancellorship (1909-17), the Chancellor was largely absent from a significant role in developing national strategy, even though his postwar claim of his lack of involvement in this realm is a distortion.[140] In the end, his major contribution to Germany's defense for the coming war was to convince the Socialists to support the war effort.

For Germany, the disconnect between civilian and military authorities was a major problem because the strategies developed by the General Staff were not strategies at all. Based on officer education and the army's culture, they were instead tactical and operational concepts. In all, the Army lived in the shadow of the Wars of Unification, perhaps never truly recognizing that tactics and operational concepts were no substitute for strategy. The Emperor also was little help because, even though he clearly wanted to find Germany's place in the sun and to gain the respect among the community of major powers, he failed to recognize that this cannot be done by treading on the diplomatic toes of the other major nations. He ignored Bismarck's concept of being the hegemon of

Europe, without appearing to be, without flaunting the economic and military power of the German Empire.

Conversely, neither William II nor his Chancellors were the evil men portrayed by wartime propaganda. The Kaiser was instead an unbelievably immature individual who could not set reasonable and achievable goals for his nation. Due to the quirks in his personality, neither could he acquiesce to the goals nor strategies set by a strong chancellor, as had his grandfather, even if such an individual had been available. As a consequence, Germany wallowed diplomatically through the last decade of the 19th century and the first of the 20th with the Chancellors, Foreign Ministers, and the Kaiser irritating the other major powers through their ineptitude and through William's bombast. By 1907, if not earlier, Germany had achieved one major accomplishment on the world scene as it related to security policy; it had managed to encircle itself with unfriendly alliances composed of the other European powers. In Bismarck's heyday, Berlin had made rapid progress toward becoming the center of European diplomacy. Under William II, it had become an island surrounded by unfriendly waters.

In this atmosphere, the planners of the services became even more significant. Moltke had planned on how to fight a war on two fronts, and Schlieffen's writings had contributed to additional thought on how to deal with such a quandary. Men, more men, and more corps were needed to fight the war that military planners knew would come. The goal of this war was to break out of the encirclement that was threatening Germany. On December 8, 1912, William II convened a war council. When the council met, War Minister Josia von Heeringen was not even present. After all, though an officer, he was a part of the civilian government. While subordination of the military to civilian authority had been a problem since Bismarck's day, at this juncture it was clear that the General Staff had won.[141]

The Kaiser's assessment was that war was inevitable, an assessment agreed to by Moltke the younger. In the wake of this council, pressure was exerted on the civilian side of the government to increase appropriations for the military and to increase the number of German soldiers in uniform. In the days following this meeting, the War Minister and the Chancellor were briefed on the basic concepts of the General Staff's version of the Schlieffen Plan. The war, when

it came, would be a war to relieve the peace-loving German nation from the encirclement that threatened its very existence. Was there a grand strategy that governed all of this? No, initially there were only operational and tactical plans designed to relieve the encirclement of Germany. This, in short, had become the German way of war.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

> It is simply not true that Schlieffen was keen on wresting control from the politicians. . . . His continued influence on German policy was the fault of Bismarck's sucessors, who carelessly squandered his legacy.
>
> Brigadier General Dr. Günter Roth[142]

Even before the Guns of August opened up in 1914, initiating the over 4 years of carnage we know as World War I, the failures of the German way of war were already evident. They did not begin with the nightmare National Socialist years when a political leader with the background of a corporal in a Bavarian Regiment moved corps and armies, they began in the mid-19th century as Germany was being formed into a nation-state and they saw their ultimate expression during World War I.[143] The problems and the resulting failures are summarized below.

The first problem relates to the German General Staff, the elite military staff group that was reformed during the Scharnhorst era. It was redesigned in the early 19th century to provide well-trained and professional advice to senior officers. The senior leaders of that period generally had their appointments due to social and/or political position rather than military training and thus needed the advice of experts to carry out their duties competently. The capabilities of the General Staff officers and their professionalism were clearly evident in the Wars of Unification, but they came to regard themselves as experts, Bismarck said demagogues, both in war and in matters of state, i.e., as these matters related to Germany's security policy. The latter, matters of state, were far and above their training and experience. Their experience was in the Moltke era, in a time when Moltke had taken concepts of Napoleonic warfare—rapid maneuver and concentration of forces on the field to destroy the enemy army—and had significantly improved them using the technology of the Industrial age. Through Moltke's writings and his campaigns, the General Staff came to believe that in these "modern" campaigns,

characterized by rapid and decisive military actions, a strategy could be found for the German nation.[144]

Beginning in the 1860s, the General Staff, and the senior officer corps in general, chaffed against and intrigued against civilian control of the nation in war and peace. They were a dangerous group for a new parliamentary democracy as they were outside the constitutional government and ignored, as well as actively subverted, the constitutional lawful part of the government. They built their fame and their reputation on the Wars of Unification, more than in the reformist Scharnhorst era. Through their mid-19th century victories and by the last decade of that century, they had become dominant players in German security strategy/military strategy. Their push to short circuit their fellow officers in the "civilian" branch of the war ministry and their desire to override the Chancellor in matters of strategy were, by this time, completely successful.

The success of the General Staff in attaining a dominant role in determining Germany's security policy was dangerous for Germany and for Europe. By education and experience, they had little exposure to the higher levels of strategy and perhaps never truly realized that their famed victories in the Wars of Unification were due to the wise, though arbitrary, policies and strategies established by Otto von Bismarck rather than the military in general, and the General Staff in particular. Again, their mentor was Moltke the Elder, a master of military art in the field, and not Clausewitz who is remembered for his writings on strategy.[145] Thus, their perspective was that of tactical field officers, though admittedly they also functioned on what we today call the operational level of war. Thus, they came to confuse tactical and operational success as synonymous with strategy. In fact, successful tactics with victory on the field was, for many senior German officers, a strategy in itself.

The reforms of the early 19th century gave them a significant place in the Prussian/German system, but those same reforms failed to give them the necessary education to see above and beyond the area of tactical operations. Had appropriate counterbalances existed in the civilian realm to negate their rise to prominence, perhaps the Germany of the 20th century might have been somewhat different—but there were none. After Bismarck, Germany failed to produce, or better yet, elevate to a position of authority, a statesman of the

former's stature or talents. One cannot agree with the assertion by the Chief of the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* that, after Bismarck, the senior military officer corps moved to fill a vacuum created by defaulters, bankrupt politicians.[146] In reality, the General Staff had pressed for an increasing role in strategy and security policy from 1871 until the end of that century. In reality, Gerhard Ritter's comments likely sum up the situation best:

> The historic guilt of Bismarck's successors lies in the fact that they allowed themselves to be drawn into this dependency, [a dependency on military technocrats] that without raising a voice of opposition they accepted war planning as being the privilege of the military expert.[147]

The failure, however, was both military and political. The politicians acquiesced, were taken in, or were overwhelmed by the military experts. In the end, the General Staff's army plans and that of Tirpitz and his naval staff for only military options sufficed for some sort of strategy for the German nation. Their solutions were not really a strategy for Germany; in reality, they were military-dominated tactical and operational plans devoid of strategies.

Where were the political solutions for Germany between 1890 and 1914? Could the political element of power have been exercised, rather than the military? At one time, political solutions clearly existed to resolve Germany's problems, but they were squandered by inept politicians who had seriously damaged Germany's political reputation by their ineptitude and unrealistic schemes and strategies. Even if the political leadership had designed achievable strategies for the post- Bismarck Second Reich, or had promoted the political or economic element of power, there was the Kaiser. As the 19th century came to an end, there could not have been a more unfortunate successor to the German throne. Even another Bismarck might not have been able to counterbalance this mercurial personality. While the post-1945 German generals consistently complained about Hitler's interference in Germany's military plans and operations, one only has to give a cursory review of the post-Bismarck era to see that Hitler assuredly was not the first German head of state to meddle in politics and military affairs.

Returning to the original question raised in the introduction, are there lessons to be learned from studying the German way of war,

or have we, in fact, studied them far too much? At the same time, have key lessons been missed? In reality, military students have missed or glossed over a very important lesson: the importance of the national leadership setting achievable goals and the importance of adopting strategies to achieve them. Instead, both civilian and military students of modern Germany have pursued a fascination with the tactical and operational victories won by the Germans, particularly in World War II. Granted, whether one studies the 1870 Sedan operations or the almost staggering victory brought about by the Wehrmacht through the 1941 Kiev encirclement, tactically and operationally the German Army was an amazing force in the field.

What we have ignored, a significant lesson provided by the Germans, is that sometimes victories in the field are not enough. The Germans, too, ignored this lesson. Instead, they studied, particularly in the late 19th century, tactical and operational warfare, for the patron saint of Germany's military leadership was Helmuth von Moltke, not Clausewitz. From the mid-19th century, the German army—Moltke's Army—developed a fascination with flank attacks and envelopments which culminated in the immediate pre-World War I Cannae essays. As Schlieffen studied classical warfare and wrote about the Punic wars, both he and his military disciples missed a significant lesson. Hannibal, the mastermind of Carthaginian victories, was only a success tactically. Despite his domination of the Roman countryside, from the start of the Second Punic War (218 B.C.) until virtually the end, 14 years later, he lost the Second Punic War. Even though he had amassed an almost unbelievable string of tactical victories throughout the length of the Italian Peninsula, including the classical double-wing envelopment at Cannae, in the end the famous Carthaginian failed. In the Battle of Zama, he not only lost this solitary battle, he lost the war together with the Carthaginian Empire. Roman strategies, and ultimately tactics, prevailed. The lesson of the Second Punic War and of 20th century Germany is that without sound strategies, both national and military, without logical achievable goals, tactical and operational victories—even small war victories—may in the end mean very little to a nation. For Hitler's Germany, Poland, France, the Low countries, and Norway were all spectacular victories—victories still studied today, but what was the result for the German nation? The most significant lesson provided

by a study of the German way of war is the importance of having an achievable set of goals for a nation and strategies to achieve those goals. This lesson is far more significant than the factors that resulted in their tactical and operational successes.

Second, once a nation sets its goals, to have the best chance of achieving them, that nation should always attempt to use multiple elements of power. If a nation's military is allowed to plan in isolation, if the political leadership acquiesces and defers to the military in developing security policy, in all likelihood, the solutions to the problems will be military and the element of power utilized will be military. That Germany, after unification and after Bismarck, failed to develop a competent and respected diplomatic corps and that this nation failed to recognize how to use the economic power resulting from its rapid late 19th century industrialization, is a sad commentary on its leadership.

Third, a nation must have its military establishment function as a unified force. If, as was the case with the German Navy, its plans are based on one set of contingencies with the army's on another and both compete for the same resources with no coordination, the country's military will be unable to fully develop or effectively employ the full strength of its forces. Since the passage of Goldwater-Nichols, today's U.S. military forces have been pushed, sometimes dragged into a joint culture. At times, this process has been painful for the leadership of all of the services, but if there is ever a lesson to be learned from studying the German military experience, it is the consequence of failing to have joint planning and utilization of joint military forces in war. A student of history can only wonder if Germany's army and navy had tried to stage any significant joint operations in World War I, whether this could have improved Germany's military position in the war. Instead, other than a Baltic joint operation in 1917, it was as if the German Army and Navy were in the service of different nations.[148] Neither coordination nor cooperation was the order of the day.

Above all, and something that nations entering the 21st century should remember, is that the German experience shows the student of military history/affairs that sometimes technical operational victories in the field are not enough. They need to be a part of a strategy in pursuit of achievable goals, if the nation is to succeed.

ENDNOTES

1. Holger Herwig, "The Prussian Model and Military Planning Today," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 1998, p. 67.

2. Colonel T. N. Dupuy, *A Genius For War: The German Army and General Staff, 1807-1945*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1977.

3. Kenneth Macksey, *Why the Germans Loose a War: The Myth of German Military Superiority*, London: Greenhill Books, 1996, p. 228.

4. Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2000, p. 232.

5. For example, see B. H. Liddell Hart, *The German Generals Talk: Startling Revelations from Hitler's High Command*, New York: Quill, 1975; and of course a classic in this line of thought, Eric von Manstein, *Lost Victories*, Chicago: The Regency Press, 1958.

6. Oberst i.G. Christain O. E. Millotat, *Understanding the Prussian-German General Staff System*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1992, p. 42.

7. This term, *Gotterdamerung*, is normally used to describe the catastrophic collapse of the Third Reich in the late spring, 1945. This term was taken from Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, a favorite of Hitler's. The opera ends with an orgy of destruction, similar to what happened in Berlin in April 1945.

8. For those who are unfamiliar with the concept of elements of power, a good primer is Hans J. Morgenthau's book *Politics Among the Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace,* New York: Knopf, 1968. Morgenthau found that there were elements that were relatively stable, and then there were those that were subject to change. Application of these elements of power is the means to achieve national goals. Currently the key elements of power that are recognized are economic, political, military, psychological, and, most recently, informational. The fault with the Germans appears to be that they had a distinct tendency to gravitate to the military, ignoring/overlooking the others.

9. Michael Handel, *Sun Tzu and Clausewitz Compared*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1991, p. 21. Even more pointedly, Sun Tzu stated: "For the Emperor to resort to violence was an admission that he had failed in his own conduct as a sage pursuing the art of government. The resort to warfare, *wu*, was an admission of bankruptcy in the pursuit of *wen*, the arts of peace. Consequently it should be a last resort and it required justification both at the time and in the record." P. 23.

10. The author readily acknowledges a notable exception to this statement. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck willingly used the military element of power from 1864-71 in order to unify Germany. Conversely, once his basic goals were achieved, the chancellor consistently avoided war and through diplomacy, and at times chicanery, defused crises and forsook the military element of power.

11. This is in contradiction to the concepts promoted by the preeminent 19th century German thinker Carl von Clausewitz, who stated, ". . . We also want to make it clear that war itself does not suspend political intercourse or change it into something entirely different. It is essential that intercourse continues irrespective of the means it employs." Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Sir Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans. and eds., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 605.

12. Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment," *Makers of Modern Strategy*, Peter Paret, ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 296.

13. A student of military history only has to look at the profusion of memoirs written by the German officer corps after World War II to find the roots of this legend. From Guderian to von Manstein, a common theme exists that many of the "Lost Victories" were due to Hitler's interference in maneuvering forces from the Army to the company level.

14. Do note, however, that in 1834 Prussia exercised leadership in this regard through the establishment of the *Zollverein,* a voluntary customs union which erased the economic barriers between participating German principalities. Conveniently for Prussian ambitions, Austria was excluded from membership.

15. The Hohenzollerns, the Prussian ruling dynasty with its roots in southern Germany, had ruled Brandenburg-Prussia for generations. In general, the Hohenzollerns were divine right kings who, above all, wished to retain their royal prerogatives and to protect their dynasty from intrusions by popular rule or competing houses.

16. The reader should remember, however, that at this congress a German confederation, not a unified state, was created. The purpose of the confederation was not to unify the Germans but to protect against external threats and to guard against internally-based revolutions. In structure this confederation was not a unifying force but rather an organization of 38 sovereign states and principalities whose representatives functioned and voted as their sovereigns instructed. A good read on this period remains Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, 1812-1822,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1999.

17. As stated by one author, "It was perhaps a bad omen that the second German Reich, the United Germany, had been founded on the basis of three wars. With hindsight, it seems as if no peaceful existence could have resulted from such aggressive beginnings." Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 16.

18. Critics of Prussian politics should use appropriate perspective when criticizing Prussia for its initiation of these Wars of Unification. Despite Anika Mombauer's quote in the previous footnote, consider the experience of other European nations. The United Kingdom did not come into existence through a peaceful joining of Wales, Scotland, and England. France was a battleground for centuries between English nobility and French nobility before the English and their

allies finally were evicted and France became a nation-state. War was the order of the day for Spain beginning with the 9th century through the end of the 15th century, when the Spaniards destroyed the last vestiges of the Moorish civilization and became a united country. In short, Prussia was one of many European nations that unified by the sword; perhaps its problem was that it happened to be a latecomer in the process. For a U.S. reader, it should not be forgotten that our country also grew and expanded westward through innumerable wars with the Native American tribes.

19. Daniel Hughes, *Moltke, On the Art of War: Selected Writings*, Novato CA: The Persidio Press, 1993, p. 25. At the same time, following the Wars of Unification, Moltke was both a skeptic and a realist noting, "One hopes that with advancing civilization war will be less frequent, but no state can entirely dispense with it." Hughes, p. 24.

20. For example, one author correctly noted that "the Prusso-German Army was a strategic culture **largely shaped by three short Wars of Unification** against Denmark, Austria, and France." (Emphasis added.) Holger H. Herwig, "Strategic Uncertainties of a Nation-state: Prussia-Germany, 1871-1918" in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein, eds., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, Looking at these wars and how they were viewed by German military thinkers, Gunther Rothenberg stated that the Germans found "the campaign of 1866 as the Moltkean ideal of war. The decisive battle was fought within weeks after the outbreak of hostilities, and its outcome deprived the adversary of the means and the will to fight further." Gunther E. Rothenburg, "Moltke, Schlieffen and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age,* Peter Paret, ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 302.

21. Louis Napoleon, nephew of the famous French Emperor and principal claimant to the throne, should not be confused with the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Louis Napoleon, or Napoleon III, was aptly called "Napoleon the Small" by Victor Hugo, but he assuredly had territorial ambitions like his uncle, whether they were at the expense of Germany or a new world empire, initially focusing on Mexico.

22. The revolutionary Parliament meeting at Frankfurt actually offered the Prussian Emperor the crown, but according to one of Bismarck's biographers, "He, the emperor, detested election by a parliament, a crown offered by the representatives of the people. That was revolution, and he hated revolution all the more as he remembered his own humiliation before it. So he declined the crown on the grounds that he would accept it only if offered unanimously by the German princes." Erich Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1958, p. 27. Note, however, that the German Emperor did devise a plan to reduce Austrian influence in the German Confederation and pressed for a Prussian-led plan to unify the German states. In the end, however, Austrian and Russian pressure forced Prussia to sign an agreement to renounce these ambitions, and this agreement at Ölmutz became known by German Nationalists as the "Humiliation of Ölmutz."

23. Frederick William IV suffered a stroke in 1857 that incapacitated him. He died in 1861 and with his passing, William officially became Emperor. William had not been groomed as Emperor because it was assumed that Frederick William's heirs would reign. Since the latter was childless, William was in line for succession. While both men were decidedly absolute monarchists, William was the soldier and determined to build Prussia's power, a factor which was extremely important in German unification.

24. William's plan called for the enforcement of the traditional 3 years of military service for all men, a provision that previously had not been well-enforced, and a weakening of the *Landwehr,* the traditional Prussian militia, which had proven to be unreliable during the revolutions of 1848. Through these provisions, he thought there would be increased funds and manpower to support the additional regiments for the Prussian Army.

25. Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification, 1815-1871*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 120-121.

26. The opposition refused to pass the necessary budget to fund William's enlargement of his army and, when a budget could not be agreed upon, the government proceeded without one, collecting taxes and expending funds according to the plans and programs of William and Bismarck. In Bismarck's opinion, "If a compromise cannot be arrived at and a conflict arises, then the conflict becomes a question of power. Whoever has the power, then acts according to his opinion." Thus, since the crown had the power, it simply functioned without parliamentary concurrence. Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire,* p. 61.

27. Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification, 1815-1871*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 72.

28. Gunther E. Rothenberg, in his foreword to Daniel Hughes, *Moltke on the Art of War*, Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993, p. x.

29. Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany*, p. 72.

30. *Ibid*., p. 111.

31. *Ibid*.

32. Classic examples of this romanticized fiction were the writings of Heinrich Von Treitschke and Heinrich Von Sybel, both of whom portrayed the pressure for German unification as essentially an irresistible popular current which was sweeping through the German states.

33. Gordon Craig placed the issue of Bismarck and unification in perspective when he stated, "If he had never risen to the top in Prussian politics, the unification of Germany would probably have taken place anyway but not at the same time or in quite the same way it did." Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 1.

34. Rather than terming it "hijacking," his main biographer better describes it as "Bismarck first conceived his plan for the exploitation of German Nationalism in

1858-1859 when conditions for its execution appeared particularly ripe." Pflanze, *The Unification of Germany*, p. 156.

35. Examples of Bismarck's "borrowing from others" includes his adoption of German nationalism and German unification for his own purposes or, after unification was achieved, borrowing elements of the social legislative agenda, specifically social insurance, from the Socialists whom he was determined to destroy. See William H. Dawson, *The German Empire, 1867-1914*, 2 vols., Vol. II, New York: George Allen & Unwinn, 1919, pp. 39-46.

36. This was particularly true once the Wars of Unification started. Gordon Craig quotes a former member of Bismarck's opposition, Gustav Mevissen, who, after the victories against Austria in 1866, stated,

> I cannot recover from the impressions of this hour. I am in truth no devotee of Mars; the goddess of beauty and the mother of the graces appeal more to my understanding than the powerful god of war, but the trophies of war exercise a magic spell even upon the child of peace. Involuntarily the look is fettered, and the spirit dwells with those countless masses who are hailing the god of the moment, success.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, p. 8.

37. Calculated in that Bismarck cooperated with the Austrians in the brief War against Denmark, but in the Convention of Gastein, 1865, Prussia administered Schleswig and Austria administered Holstein. This dual power administration between the two powers, with relations already strained over the question of who would be the leader of the German states, was a recipe for future conflict.

38. As an example, the Prussian Army had transitioned from muzzleloading weapons to the Dreyse Needle gun, a breechloader that allowed a Prussian soldier to fire five-to-six times faster than his Austrian adversary. Conversely, the Austrians were at the same time transitioning to muzzleloaders converted to breech loaders and had finally seen the need to adopt the concept of interchangeable parts, something their arms industry had failed to do. See John Walter, *The German Rifle: A Comprehensive History of the Standard Bolt Action Designs, 1871-1945*, London: Arms and Armor Press, 1979, pp. 20-46; and Hans-Dieter Götz, *Die deutschen Militargewehre und Machinenpistolen, 1871-1945*, Stuttgart: Motorbuch Verlag, 1974, pp. 8-9. The Austrians, in terms of weapons technology, had only one advantage over their Prussian adversaries—artillery. Even though the Prussian Army, through its studies of the American Civil War, appreciated the impact of modern artillery, they were slow in converting to rifled tubes made with high quality steel.

39. Although politicians had robbed Moltke of his total victory over Austria, a real victory resulting from the Austrian war was the rout of the Progressive party. A key plank in the Progressive Party platform had been the unification of Germany. Bismarck, in practice the leader of unification, simply ripped that plank from their platform.

40. A letter from Otto von Bismarck on July 9, 1870, in Fürst Herbert Bismarck, ed., *Bismarcks Briefe an Seine Braut und Gattin*, Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchandlung, Nachfolger, 1900, p. 572.

41. A good overview of Moltke's early life and the rather chaotic early family years is summarized very well in Arden Bucholz, *Moltke and the German Wars, 1864 -1871*, New York: Palgrave Publications, 2001, pp. 25-49

42. After completing his studies at the General War School, Moltke did spend some 12 years with a regiment. but after this period in the tactical world and a brief period as a military advisor in Turkey, he moved to higher staff positions and to his military studies. See William O'Conner Morris, *Moltke: A Biographical and Critical Study*, New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd, 1971.

43. In his comments in a section of his writings entitled S*ieg und Überlegenheit: Schnelle Entscheidung*, Moltke stated,

> The character of the present day conduct of war is marked by the attempt to obtain a great and rapid decision. Calling into service all of those capable of bearing arms: the strength of armies; the difficulties of sustaining them; the enormous cost of being under arms; the disruption of commerce, manufacture and agriculture; the battle-ready organization of the Armies and the ease in which they are assembled, all press for early termination of the war.

Hughes, *Moltke, On the Art of War: Selected Writings*, Novato CA: The Persidio Press, 1993, pp. 125-126.

44. As noted by my friend and colleague, Antulio J. Echevarria II, "Nonetheless, in an interview in 1890, Moltke reputedly listed Homer's works, the Bible, and *On War* among the five books that most influenced him." Echevarria, "Moltke and the German Military Tradition: His Theories and Legacies," *Parameters*, Spring 1996, p. 92. A clear indication of Clausewitz's influence can be seen in Moltke's *Comments on Strategy*, written in 1871, where he stated, "policy uses war for the attainment of its goals; it works decisively at the beginning and the end of the war so that indeed policy reserves for itself the right to increase its demands or to be satisfied with a lesser success." Max Horst, *Moltke: Leben und Werke in Selbstzeugnissen, Briefe, Schriften, Reden,* Bremen: Carl Schunemann Verlag, n.d., p. 361.

45. In many respects even though he acknowledged Clausewitz as a major influence, he actually broke with a significant part of Clausewitz's thinking. While Clausewitz consistently referred to war as a political act, Moltke tended to minimize the political element and seek military, tactical, and operational solutions to problems. In particular, in war he espoused the idea that once the first shot was fired, the generals would run the war. The political leader did not have a role.

46. Hughes, *Moltke, On the Art of War* p. 124.

47. *Ibid*., p. 46.

48. Grosser Generalstab, ed., *Moltke's Militärische Werke*, 14 vols., Berlin: E. S. Mittler, 1892-1912, Vol. II, part 2, pp. 33-40. As he stated, "*Kein operationsplan reicht*

mit einiger Sicherhiet über das erste Zusammentreffen mit der feindlichen Hauptmacht hinaus." See also, Horst, *Moltke: Leben und Werke in Selbstzeugnissen, Briefe, Schriften, Reden,* p. 361.

49. Hughes, *Moltke, On the Art of War*, pp. 128-129.

50. *Ibid*., p. 36.

51. As noted by Arden Bucholz in his work, *Moltke and the German Wars, 1864-1871*, New York: Palgrave Publications, 2001, pp. 135-138, William I initially had serious reservations about going to war against a kindred state, no matter how serious their disagreements about the leadership of the German states. Once the victories began to amass, however, William was in favor of marching on to Vienna and imposing a punitive peace. Bismarck, worried about Louis Napoleon's plans and intentions and concerned about weakening the Hapsburgs and the ensuing power vacuum, was the voice of moderation.

52. Hughes, *Moltke, On the Art of War*, p. 25.

53. After the Franco-Prussian war, however, he recognized the significance of politics prior to the war, but he held fast to the view that once the war had begun, political leaders and their policies should be removed from issues of military strategy and policy. As noted by Holger Herwig,

> . . . the Elder Moltke remained open to change. He understood the geopolitical chessboard of the 1890s and appreciated that the location of the Reich between France and Russia defied simple operational tactical resolution. "It must be left to diplomacy," Moltke concluded, "to see if it can achieve a peace settlement" in a future war among the great powers.

Holger H. Herwig, "The Prussian Model and Military Planning Today," *Joint Forces Quarterly,* Spring 1998, p. 70.

54. The encircled French Army was to become prisoners of war, and all of their weapons and equipment would fall into German hands. All French officers would be allowed to retain their firearms, but they, too, would be prisoners of war. Bucholz, *Moltke and the German Wars, 1864-1871*, pp. 181-182.

55. As noted by one author, a part of Bismarck's concern was the possibility of foreign intervention to bring the war to an end. Were this to occur, it might not be possible to achieve Prussia's goals in the war completely. See Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army,* p. 206.

56. As succinctly summarized by Otto Pflanze, "The conflict between Moltke and Bismarck is a classic example of the uneasy relationship between political and military leadership in wartime. To the Chancellor the fall of Paris meant the possibility of peace on German terms, but to the general, it meant the release of troops for further military operations." Perhaps most significant, he noted, "The Junker had won his private struggle with the military at a crucial time in German history. But the institutional dualism of military and political authority which was its cause remained unaltered. **One day, long after his death, the problem would**

rise again to plague his successors in a war of far greater dimensions." Emphasis added. Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany*, p. 468.

57. The author acknowledges that Bavaria, Saxony, and Wurttemberg were able to maintain a degree of autonomy, but this, too, would begin to erode in 1914 and disappear after the end of World War I.

58. Horst, *Moltke: Leben und Werke*, p. 363.

59. The reader should note, however, that this was not a new or innovative concept on the battlefield. The idea of rapid movement, concentration of force, and annihilation of the enemy army is warfare in the Napoleonic tradition. Moltke's contribution was using the new technology of the period: railroads, telegraph, and breech loading rifles, to give the Prussian Army the speed and firepower to accomplish the task. See Dennis Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles: Soldiers, Technology, and the Unification of Germany*, Hampden CT: Archon Books, 1975.

60. Hughes, *Moltke on the Art of War*, p. 52. Moltke stated, "I am convinced that improvements in firearms have given the tactical defense a great advantage over the tactical offense."

61. *Ibid*., pp. 128-129.

62. *Ibid*., p. 59.

63. Holger H. Herwig, "Strategic Uncertainties of a Nation-state: Prussia-Germany, 1871-1918," in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein, eds., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 251.

64. The Ems dispatch episode is classic Bismarck. When Bismarck received the original "Ems" telegram, he was initially discouraged by its contents for he feared that the French message would not serve as the catalyst for the coming conflict. Thus, he edited the telegram to make it inflammatory and released it to the press. For Bismarck, war with France was necessary to complete the process of unification. See William L. Langer, "Bismarck as a Dramatist," in A. O. Sarkissian, *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography in Honor of G. P. Gooch*, London: Longman, 1961, pp. 199-216.

65. Too often people miss important elements of Germany's post-1870 power. By the beginning of the 20th century, Germany not only had the most powerful army on the continent, it also was out-producing Britain in pig iron, had rapidly expanded its electrical and chemical industries, and had the lion's share of the world's dye production. As noted by Otto Pflanze, between 1850 and 1860, coal production in Germany doubled, and the number of steam engines in use rose from 1,416 in 1846 to 10,113 in 1861. Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany*, p. 114. In short, in the latter part of the Bismarck years, Germany had immense political and economic, as well as military power. For the sake of the German people, it is rather a pity that William II and his ministers did not appreciate that there were elements of power to be exercised above and beyond the military element.

66. Hans Kohn, *German History: Some New German Views*, London: Allen and Unwinn, 1954, p. 30.

67. For those unfamiliar with this period of German history, Bismarck was faced by two serious issues: the possibility of France waging a war of *revanche'*; and, particularly in the cities, the growth of the Social Democratic Party—with its socialist agenda—which, together with the other democratic forces in Germany, threatened to unravel the social fabric of the German state which both Bismarck and William sought to preserve. The Social Democrats and the Liberals were, for him, a serious threat. See Johannes Ziekursch, *Politische Geschichte Des Neuen Deutschen Kaiserreiches,* 3 vols., Frankfurt: Societäts-Druckerei, 1925-30, particularly Vol. II.

68. Herwig, "The Prussian Model and Military Planning Today," p. 71.

69. Consider, for example, the economic indicators and the power they provided. Two key indicators were the production of pig iron and coal. In the period 1850-60, annual pig iron production increased from 215,000 tons to 529,000, and coal production doubled, increasing from 6 million tons to 12 million. By the end of the 19th century, Germany was producing more pig iron than Great Britain.

70. The Chancellor never regarded himself as a *Kolonialmenschi*, but in all likelihood, he engaged briefly in the race for colonies due to necessities of internal/domestic politics rather than any true belief in the worth of overseas posessions. See Erich Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire*, New York: W. W. Norton Inc, 1964, pp. 272-281.

71. A vocal lobby in Germany wanted Germany to have an overseas empire. Bismarck traditionally was skeptical of the value of colonies but had no hesitancy to use German "Colonial Humbug" for the purposes of his politics, both foreign and domestic.

72. Bismarck seemed intent on grooming his eldest son, Herbert von Bismarck, as a potential successor. Bismarck's son had the determination of his father but totally lacked subtlety and charm. He had a violent temper and was frequently cowed and verbally abused by his father. Thus, Herbert had the name but not the talent to assume his father's mantle.

73. The crisis over Bulgaria came at a time when German/Russian relations were deteriorating and elements within the German General Staff, notably General Alfred von Waldersee, attempted to push Germany into war with Russia, together with Germany's ally, Austria. This attempt was stopped dead by Bismarck through his direct intercession with the Austrian government. The Chancellor made it perfectly clear to the latter that the defensive alliance between Austria and Germany was simply that, a defensive alliance. Furthermore, he clearly stated that advice to the monarchs on matters of politics should not be from the General Staffs. See Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 266-270.

74. Erich Brandenburg, in his study *From Bismarck to the World War: A Study of German Foreign Policy, 1870-1914*, London: Oxford University Press, 1927, pp. 2-

16, rightfully claims that Bismarck truly sought peace and of course the isolation of France. He could see no real value in a war—even a victorious war—for the German Empire.

75. Lawrence Lafore, in his book entitled *The Long Fuze: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I,* New York: Lippincott Publishing Company, 1971, 2nd ed., p. 83, noted,

> The preeminence of Germany assured, while it lasted, a quite unprecedented measure of stability. In the 1880s, it faded into a second stage where Germany's preeminence was less certain and where overseas issues began to intrude into European politics and a period of instability and tension ensued. This was to be replaced by a third phase about 1905 when Germany's preeminence had largely disappeared . . .

76. The alliances, to include secret alliances, inherently created tensions in European politics. Nonetheless, these were products of Bismarck's skillful diplomacy and, while alliances that isolated France did produce *angst* and tension, with his skillful hand they also kept a measure of order in the European scene.

77. Thus, in 1874 he stated, "I am convinced that improvements in firearms have given the tactical defense a great advantage over the tactical offense. It is true that we were always on the offensive in the campaign of 1870 and that we took the enemy's strongest positions. But at what a sacrifice! Taking the offensive only after having defeated several enemy attacks appears to me to be more advantageous." Daniel Hughes, *Moltke on the Art of War Selected Writings*, Novato CA: The Presidio Press, 1993, p. 52.

78. This threat went beyond a simple military assessment. Cheap Russian grain threatened the income of the agricultural population, particularly the landed gentry of the eastern provinces, causing a demand for tariffs to protect Germany's powerful agricultural interests. Conversely, the commercial interests in the rapidly industrializing areas of Germany wanted open trade because, for them, Russia was a rapidly expanding market for their goods. Trade, tariffs, and threats of tariffs added to the tension.

79. The War Ministry was a civilian ministry, but military personnel, in fact, served in it. Thus, for example, General Alfred K. G. von Kameke was War Minister from 1873-83. Even though he was a general officer, he antagonized Bismarck and some of the military establishment because he tried to work with and appease deputies in the Reichstag who were critics of the Army. In short, it wasn't the personnel, civilian or military, within the War Ministry who were the problem. It was the issue of to whom the ministry reported, i.e., civilian rather than military officials. In an era when parliamentary demands were rising, together with criticism of military budgets, having any part of the military responsible to a civilian ministry was a major problem for Prussian conservatives.

80. Problems went beyond the trends within the Reichstag. There were also liberal-minded officers that worried about leadership in the General Staff and the Chancellor, as well. Concern also was that some of these officers were in league

with the liberal-leaning Crown Prince and his decidedly liberally-leaning wife. Thus, for the conservatives of the William I/Bismarck/Moltke persuasion, there were repeated threats to the established order. See Gordon Craig, *Germany: 1866-1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 161-164.

81. In many respects, the Prussianized German army in the late 19th century never totally lost its class orientation. The reforms of the Scharnhorst era had sought to remove some of the class prejudices in the selection of officers through promoting the idea that officers should be selected on the basis of ability rather than social class. Despite the acceptance of middle class candidates into leadership positions, the old order officer corps still distrusted the masses and thus the German Army retained a dual mission of protecting the country from its foreign enemies and being prepared to defend the government from its citizens. As the Social Democratic Party increased its power at the end of the century, the role of the Army as an internal security force became even more significant. See Stig Forster, *Der doppelte Militarismus: Die deutsche Heeresrustungspolitik zwischen Status-Quo-Sicherung und Agression. 1890-1913,* Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1985, pp. 25-26.

82. As noted by Holger Herwig, the actions of 1883 literally "emasculated the single agency that accounted for it in the Reichstag, The Prussian War Ministry." In addition, "The General Staff no longer kept the Prussian War Ministry abreast of strategic planning." Holger Herwig, "Strategic Uncertainties of a Nation-State: Prussia-Germany, 1871-1918," *The Making of Strategy: Rulers States and War,* Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 246.

83. Like many high officials in that era, Bismarck was given a military rank and could and did wear a uniform. In fact, he was ultimately promoted to the rank of Field Marshal at the time of his retirement. Nonetheless, he never trained as a soldier and never commanded troops in battle. Simply, he was a civilian given a military rank due to his high governmental position.

84. He stated, *Meine Herren, es kann ein siebenjahriger, es kann ein dreissigjahriger Krieg warden – und wehe dem, der Europa in Brand steckt, der zuerst die Lunte in das Pulverfass schleudert.* Max Horst, *Moltke: Leben und Werke in Selbstzeugnissen, Briefe, Schriften, Reden,* Bremen: Carl Schunemann Verlag, n.d., p. 423.

85. Hermann Hoffman, *Fürst Bismarck, 1890-1898; nach personlichen Mitteilungen des Fürsten and eigenen Aufzeichnungen des Verfassers, nebst einer authentischen Ausgabe aller vom Fürsten Bismarck,* Berlin: Stuttgart Union deutsche verlagsgesellschaft, 1913, Vol I, p. 196.

86. Gunther E. Rothenburg, "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age,* Peter Paret, ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 308-309.

87. Bronsart von Schellendorf was himself a General Staff officer who shared Moltke's and Waldersee's concern about a civilian department, the War Ministry, standing between them and the Emperor. When he was appointed as War Minister,

it was with the understanding that he would agree that the Chief of the General Staff would have direct access to the Emperor.

88. As noted previously, this civilian ministry usually had a military leader, but the issue was not the background of the ministry's chief executive; it was to whom he reported, the civilian authority or the military.

89. The conflict over the authority of the "civilian" ministry vs. the military, to include the General Staff, continued even after the military's coup. Lieutenant General Walter Bronsart von Schellendorf, younger brother of Paul Bronsart von Schellendorf, attempted to reverse the loss of the ministry's influence which his brother had willingly and enthusiastically helped to neuter but to no avail. The controversy continues up to the eve of World War I. See Martin Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps, 1890-1914*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, pp. 9-10.

90. This dislike was reciprocal, for the Empress, a daughter of Britain's Queen Victoria, was a decided enemy of Bismarck and the "Iron Chancellor's ways." A liberal who had many strong connections with Britain, she was determined to see a different kind of Germany following William's death. Neither the Empress nor her husband were ever given such a chance.

91. This is not merely the writer's assessment. His mother, writing to her mother, Queen Victoria, noted after William's birth, "Your Grandson is exceedingly lively and when awake will not be satisfied unless kept dancing around continually. He scratches his face and tears his caps and makes every sort of extraordinary noise." Sir Frederick Ponsonbody, ed., *Letters of the Empress Frederick*, London: The Macmillan Co., 1929, p. 20.

92. The Kaiser had an unbelievable wardrobe of uniforms which he genuinely loved. He had uniforms from regiments of which he was an honorary member and even uniforms from a number of other countries, like Britain, where he held honorary memberships. He relished wearing these at any appropriate occasion. In the late 1930s, another German political leader, who had his own uniform fetish, Hermann Göring, was the butt of jokes when it was rumored that he had gotten into the old Imperial palace, found the Kaiser's fantastic uniform collection and had his left arm surgically altered so he could wear some of the vast military wardrobe.

93. Not all of the blame, however, should fall on Caprivi's shoulders because at the time the Chancellor was working the issue, he was without a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs as the former occupant of that position was Herbert von Bismarck, son of the former Chancellor. Herbert had resigned after his father's departure. Since Caprivi was unfamiliar with all of the particulars of the treaty, he went to the Foreign Ministry for assistance, and the input of Frederick von Holstein and others convinced him that the treaty offered much to the Russians and little to the German Empire. In short, in addition to Germany's military leadership, that is to say, the General Staff, elements in the Foreign Ministry also opposed the Reinsurance Treaty. Therefore, the Kaiser was convinced that the Treaty should not be renewed.

94. In fact, Waldersee and the aging Moltke even promoted the concept of a preventative war before the Russians became too strong. Bismarck scoffed at this concept for, in his opinion, a prophylactic war was like committing suicide to prevent one from dying. See Dennis Showalter, *Tannenberg: Clash of Empires*, Hamden CT: Archon Books, 1991, p. 24.

95. In all fairness to the young Emperor, it must be noted that he originally sought the renewal of the treaty but was later convinced that it was not in Germany's interest. The real culprits in subverting Bismarck's system of alliances were Waldersee and the leading anti-Bismarck official in the Foreign Office, Friedrich von Holstein. For years, Holstein had a significant philosophical disagreement with the old Chancellor about Russia and its threat to the Second Reich.

96. As succinctly stated by Gunther Rothenburg,

> An exceptional statesman like Bismarck, enjoying the full confidence and support of the ruler, and a soldier of the caliber of the elder Moltke still could arrive, albeit grudgingly, at a common understanding of what was necessary, desirable, and possible in war. But once these men were gone, strategic planning in Germany, and for that matter in most European states, was dominated by military appreciations alone and no longer was subject to any serious political appraisal and review.

Ibid, pp. 324, 325.

97. For a good reference on the post-Bismarck period, see John C.G. Röhl, *Germany Without Bismarck*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1967.

98. In short, the German government agreed to British claims to vast tracts of land in Africa, which gave the British control of the headwaters of the Nile, and clear access to the Nile from the East coast of Africa. The treaty was unpopular in Germany but, in the opinion of Caprivi and Friedrich von Holstein, a key person in the successful move to kill the Reinsurance Treaty, the potential to draw Britain back into European issues and be supportive of Germany was worth any internal criticism. For the diplomacy surrounding this issue, see William Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, revised ed., New York: 1951, pp. 6.

99. Even when relations soured in the first decade of the 20th century, the Kaiser at times seemed baffled by the British. In an interview by the *Daily Telegraph*, William stated, "You English are mad, mad, mad as March hares. What has come over you that you are so completely given over to suspicions unworthy of a great nation? . . . I have said time after time, that I am a friend of England . . ." Interview with William II, *The Daily Telegraph*, October 28, 1908.

100. The Prussian Constitution of 1849, adopted in the wake of the Revolutions of 1848, in article 44 had a provision which gave the Emperor a prized and carefully guarded power, the *Kommandogewalt* or the power of command over German military forces.

101. Tirpitz, like the American proponent of sea power, Alfred Thayer Mahan, had developed essentially the same theory of power for which Mahan is much

better known. Like Mahan, he believed that great power status necessitated command of the sea and that the only way to truly command the sea was through the possession of major fleets consisting of capital vessels like battleships and heavy cruisers. Conversely, reading Tirpitz's plan makes one question whether the Admiral really understood Mahan's theories. While Germans read Thayer's classic work, *The Influence of Sea Power on History, 1660-1783*, Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1890, the writer who brought him to German audiences was Ernst von Halle, who wrote the book, *Die Seemacht in der deutsche Geschichte*.

102. The concept of England being a major adversary went beyond Tirpitz. Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, the Chancellor from 1894-1900, stated, "We must not expose ourselves to the danger of suffering the fate from England that Spain suffered from the United States. That the English are merely waiting for a chance to fall on us is clear." Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, p. 656.

103. Brigadier General Dr. Gunther Roth, "Operational Thinking of Schlieffen and Manstein," in *Development, Planning and Realization of Operational Conceptions in World Wars I & II*, Miltärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, ed., Bonn: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1989, p. 7.

104. Holger H. Gerwig, "The Prussian Model and Military Planning Today," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 1998, p. 69.

105. Charles White, *The Enlightened Soldier: Scharnhorst and the Militärische Gesellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805*, New York: Praeger Publications, 1989, pp. 28-55.

106. Scharnhorst himself was an excellent example of how superior talent could have been squandered due to position and class. He was the son of a former Hanoverian noncommissioned officer who, after his military service, became a tenant farmer. The younger Scharnhorst received his military education at the nearby Castle of Count von Shaumburg-Lippe and then applied to Frederick Willhelm, King of Prussia, for a position in the Prussian Army. He subsequently was given the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and elevated to nobility, *but* he was an exception. See White, *The Enlightened Soldier*, pp. 2-10.

107. Obviously the nobility felt their privilege and their opportunities were threatened by opening officer appointments to middle class citizenry. It was still too early for working class individuals to be considered for leadership roles. The objections of the nobility were two-fold: first, too much education could spoil the character of the officer; second, a spiritual bond of sorts existed between the noble classes and the sovereign, whom the officer corps was obliged to protect. Both too much education or the intrusion of middle class citizens had the potential of destroying this bond with supposed disastrous consequences.

108. As noted by one author, "As late as 1911 the Army took 94 percent of its recruits from the conservative, loyal countryside and only 6 percent from urban industrial centers." See Holger Herwig, "The Prussian Model and Military Planning Today," *Joint Forces Quarterly,* Spring, 1998, p. 68.

109. Steven E Clemente, *For King and Kaiser: The Making of the Prussian Army Officer*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992, p. 176. Note, however, that the full

content or the syllabus of this class is unknown. Thus, while a strategy class is a part of the curriculum, the actual content is not at all clear.

110. Actually Scharnhorst's recognition of Clausewitz's talents predated the founding of what became known as the *Kriegsakademie*. Scharnhorst's short-lived academy for promising young officers, which opened in 1804 and only stayed in existence until its dissolution in 1806, had among its students Lieutenant Carl von Clausewitz.

111. An old standard but still valid book on this period is William O. Shanahan's *Prussian Military Reforms – 1786-1813*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1945.

112. T. N. Dupuy, *A Genius for War: The German Army and the General Staff, 1807-1945*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc, 1977, p. 25.

113. Oberst i.G. Christain O. E. Millotat, *Understanding the Prussian-German General Staff System*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: The Strategic Studies Institute, 1992, p. 28.

114. According to one well-known military scholar, Scharnhorst's ideas impacted far beyond the Prussian Army. In his well-known study, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, New York: Vintage Books, 1957, p. 31, Samuel P. Huntington states the reforms promoted by Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Grolmann, and the Prussian Military Commission "mark the true beginning of military professionalism in the west . . . To Prussia goes the distinction of originating the Professional officer."

115. This translated curriculum table was taken from Clemente, *For King and Kaiser: The Making of the Prussian Army Officer,* p. 176.

116. Millotat, *Understanding the Prussian-German General Staff System*, p. 28.

117. Clemente, *For King and Kaiser: The Making of a Prussian Army Officer, p.* xiii. The fact that public education in Germany had improved dramatically since the founding of the General War School is overlooked by the author of this study. Thus the assertion that the army depended on German schools for a broad public education may well be recognition of the improvement in public education in Germany, rather than a dilution of the war college curriculum.

118. Clemente, *For King and Kaiser: The Making of a Prussian Army Officer*, pp. 176-177.

119. A. Kuhn, Major, ausser Dienst, *Die Aufnahme-Püufung fur die Kriegs-Akademie: Ein Hülfsmittel zur Vorbereitung fur die Kriegs=Akademie und für die militärische Uebungs=Reisen*, Berlin: Liebelichen Buchhandlung, 1898.

120. Königliche Hofbuchhandlung, *Lehrordnung der Königlichen Kriegsakademie*, Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mitler und Sohn, 1903. The curriculum included in the 1910 edition of the same book, only 4 short years before the outbreak of World War I, shows again that tactics, taught all 3 years, dominates in terms of the level of war. Königliche Hofbuchhandlung, *Lehrordnung der Königlichen Kriegsakademie*, Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1910.

121. Holger H. Herwig, "The Making of Strategy: Rulers States and Wars," p. 242.

122. Holger H. Herwig, "The Prussian Model and Military Planning Today," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 1998, p. 69.

123. Jehuda L. Wallach, *The Dogma of the Battle of Annihilation: The Theories of Clausewitz and Schlieffen and Their Impact on the German Conduct of Two World Wars,* Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1986, pp. 196-198.

124. *Ibid*.

125. Delbrüch engaged in a "Federkrieg" with professionals from the General Staff from the 1890s until the end of World War I. Delbrüch found that military strategy and political strategy should be used in tandem and that the fixation in German circles on the battle of annihilation overlooked the fact that in some wars a strategy of exhausting and/or attriting the enemy had been used. As an amateur, a historian rather than a professional military officer, he was not well-accepted by the General Staff. See Antulio J. Echevarria, *After Clausewitz: German Military Thinkers Before the Great War*, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000, pp. 183-188.

126. Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the U.S. Army War College*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: The Alumni Association of the U.S Army War College, 1983. See, in particular, pp. 68-115.

127. *Ibid*, p. 89.

128. Arden Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen and Prussian War Planning*, Providence RI: Berg Publishers, 1991, p. 9.

129. The modern reader should also remember that in his writings there is no mention of operational warfare, only tactics and strategy. For that matter, German writers in the post-Imperial era do not mention the operational level either. The term operational level of war is a recent addition to the military lexicon. Conversely, the literature of the period does mention campaigns.

130. Quoted by Colin S. Gray in "Why Strategy is Difficult," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 2003, No. 34, p. 83. He also stated, "Strategy is a system of expedients. It is more than a discipline; it is the transfer of knowledge to practical life . . ." See also Horst, *Moltke: Leben und Werke in Selbstzeugnissen, Briefe, Schriften, Reden,* p. 363.

131. Herwig, "The Prussian Model and Military Planning Today," p. 71.

132. Note, however, that from 1871-88 as Moltke was Chief of the General Staff, planning for a possible war on two fronts varied with Russia occasionally being targeted as the most serious threat and thus the recipient of the initial attack. In Bismarck's eyes, the major threat was France, but in the Army's opinion, the greatest and growing threat was Russia.

133. The old standard on this plan is Gerhard Ritter's, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth,* Andrew and Eva Wilson, trans., New York: Praeger, 1958. See

also Arden Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen and Prussian War Planning*, New York: Berg, 1991.

134. Antulio J. Echevarria II, "An Infamous Legacy: Schlieffen's Military Theories Revisited," *Army History: The Professional Bulletin of Army History*, Summer-Fall, 2001, pp. 1-8.

135. Although as noted by Holger Herwig, Vice Admiral Wilhelm Buchsel of the German Admiralty Staff demanded the creation of a strategy council of army and navy leaders to be chaired by the Emperor and to include the Chancellor. The object was to analyze the potential war with Britain and France. This proposal, however, was rejected since it could be regarded as an infringement on the Emperor's *Kommandogewalt*. See Holger H. Herwig, "From Tirpitz Plan to Schlieffen Plan: Some Observations on German Military Planning," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, March 1986, p. 55.

136. Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of the United States Military Strategy and Policy*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973, pp. 200-201. See also Adolf Carlson, *Joint Army-Navy Planning on the Eve of the First World War: Its Origins and Its Legacy*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1998.

137. Holger H. Herwig in his article, "Strategic Uncertainties of a Nation-State: Prussia-Germany, 1871-1918," *The Making of Strategy: Rulers States and War,* Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 249.

138. This element of the defense debate is well-described by Herwig in "Strategic Uncertainties of a Nation-state: Prussia-Germany, 1871-1918," pp. 246-249.

139. For the benefit of the nonhistorian, in the Second Reich the Chancellor was chosen by the Emperor and served at the Emperor's pleasure. Unlike a prime minister, he was not the leader of the major party in parliament, rather he was responsible only to the crown. He had a responsibility to go before the Reichstag and present proposals, but his responsibility was to the crown alone.

140. Thus his oft quoted, though in part inaccurate comment, "It has never been my business to comment upon Grand strategy . . . . there never took place during my entire period in office a sort of war council at which politics were brought into the military for and against."

141. An excellent overview of the panic in the German military establishment over the encirclement of the German Empire and the increasing power of Germany's adversaries can be found in Holger H. Herwig's article, "Strategic uncertainties of a nation-state: Prussia-Germany, 1871-1918," *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War,* Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 257-263.

142. Brigadier General Gunther Roth, "Operational Thinking of Schlieffen and Manstein," *Development, Planning, and Realization of Operational Conception*

in World Wars, Militargestrehtliches Forshulingsaust, ed., Bonn: E. S. Mottler & Sohn, 1989, p. 7.

143. If anything, Hitler, in many respects, reversed the trend that had been established in the Imperial era by subordinating the General Staff officers and the old-line professional officers to his political will.

144. The classic quote which summarizes the failure of too many senior imperial officers comes from Eric Ludendorff in 1918. As Operation MICHAEL was planned, Ludendorff was irritated by a General Staff Officer who asked what the objective was of Operation MICHAEL—a part of the German spring offensive. The general retorted, "I object to the word 'strategy.' We shall punch a hole in their line. For the rest, we shall see." Holger H. Herweg, "The Prussian Model and Military Planning Today," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 1998, p. 72.

145. This statement is largely true although there were some of the German officer corps who did read and appreciate Clausewitz. For example, on the eve of World War II General der Artillerie Horst von Metzsch published a 48-page pamphlet entitled *Clausewitz Katechismu*s, which highlighted some of the key teachings of Clausewitz but in classic Catechism style. See Horst von Metzsch, General der Artillerie, *Clausewitz Katechismus*, Berlin-Carlottenburg: Bucholz und Weisswange Verlagsbuchandlung, editions of 1937 or 1941.

146. Brigadier General Dr. Gunther Roth, "Operational Thinking of Schlieffen and Manstein" in *Development, Planning and Realization of Operational Conceptions in World Wars,* Miltärgeschichliches Forschungamt, ed., Bonn: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1989, p. 7.

147. *Ibid*, p. 9.

148. The writer refers to the successful joint operation against the Russian island of Oesel, Dago and Moon, largely unknown in the west but well-described by Dr. Rich Di Nardo in an excellent paper given at the Annual Conference of the Society of Military History at Knoxville, Tennessee, May 1-4, 2003.

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