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Jena and Auerstadt:
Reorganization of the German Military from 1807-1945

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by

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Abstract

The twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 and the defeat of the Prussian army by Napoleon I set in motion a series of reforms that transitioned Prussia into a modern state both economically and militarily. From these reforms and key reformers, the Prussian state established itself amongst other European powers of the time helping defeat Napoleon in 1815 ending the Napoleonic period. After the Napoleonic age, the Prussian state again faced a dire situation during the 1848 revolutions and whether it would continue the reforms through a conservative or liberal approach. The military reforms of the 1850s during the Bismarckian era eventually succeeded in the successful wars accumulating in German unification in 1871. From this period forward, Prussian reforms transitioned into Imperial Germany during World War I (1914-1918) and finally climaxed with the creation of the *Wehrmacht* in World War II (1939-1945). The battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 are significant in that they translate and connect to the creation of a modern Prussian army which then transitions to the modern *Wehrmacht* in the 1930s. The symbolism of the Prussian reforms in 1807-1813 is evident in the history of German and Prussian militarism and the events in Europe from 1807-1945.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt in October of 1806 during the Napoleonic Wars is the defining moment in which the Prussian military saw a defeat they never believed possible. From this defeat, Prussian ideology and militarism led the German people to victory over Napoleon in 1815 and led the way for one of the most militarized and industrial nations in the world. The Prussian victory also came with the help of an allied coalition comprised of Great Britain, Austria, Spain, Russia, and many other smaller nations. The Reform Period (1806-1813) saw a re-birth of Prussian militarism combined with new tactical military innovations based off the Napoleonic system. This period of reform began the stages for the rise of the Prussian state and the unification of Germany. The defining moments of the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt set in motion the much-needed reforms throughout the Prussian state pitting the ideals of conservatism and liberalism against each other accumulating in the creation of a modern state reinforced by a powerful military. The reforms also continued post-Napoleonic period into the mid and late 19th century leading a pathway for the unification of the German people by the victorious conservative Prussian military in the 1860s-70s. From this point forward, historians see the effects of Prussianism throughout Germany leading to Imperial Germany in World War I (1914-1918) and the Third Reich during World War II (1939-1945). The linkage between the critical reforms of 1807-1813 and the German Reich of the 1930s-40s leads directly to the battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 which set in motion a ripple effect of Prussian militarism.

In Walter Michael Simon's book, *The Failure of the Prussian Reform Movement, 1807-1819*, he argues that the Prussian reform movement did not reach the overall potential of what Great Britain, France, and other various European powers were achieving at the time. This is not

to say that the Prussian reform movement did not gain an important political, agrarian, military, and cultural push towards modernization, but rather, the focus around the state within a state centered around the military only happened due to the frustrations of the monarchy at the time. Simon summarizes that the failure to remove or reform the existing feudal structures (political and social) and challenge the authoritarian principals of the state led Prussia to settle on the principals of militarization first which is evident by the 1860s.¹ The failure of the social and political forms on a larger scale led Prussia down an avenue of militarism and authoritarian nationalism. Simon's literature is an excellent example of historiographical challenges that past and contemporary historians face. Though most historical literature is subjective based around theories, it allows for objective reasoning to compare newer arguments. Every social, economic, political, religious, diplomatic, and military variable from 1815 to 1877, regardless of its success or failure, retains its foundation from the events of the battle of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806, a date so often looked over in the realm of Prussian reform movements.

Before the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt, the Prussian military and its previous glory under Frederick II of Prussia (1712-1786) during the Silesian Wars (1740-1763) better known as the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) diminished on many fronts. After the death of Frederick II, the Prussian military declined in many ways typical of many great military states of the time. Its tactics had changed little, and its leadership clouded with old aristocrats too old for duty combined with the weak leadership of Frederick William III (1770-1840). The French military during the wars with Frederick II saw a series of embarrassing defeats that ultimately led to the eventual French Revolution (1789-1799) and a reformed military effort under Napoleon I (1769-1821) and his general staff of field marshals. Napoleon, like Frederick II, understood that

¹ Walter Michael Simon, *The Failure of the Prussian Reform Movement, 1807-1819* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1955), 240.

changing battle tactics and the study of past generals such as Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), Hannibal (247-181 BC), and Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) all changed how warfare and campaigns were previously fought which gained them notable victories.

The state of Prussia under Frederick II in theory stood little chance against the greater powers of that period such as the French, Austrian, and Russian empires which were all united theoretically unlike the German speaking peoples which comprised hundreds of principalities and secular states. For most of Germany's history, they were never united in the greater sense of identity or by a central government. The creation of the Holy Roman Empire (800AD-1806AD) did not unite the German speaking peoples as the case in 1871. The Holy Roman Empire for the greater part of its history only manufactured a similar language and common religion of Catholic Christianity. The separation of the German people further declined during the Protestant Reformation (1517-1600) in which Germans of Catholicism clung to larger Catholic powers such as France and Austria, and smaller states such as Prussia adopted Protestant notions of faith with a heavy influence on Teutonic heritage that continues throughout its history until 1945. The German people were not a united nation by any measure; rather, they were a patchwork of competing principalities for many centuries.

Herbert J. Redman in his book, *Frederick the Great and the Seven Years' War, 1756-1763*, gives an excellent depiction of the true identity many Prussians considered themselves to be in the glory of militarism, culture, tradition and identity.² Redman goes on to argue that this critical moment defined the identity of the Prussian people for the remainder of their history and why their society centered around militarism. His work also illustrates the very nature in which Prussians thought especially during the events post-1760s. The Prussians believed that even in

² Herbert J. Redman, *Frederick the Great and the Seven Years' War, 1756-1763* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015).

the face of defeat they could and would rise again to obtain that “final victory” so often regurgitated by the many generations afterwards until 1945. To understand the Prussian history, historians constantly revert back to understanding the ideologies, traditions, and perhaps the very nature of this culture. Napoleon in his famous words stated that, “Prussia was hatched from a cannonball.”³ Frederick II of Prussia initiated a series of reforms in the Prussian military such as mandatory service for all males, strict and constant drill, mercenaries, and the oblique order. From the moment Frederick II of Prussia died in 1786, the Prussian army changed little during the age of Napoleon I and his sweeping reforms throughout the French military which adopted the modern corps system and mixed tactics. The Prussian state of mind centered around the idea that they were undefeatable, and their linear tactics and strict tradition were impervious to outside threats.

Past and present historians on the Napoleonic Wars regarding Prussia fail to understand the significance of the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt and how that impacted the Prussian military from 1806 onward into the 20th century. Battles such as Austerlitz (1805), Ulm (1805), Waterloo (1815), and many others are at the forefront of Napoleonic history, but rarely does history acknowledge Napoleon’s greatest victory at Jena and Auerstadt which saw the entire collapse of the Prussian army and the sack of the Prussian state as a whole. The collapse of the main Prussian forces signified only a hopeless scattered resistance of Prussian garrison troops stationed throughout strongholds within the country. The capitulation of Stettin (1806) only made matters worse when 500 French Hussars bluffed 6,000 Prussians in surrendering only adding to the humiliation; moreover, it was a humiliation that Prussia never forgot or forgave. It was the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 that saw that final defeat of a once powerful European power.

³ Walter Henry Nelson, *The Soldier Kings: The House of Hohenzollern* (New York, NY: Putnam, 1970), 15.

The Austrians and Russians did lose a series of defining battles, but they were never defeated as the Prussians were but survived to continue the fight in the future through a series of treaties and coalitions. From 1807 until 1813, the Prussian military and the state were under control of French forces. The humiliation prompted the Prussian leadership on the state and military levels to rethink the very nature in which warfare would be fought in the future of Europe. This reorganization period set the tone on the future of Europe and the eventual unification of Germany under the Prussians by the 1870s.

The battles of Jena and Auerstadt of 1806 and the reorganization of the Prussian military led to the military, economic, and diplomatic superpower of a united Germany from 1871 to 1945. Is it possible that a military defeat as great as the battles of Jena and Auerstadt could inspire an entire generation of Prussians to unite under one singular military ideology and also build the most formidable military known to the world throughout the mid-19th and 20th centuries? Historians and history usually give rise to nations or empires during victories but, could a defeat inspire such consequences and explain German-Prussian military ambitions post-Napoleonic era? Historiography and gaps within the literature help identify the underlying causes of such arguments throughout the historical community to explain the argument's relativity to modern history.

Kevin Brazier in his book, *The Complete Blue Max: A Chronological Record of the Holders of the Pour Le Mérite, Prussia's Highest Military Order From 1740 to 1918*, explains in great detail and historical evidence the symbolism of Prussia's military even after the unification of Germany in 1871.⁴ German history in many instances regarding Prussia becomes diluted post-1870s as many do not consider the important factors that identify Prussia from Germany and

⁴ Kevin Brazier, *The Complete Blue Max: A Chronological Record of the Holders of the Pour Le Mérite, Prussia's Highest Military Order From 1740 to 1918* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Military, 2013).

how Prussia and its many traditions remained at the epicenter of a united Germany. Prussian military traditions not only continued but also grew into a fanatical ideology of perfection amongst all Germans by the time of Imperial Germany. Germans that were not of Prussian origin were immediately indoctrinated in the “Prussian Way.” Brazier identifies key elements from the period of Frederick II up to Imperial Germany and the Third Reich all of whom through indoctrination and propaganda of the masses elevated the ideals of Prussian hegemony intertwined in a relatively young German nation.⁵

German historians and historians across the globe have debated the actual rise of Germany and moreover its central idea of militarism. To better understand the rise of Germany, it is important to understand the historiography of the topic and what has been written on it during the last century. Historians both past and present all have differing opinions on when exactly Germany became a central power and what prompted that. Historian Eckart Kehr in his work, *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History*, explains the important factors that determine any nation’s future through a series of decisions whether they be economic, military, or diplomatic.⁶ All these factors remain true especially for the state of Prussia and its history to a greater Germany. Kehr puts a great emphasis on not just military factors but other factors such as political, economic, and diplomatic and how all work together to formulate the greater understanding of a nation’s history through actions and where they are today. One of the most important factors he mentions is Prussia’s diplomacy and relations during the late 19th century and how they became isolated to a degree amongst their European neighbors. Secondly, he argues to an extent that Germany’s tough diplomatic stances drifting

⁵ Brazier, *The Complete Blue Max*.

⁶ Eckart Kehr, *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977).

into the early 20th century ultimately plaguing them into two world wars. The question for many historians on this matter begins with, how, why, and when did this indoctrination of Prussianization begin? Secondly, historians should ask themselves why Law 46 abolished Prussia in 1947 by the Allied Powers? This law states that, “The Prussian State, which from early days had been the bearer of militarism and reaction in Germany, has *de facto* ceased to exist.”⁷ Today, modern Germany still enforces strict laws against images of Prussianism.

Through the decades of argument and debate very seldomly has the Reform Period of 1806 been mentioned. Prussia did not begin its Reform Period after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 but rather much sooner under the nose of the French during the occupational period of 1806-1813. Leading military thinkers such as Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) in his book, *On War*, is one of the leading figures who reorganized and implemented the “New Prussia” whilst maintaining the Prussian state of mind of dominance and superiority. In true Prussian fashion Clausewitz states that, “Our knowledge of circumstances has increased, but our uncertainty, instead of having diminished, has only increased. The reason of this is, that we do not gain all our experience at once, but by degrees; thus our determinations continue to be assailed incessantly by fresh experience; and the mind, if we may use the expression, must always be “under arms.””⁸ Notable Prussian thinkers such as Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst (1755-1813), Karl Freiherr vom und zum Stein (1757-1831), Karl August von Hardenberg (1750-1822), August Neidhart von Gneisenau (1760-1831), Hermann von Boyen (1771-1848), and William von Humboldt (1767-1835) all contributed to the reforms that took place within the

⁷ Gordon A. Craig, “The End of Prussia,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 124, no. 2 (1980): 97, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/986204>.

⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (London, United Kingdom: N. Trübner & Co., 1873), 47.

Prussian military system post-Napoleonic Wars which contributed to the modernization of Prussia and thereafter.

Eric Dorn Brose in his book, *The Politics of Technological Change in Prussia: Out of the Shadow of Antiquity, 1809-1848*, examines the pivotal reform periods during the Napoleonic Wars and the post war years. His analysis gives an interesting insight on what goals the Prussians set to achieve and how they would achieve them. Many of his arguments suggest that Prussia post-Napoleonic period set to revive the social and diplomatic entities that plagued them in the past to modernize like other European superpowers. Though the reform period did achieve most of its goals according to Brose in adopting modern revisions for the populace, the reformed military still held too much power in the central government. Brose's writing sustains that this power struggle within the Prussian government and the authority of the military contributed to the agreement of aggression on the belief that to unify or "liberate" the German speaking people, the ever-growing presence of the Austrian Hapsburgs and the French needed pushback, and Prussia believed that it needed a standout military victory to achieve the encroachments of the papist. Brose's work is an excellent example of literary history that gives attention to the mindset of the Prussians and their belief that they were liberators.⁹

Hans Kohn author of, "The Eve of German Nationalism (1789-1812)," describes the "state" of Germany during the Napoleonic revolutionary era and their welcoming of liberal reforms brought on by the Napoleonic system. Kohn describes how many German nations such as Saxony, Bavaria, Hanover, and Hesse-Kassel did not show any national German pride compared to the Prussians. The only nation that shared the defeat with the Prussians at the battle of Jena and Auerstadt were the Saxons. Saxony, since the wars of Frederick II, became an ally of

⁹ Eric Dorn Brose, *The Politics of Technological Change in Prussia: Out of the Shadow of Antiquity, 1809-1848* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Prussia and were one of the few German states to do so. A large contingent of 20,000 Saxon troops joined with the Prussians to engage the French unsuccessfully. According to Kohn, “Perhaps no German state proved more immune to German nationalism at the turn of the century than Prussia. Since the time of Frederick II a Prussian nationalism had grown up, a feeling of pride in the military successes and the personal renown of the king whose policy had been anti-German, both in the political field and in the cultural sense: he weakened the German Reich and felt no sympathy for its culture.”¹⁰ Frederick II of Prussia did not embrace a national German identity but rather adopted a Prussian form of military and political thought separate from a German one. Kohn distinguishes that Prussia was far different than other German states and that they were the catalyst of unification. German unity and nationalism were only present post-Napoleonic era due to the Prussian military efforts to unite the nation. The defeats at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt began this period of reform not for the German states but Prussia.

Guy Stanton Ford has an interesting study on the principals of neutrality comparing the Prussian and Hanoverian states or kingdoms respectively in his book, *Hanover and Prussia, 1795-1803: A Study in Neutrality*. Stanton’s book describes the issues with Prussia during the static period from Frederick II’s death in 1786 to 1806 and the collapse of the Prussian state, and its inability to reform its military. Stanton also addresses in his writings that the challenges against the corps system within the Prussian army, first suggested by Frederick II in his older years and eventually by much younger officers during the French Revolutionary years, crippled Prussia’s military to effectively challenge the newer and more advanced Grand Army of Napoleon. Prussia also did not effectively show its dominance in its very brief and inconclusive wars with France during the first phases of the revolutionary period. Stanton delivers an

¹⁰ Hans Kohn, “The Eve of German Nationalism (1789-1812),” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12, no. 2 (1951): 267, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2707517>.

incredibly convincing argument on the various reasons the Prussians remained neutral during most of the revolutionary years, and only by 1806, they decided to challenge Napoleon directly. The years of neutrality argued by Ford set the precedent of inevitable collapse and a strong urge to reform the military on Napoleonic organization and structure.¹¹

R. C. Raack in “Schleiermacher’s Political Thought and Activity, 1806-1813” describes the political thought of Schleiermacher, a Prussian nationalist, during the brief war between France and Prussia during 1807. Interestingly, Raack gives insight on the opinion and occupation of Prussia by the French from 1806 to 1813. The French at first were regarded as liberators but eventually viewed with disdain only prompting Prussian leadership to rethink the consequences of the 1806 campaign and the necessary measures to take to compete with Napoleon. This article’s value is that it not only describes the local mindset of the Prussian populace but also the nature in which their customs were affected by French occupation only prompting a national response by 1813 and the revolutionary call to arms. Though Napoleon’s catastrophic defeat in Russia in 1812 is significant, Napoleon successfully raised another military force in central Germany capable of fighting all the coalition powers at once. The Prussian call to arms inspired other German nations to join the cause as well revealing a nascent form of German nationality. Many pro-French German states began to see the economic, financial, and human toll on their nation. Napoleon conscripted tens of thousands of Germans into his Grand Armee. Raack states that, “On March 20 [1813], the king issued an appeal to the patriotism of his subjects, followed in the next week by a summons to join the volunteer *Landwehr*. The request for volunteers was supported enthusiastically by Schleiermacher from the pulpit. The events of the foregoing two

¹¹ Guy Stanton Ford, *Hanover and Prussia, 1795-1803: A Study in Neutrality* (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1967).

months portended to him the awakening of the national voice at last.”¹² From a historical standpoint, this was one of the few times in German history where German nationalism occurred on a large scale compared to the events of 1806 where Prussia challenged Napoleon alone and suffered a major defeat. Secondly, the reformed Prussian army based off of the Napoleonic army enjoyed the new organizational structure and command system. The corps system allowed the Prussian army to move rapidly compared to the regimental structure of 1806. Gaps within the literature include whether the Prussians reorganized based off of the defeats at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt or public opinion on French occupation from 1806-1813.

Ernest F. Henderson describes one of the most notable Prussian military commanders during the Napoleonic Wars in his book, *Blucher and the Uprising of Prussia Against Napoleon, 1806-1815*. Gebhard Leberecht von Blucher (1742-1819), a blue blood Prussian and professional soldier, fought in the battles of Jena and Auerstadt and successively led the reformed Prussian military in a series of campaigns to the end of the war at the battle of Waterloo (1815).

Henderson gives an excellent insight on Blucher who many historians compare to Otto von Bismarck. Blucher is one of the few who commanded both the old Prussian army of 1806 and the reformed army from 1813 onwards. Blucher also became one of the leading reform members pushing for a modern Prussian military force combined with the ideology of Prussian leadership, discipline, and maneuverability. Henderson describes in his book the collapse of Prussia and its formidable rise to power from 1813 to World War I. Henderson also notes in his book that Blucher’s aspiration of Prussian dominance went further than the borders of Prussia and that Blucher on more than one occasion dreamed of Prussian expansionism and influence within

¹² R. C. Raack, “Schleiermacher’s Political Thought and Activity, 1806-1813,” *Church History* 28, no. 4 (1959): 384, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/schleiermachers-political-thought-activity-1806/docview/1290033758/se-2?accountid=12085>.

central Germany. Henderson states that, “Blucher himself declared later: “All the misfortunes of Germany and of the Prussian monarchy are traceable to this event at the moment so insignificant.””¹³ This is in response to the poor reaction of the Prussian monarch on the French occupation of Hanover. The author continues with a vibrant study of the reformation of the Prussian army and its success in the closing stages of the Napoleonic Wars whilst placing Blucher as the main character and analyzing his thoughts and his political opinions of Prussia that would eventually come to fruition on a much larger scale.

Political thought within the Prussian military can be seen by Gordon Alexander Craig in his book, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945*.¹⁴ Craig is a leading historian on the German military and an influential historian within this era. Craig’s work, like others, sets the groundwork for the Prussian military and its military history. He addresses the political thought throughout the Prussian state beginning with the Reformation period and ending with the capture of Berlin in 1945 and the end of the Nazi regime. Craig remarks on the battles of Jena and Auerstadt as the defining moment in German history as the re-birth period that prompted the eventual challenge of Otto von Bismarck to rid the German states of Austrian and French influence and unite German speaking peoples under the leadership of the Prussians.¹⁵ Secondly, Craig remarks throughout his writing that the Prussian’s ability to unite Germany and win influence stemmed from victories and not so much political willingness.¹⁶

Karl Demeter in his book, *The German Officer-Corps in Society and State, 1650-1945*, describes the political and military structure on the Prussian officers and their dynamic change

¹³ Ernest F. Henderson, *Blucher and the Uprising of Prussia Against Napoleon, 1806-1815* (Auckland, New Zealand: Pickle Partners Publishing, 2014), 20.

¹⁴ Gordon Alexander Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955).

¹⁵ Henderson, *Blucher and the Uprising*, 26.

¹⁶ Henderson, *Blucher and the Uprising*, 38-76.

throughout conflict.¹⁷ He remarks that much of Prussia's downfall at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt was the inability for the Prussian military to enlist officers based on performance rather than aristocratic ties. Demeter suggests that the reason the Napoleonic system is successful is due to the ability of the lower classes to enlist as officers. Before Napoleon adopted and transformed the French military, monarchs enlisted their officers based on wealth and societal standing rather than actual performance. After the battles of Jena and Auerstadt, the reformed Prussian system allowed lower ranking citizens to enjoy positions within the officer class which revolutionized the military from a structural standpoint.¹⁸

Peter Paret another leading historian on the reorganization of the Prussian state shows the reform measures necessary that transformed the Prussian army from an old relic to a modern national army. In his book, *Yorck and the Era of Prussian Reform, 1807-1815*, the Prussian state under occupation saw Napoleon demand thousands of Prussian troops for the invasion of Russia in 1812.¹⁹ General Yorck, a leading military reformer and Prussian nationalist, took the opportunity to learn French tactics throughout the campaign in Russia. Paret's article provides evidence of the Prussian's willingness to adopt change after the ineffectiveness of the campaign in 1806 and moreover the leadership abilities of the Prussian nobility. Secondly, the scholarship dictates that Prussian reformers understood the nature of the French and prepared to declare war on a national scale. The call to arms by 1813 saw Germans from all over the German states join the Prussian cause of a unified Germany against the French occupants. Did the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt foreshadow the era of German nationalism as it was during the years of 1813-1815?

¹⁷ Karl Demeter, *The German Officer-Corps in Society and State, 1650-1945* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1965).

¹⁸ Demeter, *The German Officer-Corps*, 3-8.

¹⁹ Peter Paret, *Yorck and the Era of Prussian Reform, 1807-1815* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).

E. J. Feuchtwanger explains not only the world view of Prussia in German history but also its successes and flaws in his *Prussia Myth and Reality: The Role of Prussia in Germany History*. This book respects the reality of myth and truth surrounding the invincibility of the Prussian state. The myth that the Prussian military or moreover its cultural dominance in the events of modern German history (1877-1945) is responsible for both world wars and set an interesting table of possibilities and modern political thought. This was an interesting read in that many European superpowers (France, Great Britain, Russia, and Austria) blamed Prussian nationalism for the overall demise of the German people. Prussia's reputation of military eagerness and expansionism only contributed or held hostage the other various peaceful German states. Feuchtwanger explores the various German states beginning from the reformation period and their overall dislike and distrust of the Prussian monarchy. He explains that there were two forms of thought between west Germans and Prussians and that Prussia was not considered culturally German in the mindset of Saxony, Bavaria, Hesse, Hannover, and many others. Prussians were viewed as an eastern horde of lesser German status. However, as time progressed and the Prussian state became one of the leading military superpowers of the world, more German states fell in accordance with their overall aims of unification. Secondly, the victories over the French and the Austrians during the unification period finally cemented in the presence and dominance of Prussia over central Europe.²⁰

Neil M. Heyman in his journal article, "France Against Prussia: The Jena Campaign of 1806," dissects the very causes of the downfall of the Prussian state. His literature compares the French army of 1806 to the Prussian army and the drastic differences between the two even arguing that the campaign of 1806 ended before it began by simply viewing the logistical

²⁰ E. J. Feuchtwanger, *Prussia Myth and Reality: The Role of Prussia in Germany History* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1970).

organizations of the French and Prussians. Organizational change within the Prussian ranks did not stem from the collapse in 1806 but from the arrogance of the aristocracy. Heyman argues that younger liberal Prussian officers argued for the corps system but were ultimately outranked by the older senior generals of the Frederick era. This is an interesting view throughout the literature in that reform was not necessarily a product of defeat but rather arrogance as argued by Heyman.

Heyman states that,

If the French army which invaded Saxony in October, 1806, was a harbinger of the armies of the future, the Prussian force that stood astride the Saale to meet it might well be considered close to the typical army of its day. Neither especially progressive nor hopelessly stagnant, it was in the midst of change, with the hopes of the future marred by the confusion of the present. In the vital spheres of army organization, staff structure, supply, and leadership – where we have already seen the notable French achievements – it was at best mediocre.²¹

Brendan Simms explains notably in his book, *The Impact of Napoleon: Prussian High Politics, Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Executive, 1797-1806*, that it was the successes of Napoleon and the lack luster performance of the Prussian military after the death of Frederick II that forced Prussia to reorganize itself into the superpower they eventually became. Napoleon's conquest of Europe is partially responsible for the unification of the united German empire. Without the defeats at the battle of Jena and Auerstadt the Prussian state most likely would not have reformed as they did especially militarily. Simms's book is interesting in that it raises many questions of "what if" but constantly provides solid evidence to reinforce his arguments.²² Prussia did not set itself apart from the rest of Europe by policy or diplomatic achievements but moreover their ability to win wars on the battlefield in a decisive manner.

²¹ Neil M. Heyman, "France Against Prussia: The Jena Campaign of 1806," *Military Affairs* 30, no. 4 (1966-1967): 188-189, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1985399>.

²² Brendan Simms, *The Impact of Napoleon: Prussian High Politics, Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Executive, 1797-1806* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Ritter Gerhard in his book, *The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany*, describes other interesting historiographical concepts of German militarism and the failures of the Wilhelminian Empire during the First World War.²³ Most of the arguments surrounding the Prussian military stems from the idea of invincibility. For example, Frederick II won a series of victories during his reign against the Austrians, French, and Russians prompting little to no military change after his death. The defeat at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 forced the Prussians to change and reform their military structure to match the new and improved Napoleonic system. After the unification of Germany in 1871 and the victory over the Austrians during the Austro-Prussian War (1866) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), the Prussians began, according to Gerhard, to become overconfident in their military abilities. Only in the defeat of 1918 did the Germans reorganize again in their history to attempt to conquer Europe and expand its national identity. This builds upon the idea that Prussia only through defeat, such as Jena and Auerstadt, is forced to change, but Prussian ideology of invincibility remains the same creating a continuous power struggle throughout Europe post-Napoleonic era.

The Moltke Myth: Prussian War Planning 1857-1871 by Terence Zuber gives an excellent insight into Field Marshal Moltke the Elder (1800-1891) and the revolutionary tactics he implemented into the Prussian military making it notably one of the best forces in Europe and its victories against the Danes, Austrians, and French during the 1860s-70s.²⁴ Zuber goes on to argue that these were the continuation of the military reforms proposed during the period of 1807-1813 and how Prussian conservatives eventually won the heart of the Prussian people by using military victories to gather strong support for the military and to consummate not only the

²³ Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1969).

²⁴ Terence Zuber, *The Moltke Myth: Prussian War Planning 1857-1871* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008).

Prussian populace but the other German nations to follow suit of the Prussian system. For Prussia to forge itself into a unifying factor for Germany, they needed a powerful military leader such as Moltke the Elder. Bruce Bassett-Powell in his book, *The Armies of Bismarck's Wars: The Army of Prussia – History, Uniforms, Weapons & Equipment, 1860-1867*, reinforces this idea of how the Prussian army by the 1860s became the very center of the Prussian state and how that spilt over into a larger Prussianization of Germany.²⁵ Prussia's victories, according to Bassett-Powell, did not accumulate from liberal nationalists but rather the conservative ideologies of a strong and unified modern Prussian military who forged the German people together into one coalition. Secondly, Bassett-Powell reinforces the idea that Prussia's military through the continuation of reforms and modernization by Moltke placed it above other European armies of the time granting Prussia major victories over larger powers. Clausewitz states that, "If the military leader is filled with high ambition and if he pursues his aims with audacity and strength of will, he will reach them in spite of all obstacles; while an ordinary person would have found in the condition of his army a sufficient excuse for giving in."²⁶

Historian Martin Kitchen in his book, *A Military History of Germany: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day*, also draws comparisons by analyzing the Prussian military and its government during the 18th century.²⁷ The work develops from the state of Prussia born from the Reformation era to a central power under Frederick II. He describes in detail the battles of Jena and Auerstadt and how that forced the Prussian state to rethink and address its internal issues prompting Prussia to eventually unite Germany into a world power by

²⁵ Bruce Bassett-Powell, *The Armies of Bismarck's Wars: The Army of Prussia – History, Uniforms, Weapons & Equipment, 1860-1867* (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2013).

²⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, trans. Hans W. Gatzke (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003), 65.

²⁷ Martin Kitchen, *A Military History of Germany: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975).

1900. In Ernst Wangermann's edition of *The Role of Force in History: A Study of Bismarck's Policy of Blood and Iron*, he continues the notions of Prussia's usage of *Realpolitik* and how that set in motion a series of events within late 19th century Prussia.²⁸ This account of Otto von Bismarck includes excellent examples on how the Prussians used their diplomatic position within Europe and how they used their past victories against the French and Austrians in the 1860s-70s to leverage their political ambitions and turning other European nations against them. Wangermann describes how the conservative Prussian government became a reactionary state with the might of a modern Prussian army at the very center of all Prussian culture which includes political and civilian life. Voltaire once said that, "Where some states have an army, the Prussian army has a state!"²⁹

Gunther E. Rothenberg in his book, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon*, revisits the conception of warfare during the 18th and 19th century and how warfare was conducted and changed under Napoleon.³⁰ How did this influence the Prussians in the grand scheme of the Napoleonic era? Rothenberg, like past historians, understands that for every action there is a reaction and that the rise of Prussia stemmed from the defeats at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt and a continuous study of Prussia's enemies. Why did the Austrian Empire fail to unite Germany, and what prompted the Prussians to do so? This is explained through a series of events and the very catalyst was that of Jena and Auerstadt to push for radical reforms that both were liberal and conservative in nature eventually leading to a conservative victory by 1871. Works such as *The Schlieffen Plan: International Perspectives on the German Strategy for World War I*

²⁸ Ernst Wangermann, ed., *The Role of Force in History: A Study of Bismarck's Policy of Blood and Iron* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1968).

²⁹ Cody Franchetti, "Frederick's "Greatness,"" *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities* 5, no. 2 (2013): 160, <https://philarchive.org/archive/FRAFG>.

³⁰ Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978).

by Hans Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, and Gerhard P. Gross, German historians, describes the very course of action by now “German” military thinkers on how they would eventually invade and conquer modern Europe in case of a two-front war.³¹ The Prussian army and its conservative ideologies began drafting and preparing plans years before the conflicts of World War I solidifying the argument that Prussia never stopped reforms post-Jena and Auerstadt but that the reforms only slowed down temporarily during the 1830s-50s during the liberal revolutionary movements. The Schlieffen Plans’ roots are directly correlated with Frederick II and his wars on multiple fronts during the Seven Years’ War.

Gordon A. Craig argues in “The End of Prussia” that Prussian militarism did not end after the Napoleon Wars but rather continued throughout the Third Reich and its demise in 1945. Prussian ideology continued to grow along within the ranks of the German people and its military even throughout the Nazi empire. The battles of Jena and Auerstadt did have a major impact on the rise of Germanism throughout the mid-19th century to the end of World War II. Craig states that, “It is true that Prussia was incapable of blocking the ideological thrust and the expansive vitality of the French Revolution without borrowing from its principles. This is what the Prussian reformers did after the crushing defeat of the Prussian army by Napoleon at Jena in 1806. The extent to which the successful patriotic rising of 1813 was due to their work – that is, to such things as the emancipation of the peasants, the educational reforms, the abolition of the brutal discipline in the army and the creation of a popular militia, and the promise of a constitution to the Prussian people.”³² Craig’s perception of the Prussian state centers not only on military reforms but governmental reforms stemming from education, politics, health, and

³¹ Hans Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, and Gerhard P. Gross, *The Schlieffen Plan: International Perspectives on the German Strategy for World War I* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2014).

³² Craig, “The End of Prussia,” 98.

overall economic modalities for the German people. Craig's perception of Prussia ending in 1945 during the Nazi Regime is interesting because it agrees that after World War II, Germany eradicated their Prussian heritage all together. Modern Germany today prohibits certain military marches that have Prussian roots.

T. C. W. Blanning's *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802*,³³ Christopher Duffy's *The Army of Frederick the Great*,³⁴ and Claus Telp's *The Evolution of Operational Art, 1740-1813: From Frederick the Great to Napoleon*³⁵ all comprise detailed descriptions on the Prussian army and its organization before and after the Napoleonic Wars and what prompted the Prussian leadership to change its organizational concepts of warfare. Each historian's unique view of the Prussian military revolves around the campaign of 1806 and how that not only influenced the Prussian military but how it began a process of radicalized Germans to unite under one ideology of dominance of central Europe. Though Prussia did suffer defeats, the central theme of Prussian discipline carried on into the 20th century into the Third Reich. This is characterized by the Reich's cultural movement to romanticize Prussian glory as they saw it.

Robert Citino, another leading historian within the German military field, describes in his book, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich*, the steps it took for the Prussian military to achieve the success that it did during its wars with the Austrians, French, and Russians and what lessons were learned throughout these campaigns.³⁶ Citino does not state that the battles of Jena and Auerstadt were the defining catalyst leading up to the Third Reich but more of a series of developments that take place within a larger context of

³³ T. C. W. Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

³⁴ Christopher Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great* (Chicago, IL: Emperor's Press, 1996).

³⁵ Claus Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art, 1740-1813: From Frederick the Great to Napoleon* (New York, NY: Frank Cass, 2005).

³⁶ Robert Michael Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

understanding the German people. Moreover, Citino takes a qualitative look on the role of the Prussians leading up to the unification of Germany and the two world wars.

The Reform Period in Prussia and the eventual unification of Germany is further expanded on by authors Karen Hagemann and Katherine Aaslestad in their work, “1806 and Its Aftermath: Revisiting the Period of the Napoleonic Wars in German Central European Historiography”, in which they dissect the different historical opinions over the course of the Napoleonic Wars and their impact on the German states, moreover Prussia. They state that, “Historians have often treated the reform movement in Prussia separately from the reforms in the Rheinbund. Scholarship before 1945 placed great emphasis on Prussian reforms in the development of German nationalism.”³⁷ The reform movements of 1807 were different than internal military reforms. The reforms swept across a broad area specifically targeting the lower classes on the Prussian and German populace.

J. M. Winter and John M. Merriman in their book, *Europe 1789 to 1914: Encyclopedia of the Age of Industry and Empire*, describe the cultural movement that began in Prussia during the Reform Period of 1806.³⁸ Secondly, the authors give comparison to the economic and social structure in Prussia before 1807 and how the broad sweep of reforms targeted more than the military but directly helped Prussian and German peasants develop a sense of economic modalities assisted by industrial relevancy. Before 1807, most of the Prussian lower classes still practiced a form of serfdom which lowered morale and helped contribute to the crushing defeat at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt. Prussia from this point forward used the military as a means

³⁷ Katherine Aaslestad and Karen Hagemann, “1806 and Its Aftermath: Revisiting the Period of the Napoleonic Wars in German Central European Historiography,” *Central European History* 39, no. 4 (2006): 561, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/1806-aftermath-revisiting-period-napoleonic-wars/docview/214229864/se-2?accountid=12085>.

³⁸ John M. Merriman and J. M. Winter, *Europe 1789 to 1914: Encyclopedia of the Age of Industry and Empire* (Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2006).

to increase nationalism and public happiness through industrialization which is directly tied to military reform. Michael Knox Beran in his book, *Forge of Empires 1861-1871: Three Revolutionary Statesmen and the World They Made*, describes the era of industrialization and the conquest of the European superpowers post-Napoleonic age.³⁹ Furthermore, David E. Barclay in his work on Frederick William IV, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy 1840-1861*, begins an analysis on the success of William IV and why this era became a critical moment in Prussian history in which Prussian conservative elites were able to adjust themselves to the modern circumstances at the time. The Prussians knew fully well of the consequences of being static as the battles of Jena and Auerstadt taught them that. This is a very interesting read that examines the institution and structures of the monarchial system and the changes proposed in Prussia. Barclay states that, “In adhering so stubbornly to a particular set of ideological principles, Frederick William demonstrated that he was a child of his times. In an age of ideology, Frederick William IV was himself an ideologue who proceeded, in the name of preserving Prussia's traditions, to invent an ideology for the Prussian monarchy”⁴⁰ Prussia did reform many of their institutions and furthermore slowly adopted western ideologies, but Prussian military tradition remained at the forefront of all matter involving the state.

The issue that many historians run into considering the German involvement in World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) is the time at which the German-Prussian people fully became nationalistic. The argument of the unification of Germany falls short of the reformed period of 1807. Before the unification of Germany by the Prussian empire, the Prussians already wielded mass influence over the German states. The Prussian-Austrian War

³⁹ Michael Knox Beran, *Forge of Empires 1861-1871: Three Revolutionary Statesmen and the World They Made* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2007).

⁴⁰ David E. Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy 1840-1861* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995).

demonstrated to the German people who the dominate force is, and through Prussia's reformed military and their industrial growth, the latter falls short. Therefore, the argument is that after the battles of Jena and Auerstadt, the true nationalistic unified Germany already existed in theory.

Prussia fielded the most technological and advanced army of the mid-19th century only rivaled by France, Austria, and Britain's Royal Navy. Because Prussia was technically its own state, it did not mean they did not wield immense influence over central Germany. The research shows that far too many historians place Imperial Germany in the context of unification when in fact it happened decades before. The meeting of the great powers in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna only projected a struggle for power. Prussian ideology also dictated that to unite Germany, the Austrian Hapsburg influence needed to be eradicated. The Prussian military never stopped building its military forces even during peacetime which only indicates that they were preparing for war constantly with a population whose willingness to fight never wavered. The competing European powers of the Industrial Revolution and competition amongst these powers only increased military spending and the buildup of armaments.

Gregory Moore in his work, *Fichte: Address to the German Nation*, addresses the ideology of the German peoples throughout history particularly the Prussians of Teutonic decent.⁴¹ Scholarship in many instances fails to recognize that German speaking peoples were not a united cultural force but rather many separate entities with different traditions and ideologies. The state of Prussia differed greatly as put by Moore in that they were of Teutonic decent. This idea of the old medieval order demonstrates the differences between Prussians and their German counterparts. Moreover, Moore gives an excellent psychological profile of the German way of life and their respectable culture.

⁴¹ Gregory Moore, *Fichte: Addresses to the German Nation* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Christopher M. Clark and his work, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947*,⁴² and Larry Frohman and his book, *Poor Relief and Welfare in Germany from the Reformation to World War I*,⁴³ are two excellent sources that focus on the rise and fall of the Prussian state and the reasoning behind its demise. These two authors examine the cultural, economic, and political reasoning behind the military state of Prussia especially examining the consequences of the Reformation Period and moreover the Napoleonic Wars.

The Cognitive Challenge of War: Prussia 1806 by Peter Paret analyzes the Prussian's response to the collapse of the Prussian state after the battles of Jena and Auerstadt and how their response challenged the future of the balance of power in Europe.⁴⁴ The Prussian issue persisted in its internal struggles to claim a national identity before 1807, and the battles of Jena and Auerstadt forced Prussian officials and military thinkers to revise how warfare should be fought in the future which only solidifies the notion of an excellent defense is an offensive which the Prussians ultimately became as their aggression and nationalism grew over the decades. The argument remains steady in the aftermath of Jena and Auerstadt and the powerful response not by the German people but by the Prussian state.

John Breuilly's book, *Austria, Prussia and the Making of Germany, 1806-1871*, is a great piece of scholarship giving insight into the Austrian and Prussian relations in how they fought against one another and eventually joined to create a larger German sphere of influence. This is a fascinating book because it argues how the Austrian presence in a sense prompted the Prussians to continue to compete and modernize their society. Breuilly describes how unprepared the

⁴² Christopher M. Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴³ Larry Frohman, *Poor Relief and Welfare in Germany from the Reformation to World War I* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴⁴ Peter Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War: Prussia 1806* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Prussians were at the Battle of Jena and Auerstadt and compares that to the Austrian military during that same time. Interestingly enough, the Austrian military reformed itself in the enlightened principals of the Napoleonic system. The Austrians adopted the corps system and also began a series of revolutionary changes to their command structure unlike the Prussians. It was partially in response to the Austrians already having a great deal of experience fighting against the French in the Italian Wars of the revolutionary period and the defeats at Ulm and Austerlitz (1805). Breuille gives a great deal of information on the Prussian army before and during 1806 and their overall archaic presence of stubbornness and arrogance.⁴⁵

Lastly, F. Lorraine Petre in her book, *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia – 1806*,⁴⁶ Colonel Vachée in his book, *Napoleon and the Campaign of 1806: The Napoleonic Method of Organisation and Command to the Battles of Jena & Auerstadt*,⁴⁷ and Donald J. Stoker in his book, *Clausewitz: His Life and Work*,⁴⁸ all examine the issues leading up to the battles of Jena and Auerstadt and their overall significance post-Napoleonic era. Why and how did the battles of Jena and Auerstadt effect the military, economic, and political structure of the Prussian state and the eventual unification of Germany? How did the Reform Period of 1807-1813 affect the Prussian military, and what significant impact did that have? All of these questions are relevant in the approach to arguing why the battles of Jena and Auerstadt effectively created a German superpower throughout the mid-19th century to the end of World War II. Each chapter covers a methodological approach to answering the argument and furthermore the historiography over the years and how that transformed previous scholarship. The Prussian army's evolution is the

⁴⁵ John Breuille, *Austria, Prussia and the Making of Germany, 1806-1871* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2011).

⁴⁶ F. Lorraine Petre, *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia – 1806* (Auckland, New Zealand: Pickle Partners Publishing, 2011).

⁴⁷ Colonel Vachée, *Napoleon and the Campaign of 1806: The Napoleonic Method of Organisation and Command to the Battles of Jena & Auerstadt* (United Kingdom: Leonaur Ltd, 2009).

⁴⁸ Donald J. Stoker, *Clausewitz: His Life and Work* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

foundational unit to the creation of the German army historians have studied throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

The state of Prussia's existence is rooted in the very nature of its military and its ability to use the military as a social and political weapon. From the esteemed victories of Frederick the Great to the defeats at the battle of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 and the Reform Period of 1807-1813, the Prussian state and its military evolved into the Imperial Army of 1914-1918 to the reformed Wehrmacht during World War II. Jasper Heinzen, in *Making Prussians, Raising Germans: A Cultural History of Prussian State-Building after Civil War, 1866-1935*, captures the ideology of the Prussian state and its influence within Europe especially within the military that is so closely connected with society. Prussia's idea of a state within a state only grew as more ideals of a unified nationalistic German people began to grow. Prussia pressed in military tradition upon other German states to create a unified populace under the belief that strength and security of a nation centered around the military. Heinzen describes how Germany became a state within a state with Prussia being the dominate catalyst. Prussian military tradition did not stop with modernization but only continued to grow as Germany became an empire and into a Reich.⁴⁹

David A. Harrisville in his work, *The Virtuous Wehrmacht: Crafting the Myth of the German Soldier on the Eastern Front, 1941-1944*, gives an exemplary history of the Wehrmacht's extraordinary actions on the Eastern Front during major battles of World War II.⁵⁰ He argues that the German army walked with an aura of fear, discipline, and courage unmatched by any. Harrisville goes into great detail on how Prussian tradition still carried on many years

⁴⁹ Jasper Heinzen, *Making Prussians, Raising Germans: A Cultural History of Prussian State-Building after Civil War, 1866-1935* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁵⁰ David A. Harrisville, *The Virtuous Wehrmacht: Crafting the Myth of the German Soldier on the Eastern Front, 1941-1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

later into the very nature of the German army and how they fought in most cases heavily outnumbered and starving. He goes on to state that even in the last days of the war the allied soldiers still considered the German Wehrmacht a formidable and dangerous fighting force and that they only fought harder and more ruthlessly as they were cornered. He continues by truly allowing the reader to get into the mindset of the Wehrmacht and how even in absolute defeat they continued their fanatical beliefs of Prussianism and resistance to foreigners. Donald E. Graves in his two-part book, *Blood and Steel: The Wehrmacht Archive: Normandy 1944* and *Blood and Steel 2: The Wehrmacht Archive: Retreat to the Reich, September to December 1944* gives the best depiction of the history of the German army during the Third Reich and Adolf Hitler.⁵¹ Graves in his two part book describes in detail the creation of the Wehrmacht during the 1930s and how they came to be one of the most notorious militaries during the 20th century.⁵² Graves gives the reader an insight on how the Wehrmacht came to be from the disasters of the Imperial German army in World War I. He argues that the massive loss of life by the German people, the collapsed economy, and the dismantlement of the Germany army after the Treaty of Versailles (1919) makes it almost impossible to comprehend, from an outside historical perspective, that they could achieve what they did from 1939-1945.

By the end of World War I, the Imperial German army totally collapsed in the face of a combined allied victory. Historians such as Graves and Harrisville look into how the German military during 1914-1939 never stopped forming even during times of collapse and disasters reminiscent of the ones in 1806 during Jena and Auerstadt. These historians analyze the Wehrmacht and trace its roots directly back to the Prussian state and how keeping these

⁵¹ Donald E. Graves, *Blood and Steel: The Wehrmacht Archive: Normandy 1944* (South Yorkshire, England: Frontline Books, 2013).

⁵² Donald E. Graves, *Blood and Steel 2: The Wehrmacht Archive: Retreat to the Reich, September to December 1944* (South Yorkshire, England: Frontline Books, 2015).

traditions of blood and iron developed once again into a modern-day war machine. The most interesting parts of these works are the ties both authors use to Prussia and how even in Hitler's Germany, many officers were of Prussian decent and moreover how that contributed to the greater overall reach of Prussianization in the modern German army of the Wehrmacht. Many of the German diaries that are presented in these works describes how Germans of Prussian decent considered themselves superior to other German soldiers descending from Bavaria, Hannover, and even Austria to some degree. Secondly, these works also describe how allied soldiers on each front such as the Russians, Americans, British, Canadians, and more viewed the typical soldiers of the Reich's Wehrmacht. They describe how German prisoners of war officers and soldiers alike still maintained a state of discipline and honor that never wavered almost fanatical to a degree which could not be understood until the 21st century and a deeper understanding of Germans in World War II. The Wehrmacht should not relate to organizations such as the Nazi Party or the Waffen SS as these were all different. Unfortunately, much of modern history combines all of these variables into one single group which is not historically accurate when considering that few Wehrmacht soldiers were associated with the Nazi Party.

The Wehrmacht's actions in Poland, France, and Russia are still considered to be the cornerstone of all modern militaries and various military academies in the modern day. Groups like the Waffen SS only developed into a fighting force during the mid-war period and compared to the Wehrmacht were a very small fraction of the overall German military effort. Though as argued in these works the allies viewed all of them with the same methodology of Nazism and fanaticism. The Wehrmacht is very comparable from a historical viewpoint to the rebirth of the Prussian army from 1813-1815 as they share many of the same circumstances. These circumstances accumulate from a great defeat and a rebirth period combined with a modern

military approach. Carl von Clausewitz states that, “Now, if it is to get safely through this perpetual conflict with the unexpected, two qualities are indispensable: in the first place an intellect which, even in the midst of this intense obscurity, is not without some traces of inner light, which lead to the truth, and then the courage to follow this faint light.”⁵³ The Germans, throughout their military history when reforming, not only adopted the lessons learned from previous mistakes but also implemented newer practices of warfare. Each time the German army goes on the offensive they implement a more modern approach to warfare such as the mass usage of railroads under Moltke that practiced quick and decisive action and eventually the combination of modern tanks in the 1930s into Panzer Corps for the 20th century Blitzkrieg. All these historians revert back to previous notions of Prussian military ingenuity combined with Prussian heritage and the will to survive beyond all circumstances against them.

When viewing how the reform period from the battles of Jena and Auerstadt eventually contribute to the creation of the Wehrmacht and by that end the lawful destruction of Prussian identity in 1947, it is important to also consider the peoples or *Volks* movement not only relating to the civic, economical, or political structures throughout Prussia and Germany’s history but to the military as well. Though names change, the definitions of these key terms remain relatively similar in their nature. For example, the creation of the *Landwehr* in the first reforming periods of 1807-1813 to the *Landstrum* and eventual *Volksstrum* in 1944-45. All are a critical piece to the rising of Prussia and the collapse of the Third Reich in 1945. These militia armies were the final desperate attempts by both the Prussian army of 1813-1815 and the Wehrmacht in 1944 in one last desperate attempt to save the German people against foreign invaders through sheer will and might for a final victory even against all odds. The *Landwehr* and the *Landstrum* of these

⁵³ Von Clausewitz, *On War*, 47.

eras mentioned served a great purpose in helping Prussia defeat Napoleon and liberate central Europe. These two groups were separate from the main Prussian army and eventually came to odds against one another during the 1848 revolution. The people are in short represented the liberal nationalistic movements throughout Prussia, and the regular army served as the centralized power of the conservative forces within the government. Eventually as history dictates, the regular army gained a greater foothold of power during the wars with Austria and France and overshadowed the dwindling Landwehr.

Bruno Just in his book, *Hitler's Last Levy in East Prussia 1944-45: Volkssturm Einsatz Bataillon Goldap (25/235)*, describes the desperate situation within Germany by 1944.⁵⁴ Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels decreed by law that every single male from the ages of 14 to 70 years old take up arms and defend the fatherland against what they believed an incursion against German tradition and heritage. This is an excellent book that gives a great insight to the fanatical nature of the German government during the ending phases of World War II and their belief that the German people as they had done during the Wars of Liberation 1813-1815 would obtain a great victory. The interesting connections between these terms is they are not of German origin but rather the origins of the Prussian government 132 years before. The symbolism between the Volksstrum and the Wehrmacht fighting side by side is unmistakably the works of Prussian nationalism and duty. Bruno writes one of the most riving and saddest accounts of the great slaughter that occurred amongst the Vollksstrum in the final days of the war and even in the knowledge of total destruction fought to the very end. These are the factors that intrigue modern historians around the world to ask the question on how a culture as rich and educated as that of

⁵⁴ Bruno Just, *Hitler's Last Levy in East Prussia 1944-45: Volkssturm Einsatz Bataillon Goldap (25/235)* (West Midlands, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2015).

the German one could have ended up the enemy of the world on two occasions and set the precedence for a modern genocide on an industrial scale?

Hitler's Lost State: The Fall of Prussia and the Wilhelm Gustloff Tragedy by Tim Heath and Michela Cocolin is an excellent description of the Prussian radicalism that infected the German military until the collapse of the Third Reich. Prussian nationalism as described came to fruition during World War II with the rise of the Reich and its expansion across Europe. Nazi party members and high-ranking officers gained notoriety for the lineage back to old Prussia and were held to the highest esteem.⁵⁵ Many historians argue that the ending of World War I ended the Prussian state of dominance, but as history proved, it did in fact survive. The allied powers post-World War II went as far as banning anything to do with Prussian heritage or militarism and that is still the case in modern Germany today. The question is how did Germany get to this point in history, and where did it begin? Throughout the chapters, the answer to that will analyze every facet of what began the rise and fall of Prussia and why the battles of Jena and Auerstadt began a series of events that eventually led to the reformation of the Prussian military and the economic, political, diplomatic, and cultural consequences of that event leading into the 20th century.

⁵⁵ Tim Heath and Michela Cocolin, *Hitler's Lost State: The Fall of Prussia and the Wilhelm Gustloff Tragedy* (Yorkshire, Great Britain: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2020).

Chapter 2

History of Prussia up to Jena and Auerstadt

The Royal Prussian Army dating from 1701 to 1919 went through a series of reforms to make it one of the most decolorated military forces in modern European history. The state of Prussia stemming from the Reformation period in 16th century Europe drastically shifted the balance of power within the European monarchal system.⁵⁶ The Holy Roman Empire comprised of hundreds of German states and principalities all containing their own self-governing systems and militaries which operated more or less independently.⁵⁷ The various German principalities such as Saxony, Bavaria, Hannover, Hessen-Kessel, Nassau, and many others were not associated with the state of Prussia. Many of these German city-states, which grew over time from the Reformation period, were diplomatically influenced by the stronger powers of the time.⁵⁸ These major European powers such as Great Britain, France, Spain, Russia, and most notably, the Austrian-Habsburg Empire all competed for control over these states militarily, diplomatically, economically, and culturally. Most German states recognized Prussia as a sub-state of the Teutonic Order dating back to the 12th century.⁵⁹

Prussian heritage and the Teutonic Order are worth mentioning in that historians over the past years see not only a cultural heritage amongst the two but also a strong semblance of symbols used in their culture going as far as the Third Reich of Nazi Germany. The Teutonic Order began around the 12th century founded as a military society in 1190 in Acre during the existence of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Teutonic Order existed amongst other more notable

⁵⁶ Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 4.

⁵⁷ Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter*, 15-16.

⁵⁸ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 4-6.

⁵⁹ E. J. Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 7-18.

orders of the time such as the Templars and the Hospitallers.⁶⁰ The knights' primary goals began with orders to protect Christians going on pilgrimages throughout the Holy Land against Muslims. The name of the order arrives from German roots *Orden der Brüder vom Deutschen Haus der Heiligen Maria in Jerusalem* translated as Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem.⁶¹ The word Teutonic gains its name from the Latin word of *Theutonicorum*.⁶² The order's symbol is that of the Iron Cross symbolic of Prussian and German militarism. The existence of the Iron Cross within flags and medals continued even into the modern 21st century. The Iron Cross is symbolic of a heroic military action or deed given to only a few throughout history with one of those few being Adolf Hitler. The Teutonic Order's history is characterized by militarism and genocide on Baltic Pagans during the Medieval period from 12th-15th century. When the Christians were finally defeated in 1191 with the capture of Acre, the order moved to Transylvania to reorganize and refit with the Teutons eventually being forced out by the Hungarians. From this moment forward, the Teutonic Order began a series of questionable Crusades amongst the ethnic "Old" Prussians who are not to be confused with modern Prussians post-reformation era.⁶³

The Polytheistic tribes of the Baltic states during that time existed when Catholicism began to spread across Europe and in many instances by brutal force. The Teutonic Order in 1230-1235 under the commands from The Golden Bull of Rimini, which was a decree issued by

⁶⁰ William Urban, "The Teutonic Knights and Baltic Chivalry," *The Historian* 56, no. 3 (1994): 519-530, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24448704>.

⁶¹ Peter Bander van Duren, *Orders of Knighthood and of Merit: The Pontifical, Religious and Secularised Catholic-Founded Orders, and Their Relationship to the Apostolic See* (Cerrards Cross, England: Colin Smythe Limited, 1995), 212.

⁶² Catherine Innes-Parker and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, *Anchoritism in the Middle Ages: Texts and Traditions* (Cardiff, England: University of Wales Press, 2013), 102.

⁶³ Anthony Emery, *Seats of Power in Europe During the Hundred Years War: An Architectural Study from 1330 to 1480* (Havertown, PA: Oxbow Books, 2016), 189-200.

Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250), Christianized the Baltic states.⁶⁴ The Teutonic Order launched a successful Crusade and created the Monastic State of the Teutonic Knights which set the foundations for the modern state of Prussia. These areas today are now part of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Russia who controls the old city of Königsberg now called Kaliningrad. The order began the forced conversion and genocide of the Polytheistic Prussian tribes in the area and quickly grew into a powerful Medieval state with the support of the Holy Roman Empire with numerous German knights joining the order.⁶⁵ The Teutons were a very well and organized authority within these areas sustaining themselves through trade and commerce. The Teutons did not stop with their military expansionist mindset constantly challenging the Polish and Lithuania kingdoms eventually leading to border disputes.⁶⁶ Like most Crusades, the idea for spreading Christianity developed into conquest and expansionist policies. The Teutons believed themselves superior to their Baltic Christian neighbors and their culture. The Teutons used their knights to spread Christianity not by word but by use of genocidal tactics making them a very organized and radical group. Desmond Seward in his book, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders*, discusses how the “Old” Prussians also used horrific tactics against the knights stating that the Prussians would “roast captured brethren alive in their armour, like chestnuts, before the shrine of a local god.”⁶⁷ Teutonic knights were not limited to only German members but also received knights from all of Europe. In 1981, archaeologists discovered an almost intact

⁶⁴ Norbert Kamp, “Frederick II of Swabia, Emperor, King of Sicily and Jerusalem, King of the Romans,” *Biographical Dictionary of Italians* 45 (1995), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/federico-ii-di-svevia-imperatore-re-di-sicilia-e-di-gerusalemme-re-dei-romani_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/federico-ii-di-svevia-imperatore-re-di-sicilia-e-di-gerusalemme-re-dei-romani_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

⁶⁵ Kaspars Kļaviņš, “The Ideology of Christianity and Pagan Practice Among the Teutonic Knights: The Case of the Baltic Region,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 37 no. 3 (2006): 260-267, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43212723>.

⁶⁶ William Urban, “The Organization of Defense of the Livonian Frontier in the Thirteenth Century,” *Speculum* 48, no. 3 (1973): 525-532, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2854447>.

⁶⁷ Desmond Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1995), 104.

grave of a Teutonic knight called St Bees Man.⁶⁸ Upon further discovery through modern science in 2010, they identified him as Anthony de Lucy (1332/1333-1368), a descendant from the ancient Lucey's of Normandy and England. Historical documents show that he died in 1368 whilst fighting the Lithuanians with the Teutonic Order.⁶⁹

The Teutonic Order contains many notable Grand Masters who even today still exist in private societies that practice the spread of Christianity through many charitable works. The Teutonic Order eventually grew into a very large kingdom expanding further against its Polish and Lithuanian neighbors accumulating into war.⁷⁰ With the strong economic base within the Baltic Sea, the Teutons began hiring many mercenaries to grow their military strength. By 1410, the Teutonic Order fought in the Battle of Grunwald against the combined forces of Polish-Lithuanian armies and were decisively defeated drastically ending the orders influence over the Baltics.⁷¹ The order became a very small state, and by 1515, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I's (1459-1519) support for the Teutons diminished. In 1525, Grand Master Albert of Brandenburg (1490-1568) converted to Lutheranism eventually taking the title Duke of Prussia and vassal to Poland.⁷² By 1809, the Teutonic Order dissolved and ceased to exist upon the orders of Napoleon Bonaparte. Interestingly enough, the Nazis outlawed the order in 1938 as it represented the motto of *Helfen, Wehren, Heilen*, which translates as Help, Defend, Heal.⁷³

This is a different methodology in which the Reich intended and rather kept the old teachings of

⁶⁸ "St Bees Man," Ian McAndrew and Doug Sim, accessed January 28, 2023, <https://www.stbees.org.uk/home/village/st-bees-man/>.

⁶⁹ "Latest Research," Ian McAndrew and Doug Sim, accessed January 28, 2023, <https://www.stbees.org.uk/home/village/st-bees-man/latest-research/>.

⁷⁰ Ronald Delval, "The Road to the Thirteen Years War: The Teutonic Order," *Medieval Warfare* 2, no. 2 (2012): 6-10, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48577938>.

⁷¹ Nicholas Whaley, "The Grunwald Swords: Blades of Victory, Symbols of Freedom," *Medieval Warfare* 3, no. 6 (2013): 18-19, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48578293>.

⁷² Len E. Scales, "German Militiae: War and German Identity in the Later Middle Ages," *Past & Present* no. 180 (2003): 41-82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3600740>.

⁷³ Nicholas Morton, *The Teutonic Knights in the Holy Land 1190-1291* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2009).

the order that translate into heritage by strength of arms. The Teutonic knights were highly popular during most of Medieval European history with many taking up the same principles and codes implementing them into their own orders such as the Knights of Saint Thomas an English order.⁷⁴ The Teutons and their history did not disappear by the enlightenment period but only changed its identity to the Kingdom of Prussia who were possessed by the aura of the Teutons.

Prussia in its own existence began its major step to a great military power during the reign of Frederick William of Brandenburg of the Hohenzollern Dynasty (1620-1688).⁷⁵ Frederick William began the first steps to militarizing the Prussian state with the intention to create a strong standing army. The Prussian system under Frederick William of Brandenburg comprised mostly of foreign conscripts and mercenaries to protect the state in the beginning before Frederick created a more reliable military.⁷⁶ Conscription also became a major component of Frederick William in which peasants, or the lower orders were forced into military training. This system allowed for the Prussian state to create a strong and well-trained standing army in case of wartime which became a necessary measure due in large part to Prussia's unfavorable geographical location.⁷⁷ Frederick William of Brandenburg's reforms began the process of Prussianization and solidification of Prussia as a state and not a vassal of stronger powers of the time as were many German states and their relations with the ever-encroaching Austrian Hapsburg Empire. Various Prussian regiments were created from the lower classes undergoing brutal training and discipline to ensure the professionalism of the army.⁷⁸ Officers recruited from the aristocratic class were placed in higher positions to maintain an order of discipline and

⁷⁴ Tomasz Borowski and Christopher Gerrard, "Constructing Identity in the Middle Ages: Relics, Religiosity, and Military Orders," *Speculum* 92, no. 4 (2017): 1056-1100, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26583619>.

⁷⁵ Tim Blanning, *Frederick the Great: King of Prussia* (United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2015), 7.

⁷⁶ Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 5.

⁷⁷ Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 1.

⁷⁸ Christopher Duffy, *Frederick the Great: A Military Life* (London, England: Routledge, 1985), 76-77.

dominance within the ranks.⁷⁹ These officers were amongst the few in Prussian society that were educated in all manners of life and indoctrinated in the ways of Prussian professionalism and mannerisms. Too often are Prussians viewed as barbaric warlords removed from the ideals of western philosophies. Contrary to some beliefs, these individuals were well learned in western traditions and often spoke many languages to conduct themselves accordingly in European courts. However, this does not mean that most of the Prussian population were illiterate but that nobles received a much higher degree of education. Prussians were expected to have compulsory primary education and a firm understanding of basics.

Frederick I of Prussia (1657-1713) son Frederick William I (1688-1740), also known as the “Soldier King,” continued what his father began in building and improving on the Prussian army.⁸⁰ Frederick William I enforced conscription by the state upon the lower peasant classes only allowing them to return during the planting and harvest season. During peace time, the army remained relatively small only consisting of 20,000 men, and during wartime, it consisted of 40,000 men.⁸¹ Frederick William I reorganized the royal courts of Prussia and granted military officers positions over previous artisans and other nobles. In short, he militarized the entirety of Prussia. The army became the epicenter of Prussian culture and life, and all were subject to the King and the military.⁸² King Frederick William I surrounded himself with loyal, experienced, and in many instances fanatical military commanders such as Leopold I, Prince of Anhalt-Dessau (1676-1747) nicknamed the Old Dessauer, who introduced the iron ramrod and implemented the goosestep.⁸³ The iron ramrod allowed for Prussian soldiers to fire at a much more rapid rate than

⁷⁹ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 44-45.

⁸⁰ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 8-9.

⁸¹ Kitchen, *A Military History of Germany*, 11.

⁸² Kitchen, *Military History of Germany*, 1-2.

⁸³ Kitchen, *Military History of Germany*, 24.

other European armies. This aspect gave Prussian soldiers a major advantage on the battlefield. The constant and rigorous drilling combined with the goosestep allowed for a dynamic military that could make impossible maneuvers that other European armies could not. In short, the entirety of the Prussian army could turn on a dime in perfect order whilst under enemy fire.⁸⁴

These changes granted the Prussian army flexibility, maneuverability, and precision to move rapidly in wartime scenarios. Timothy Blanning states that, “The decades of preparatory work by Frederick William I and his staff, most notably Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, better known as ‘the Old Dessauer,’ now paid off. Other European armies took months to mobilize – the Russians could take a year or more – but Frederick was able to put an army into the field in just a few weeks.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, to maintain discipline in the military and to achieve this perfection of sustainability, the King increased disciplinary measures. Prussian soldiers who did not fulfill the needs of the King and the state were subject to running the “gauntlet” which composed of severe beatings, mutilation, and in some instances death.⁸⁶ Frederick William I and his military reforms became the first priority of the Prussian state almost to a point of obsession in which the Prussian army became the epicenter of all Prussian culture. The Junker class, who were the Prussian aristocracy that formed the famed cavalry regiments which became instrumental in the future campaigns of the Prussian army under Frederick II (1712-1786), also gained a great deal of authority within Prussia.⁸⁷ The Junkers became one of the leading elements throughout Prussian history and solidified the core of the army. These individuals also held a great deal of influence over the king and various estates worked by peasants.⁸⁸ Frederick William

⁸⁴ Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 79-81.

⁸⁵ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 91.

⁸⁶ Sidney B. Fay, “The Beginnings of the Standing Army in Prussia,” *The American Historical Review* 22, no. 4 (1917): 766, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1836239>.

⁸⁷ Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 16.

⁸⁸ F. L. Carsten, “The Origins of the Junkers,” *The English Historical Review* 62, no. 243 (1947): 145-178, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/555284>.

I maintained a very tedious relationship with surrounding European powers in the 18th century which changed in the event of his death in 1740 and the crowning of his son Frederick II.⁸⁹ Frederick William I knew that the state of Prussia's true survival existed within its ability to maintain peaceful relations amongst its superior neighbors such as France, Austria, and Russia. However, his foreign policy consistently placed him at odds with his neighbors. The State of Prussia had very few allies mostly due to its Protestant beliefs and its irrelevance as a minor state. By 1739, Prussia's only ally was France. Nevertheless, Frederick William I left a Prussian state with a centralized government, large treasury, and a formidable professional army.

Frederick II, who came to be known as Frederick the Great, inherited one of the largest military forces in Europe during that period only being dwarfed by major powers such as Russia, Austria, and France.⁹⁰ Frederick II from a young age disliked the military and his father's fanatical obsession with order and drilling which earned him many beatings and humiliations from Frederick II's father, King Frederick William I.⁹¹ Frederick II, unlike others, took interest in music, art, literature, and especially French fashion. The young prince learned everything that he could about French culture including their language, art, music, and ways of the court. His obsession usually put him at odds with the king who only wanted his son to have a stronger interest in females which he did not. By 1740 at the young age of 28, Frederick II faced a dilemma with the Austrian Empire under Maria Theresa (1717-1780) who imposed dominance over the region of Silesia and regarded Prussia as a potential threat to Hapsburg claims under Pragmatic Sanction which stated that the Hapsburg claims could be inherited by a daughter.⁹² This hereditary claim to lands on the border with Prussia imposed a conflict of interest that

⁸⁹ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 77.

⁹⁰ Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 23.

⁹¹ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 52-54. Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 101-102.

⁹² Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 22-23. Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 190-191.

boiled over into the First Silesian War (1740-1742). King Frederick II did not immediately use harsh diplomacy against Empress Maria Theresa and rather used his intellect of logic and reasonability until his hand was forced by the empress. Maria Theresa did not see the Prussians as a threat especially the young king who in later years became her biggest rival for influence over German territories.⁹³

By this time, Frederick II and his 42,000 strong military force began a campaign into Silesia catching the Austrians off guard.⁹⁴ Blanning notes Frederick II stating that, “I am giving you a problem to solve. When one is in a favorable situation, should one make use of it or not? I am ready with my troops and everything else; if I don’t take advantage of it, I shall have in my hands an asset I don’t understand how to use; if I do take advantage of it, it will be said that I know how to make the superiority I enjoy over my neighbor’s work for me.”⁹⁵ Though the military campaign appeared successful, it was short lived as the Austrians began mobilizing its massive stores of troops and equipment. The battle of Mollwitz in 1740 began the career of Frederick II as a military commander.⁹⁶ According to Blanning, “In the shorter term, Mollwitz precipitated a chain of events that was to unleash the War of the Austrian Succession on the world.”⁹⁷ Mollwitz quickly demonstrated the importance of the Prussian reforms carried out years ago against a much larger military force in the wake of defeat. Though the Prussian military won the battle, Frederick II fled the field in belief that he had lost, and it was only the professionalism of his soldiers and the cavalry that the Austrians were pushed from the field with both sides sustaining heavy casualties.⁹⁸ The first Silesian War, though short, began the long and

⁹³ William Monter, *The Rise of Female Kings in Europe, 1300-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 155-178.

⁹⁴ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 195.

⁹⁵ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 91.

⁹⁶ Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 13.

⁹⁷ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 97.

⁹⁸ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 56.

continuous conflict between Prussia and Austria which saw the French, British, and Russian Empires eventually being drug into the conflict ending with the conclusion of the Seven Years' War. The Prussian soldiers by all odds and not to the decisions of their king did succeed in demonstrating their ability to challenge the mighty Austrian empire. Moreover, the Austrians quickly learned that the small state of Prussia possessed a very elite military force even though it was consistently smaller.

Frederick II took the short peace after the first Silesian conflict to rethink the strategy of how Prussia would conduct campaigns in the future. First, Frederick II began field training in the annexed area of Silesia to prepare for the impending Austrian invasion. Frederick II moved a large contingent of the Prussian force in this area and drilled battle maneuvers to better understand the terrain and implement rapid counter attacks against the much larger Austrian forces.⁹⁹ The Silesian Wars began the domination and influence over the various German states with many alliances being formed and continuous broken treaties. The Wars of Austrian Succession (1740-1748, 1756-1763), ushered in the old rivals of the Protestant and Catholic nations over who would have influence over central Germany and its various principalities.¹⁰⁰ The Prussians did not have any strong alliances outside of its own territories other than Great Britain during the Seven Years' War, and for most of the conflict, they remained alone.¹⁰¹ Saxony throughout the Austrian push into central Germany largely sided with the Austrian Hapsburgs and fought against the Prussians. The Austrians used the weight of their numbers to intimidate many smaller German states in siding with them. The Bavarians also sided with the forces of the Catholic nations standing firm with France and Austria against Prussia.¹⁰² Hannover

⁹⁹ Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 34.

¹⁰⁰ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 55.

¹⁰¹ Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 242-243.

¹⁰² Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 87-88.

largely remained politically dominated by Great Britain which left Prussia with enemies on all fronts. Frederick II and various Prussian leaders throughout history knew that Prussia could not sustain a defensive war and that their geographical location and the delicate condition of their populace and government remained at risk. Therefore, Frederick II took the war to the enemy.

Frederick II concluded that during these wars the best option to gain superiority and not allow a combined allied alliance was to strike rapidly against each enemy army before it could be reinforced which he did. Blanning goes on to state that, “In all the twist and turns that followed during the next few years, Frederick always had one eye- and often two- on competition from other German princes, especially Saxony.”¹⁰³ Over the many years of war between Prussia and its enemies, Frederick II invaded Saxony on many occasions demonstrating the strength of his forces. Austria also invaded Saxony during this conflict, and throughout this process of this escalation, Saxony switched hands many times. Saxony, eventually by 1806, became a major ally of the Prussians., sharing in their defeat at the twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt, only then to ally with Napoleon.

Frederick II gained notable fame for his ability to beat and route much larger forces than his own during the wars with Austria and France. The Prussian army, though disciplined, did not have the manpower or economic modality to sustain long conflicts against overwhelming odds. Frederick II initiated quick and decisive actions and achieved a strong understanding of the importance of terrain and the element of surprise.¹⁰⁴ Notable advancements Frederick II placed within the Prussian army were the ability of fast-moving field cannons. Unlike other European armies which used static field artillery and rigid formations, Frederick adopted horse drawn artillery that could move rapidly across the battlefield and maneuver to support infantry

¹⁰³ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 91.

¹⁰⁴ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 93-97.

attacks.¹⁰⁵ These same tactics became the norm of European armies after Frederick II. Secondly, Frederick implemented the creation of multiple cavalry regiments which were the eyes and ears of his army. The Prussian cavalry were known across Europe as the best in the world due to their ability to outflank and out maneuver its competition. The fame of the Junker class solidified the core of Prussian aristocracy.¹⁰⁶ Almost all Junkers who became the equivalent to Medieval knights were in the cavalry regiments. One of the most famous regiments became the *Totenkopf* or the Death Head Hussars.¹⁰⁷ This cavalry regiment formed under Frederick II and became notorious for the skull and crossbones emblem that the 3rd Waffen SS Division *Totenkopf* also used in World War II. This symbol is associated with violence and genocide in the 20th and 21st centuries. The Death's Head Division in World War II became an elite unit within the German army tracing its origins back to Prussia combined with Nordic conceptions.¹⁰⁸ The *Totenkopf* symbol remained at the core of the Prussian and German army many years after its creation. These cavalry regiments created by Frederick II were elite regiments led by battle-hardened veterans from the Junker class who advanced themselves only through sacrifice and professionalism on the battlefield. The various cavalry regiments within the Prussian army only increased as the wars continued creating the future leaders and reformers of the Prussian state. Hussar regiments in the Prussian army were one of the few exceptions of rank not granted by aristocratic ties. These cavalry regiments were very selective and almost impossible to get accepted into.

¹⁰⁵ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 268.

¹⁰⁶ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 43-44.

¹⁰⁷ David Nash, *The Prussian Army, 1808-1815* (London, England: Almark Publications, 1972), 54.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Scharff Smith, Niels Bo Poulsen, and Claus Bundgård Christensen, "The Danish Volunteers in the Waffen SS and German Warfare at the Eastern Front," *Contemporary European History* 8, no. 1 (1999): 73-96, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20081691>.

The “Oblique Order” became the most notable achievement of Frederick II during his countless battles against much larger forces arrayed against him.¹⁰⁹ This maneuver could only be performed by a well-disciplined army that demonstrated order during battles and became an adopted instrument by other European powers until the creation of Napoleonic tactics. The “Oblique Order,” in short, demanded incredible attention to detail and timing on the battlefield. It called for an entire wing of the Prussian army to shift in perfect order to not only masque its intentions but surprise and overwhelm an enemy flank whilst the other Prussian wing held and engaged the enemy center. This ability to implement this tactic stunned the Austrian and French armies in notable victories such as Hohenfriedberg (1745), Rossbach (1757), Leuthen (1757), and many others.¹¹⁰ This tactic also became an instrument under Moltke the Elder (1800-1891) where he used Frederick’s Oblique Order with other modern tactics to pin an enemy army in one position whilst a separate army attacked the flanks or rearguard to great success against the Austrians in the Austro-Prussian War in 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-71.¹¹¹

Frederick II used the discipline and flexibility of the Prussian army against a much larger static enemy which largely could not counter the Prussians in many situations. Prussian soldiers also were able to sustain a much higher rate of fire than other European armies as they were able to reload and fire twice as fast than the average European soldier.¹¹² According to Blanning, “As Clausewitz observed, in this advance the Prussian infantry achieved ‘a level of perfection in the use of firepower that still has not been surpassed.’”¹¹³ The Prussian army also implemented a much smaller baggage train that carried supplies and slowed troop movement. Frederick II

¹⁰⁹ Kitchen, *Military History of Germany*, 25.

¹¹⁰ Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 140-150; 155.

¹¹¹ Hajo Holborn, “Moltke’s Strategical Concepts,” *Military Affairs* 6, no. 3 (1942): 153-168, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1982846>.

¹¹² Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 270.

¹¹³ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 95.

implemented strict commands in an army pamphlet *Principes Generaux* describing the importance of rapid movement.¹¹⁴ This indicated that Frederick II knew that most European armies such as the Austrians and the French were a slow lumbering force because of the amount of supplies they carried. The French and Austrian armies though large were clumsy and hindered by mile long baggage trains. Frederick through his manuals encouraged the soldiers to bring only the necessary supplies needed for the campaign. He also encouraged his soldiers to live off the land by foraging which allowed the removal of logistical nightmares that plagued the Austrian and French forces. Frederick II understood the importance of past leaders such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar and emphasized reading about their campaigns and their understanding of waging war and diplomacy. He also knew how to strike at the decisive moment where the enemy did not expect him. Frederick made all of this clear in his, *Instructions for His Generals*, which outlined the expectations for his staff. Frederick II would say that the Prussian army always attacks.¹¹⁵ This became the norm for Frederick's commands even when faced with opposition from his generals.

Though the Prussian army gained fame during the wars of Frederick II, it was not without its failures. The Wars with Austria and France depleted the Prussian army of experienced veterans which could not be replaced. Frederick II relied heavily on foreign conscripts forced from other German states such as Hannover, Saxony, Hesse-Kassel, and many more to fill in the gaps.¹¹⁶ Secondly, the Prussians were not an undefeated force, and from the beginning of the conflict in 1740 to the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, the Prussian state lost tens of

¹¹⁴ Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 76-88.

¹¹⁵ Thomas Foster, *Military Instruction from the Late King of Prussia to His Generals: Illustrated with Plates. To Which is Added, By the Same Author, Particular Instruction to the Officers of His Army, and Especially Those of the Cavalry* (London, England: J. Cruttwell, 1818).

¹¹⁶ Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 77.

thousands of men and important battles. The inability of Prussian enemies to follow up on their victories allowed for Frederick II to quickly rebuild his army and reequip them. The Battle of Kunersdorf in 1759 was one of these instances where the “Oblique Order” did not work, and Frederick lost the initiative against the Austro-Russo force almost collapsing the entire Prussian army and the state of Prussia.¹¹⁷ This is regarded by historians as Frederick’s most devastating defeat which saw Frederick II write a letter of apology and recognition as King of Prussia.

Blanning interprets some of Frederick’s writings after the battle:

My coat is riddled with musket balls, and I have had two horses killed beneath me. It is my misfortune to be still alive. Our losses are very great, and I have only 3,000 men left out of an army of 48,000. At the moment that I am writing everybody is in flight, and I can exercise no control over my men. At Berlin you ought to be thinking of your safety. I shall not survive this cruel turn of fortune. The consequences will be worse than the defeat itself. I have no resources left, and, to speak quite frankly, I believe everything is lost. I shall not outlive the downfall of my fatherland. Farewell forever!¹¹⁸

The Prussian army of 48,000-50,000 men was reduced to 3,000, and only by the failure of the Russian and Austrian forces to press their advantage to the capital Brandenburg (Berlin) did Frederick’s army solidify again.¹¹⁹ Over the following days of despair from Frederick II did his loyal soldiers begin to trickle back into his camp and solidify again to create a usable military force. This is a crucial factor because it demonstrated the idea of zeal and trust of Frederick II’s defeated soldiers to return to him in confidence of a final victory. Though Frederick’s army paled in size to its original force, the Austrians knew any force under the command of the Prussian King posed a great threat. Moreover, Frederick II demonstrated his ability to overcome and defeat larger enemy armies with fewer men.

¹¹⁷ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 203-204; 208.

¹¹⁸ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 239.

¹¹⁹ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 240-241.

Austrian generals such as Leopold Joseph von Daun (1705-1766) became a notable commander for the Austrian forces defeating the Prussians in many battles and implementing flexibility and maneuverability in the Austrian field forces.¹²⁰ Frederick II admired Daun for his ability to counter the “Oblique Order” and surprise the Prussian forces. By the beginning of the Seven Years’ War in Europe, the Prussian forces were largely left to fight against the Austrians, French, and Russians simultaneously. Though Great Britain supplied the Prussians with money and supplies, it was largely the armies of Prussia fighting against the full forces of the enemy alliance alone. Frederick’s enemies began to learn and adopt new tactics of their own against the Prussians learning from their past mistakes. This combined with a decimated economy, population, and infrastructure made the Prussian army survive with the death of Russian Czarina Elizabeth (1709-1762) and the crowning of Peter III (1728-1762).¹²¹ The final victory of Frederick II at the Battle of Burkensdorf (1762) ended the long conflict which began in Silesia twenty-two years ago and initiated the peace at Hubertsberg.¹²²

The end of the Seven Years’ War set in motion future wars of Europe not only contained to the European continent but also North America. Prussia along with Great Britain gained notable territorial gains with Great Britain being in better position than the depleted state of Prussia.¹²³ The Prussian army under Frederick II suffered tens of thousands of casualties depleting much of the male population and the Prussian treasury. Though Frederick’s wars were costly, Prussia was formally recognized as a major European power and a contender for influence over the many German states in the long run. The balance and power shifted greatly

¹²⁰ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 213-215.

¹²¹ Ritter, *Sword and the Scepter*, 31-32.

¹²² Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 255-257.

¹²³ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 258-259.

within central Europe with the small state of Prussia distinguishing itself as a model for future European armies.¹²⁴

French, Austrian, Russian, Swedish, British, and various others sent military advisors to Prussia to learn their tactics and drill. Prussia quickly became the image of European armies and the ability to use flexible maneuvers against static opponents.¹²⁵ Frederick II and the Prussians gained legendary status amongst the European monarchs facing impossible odds and winning multiple victories on various fronts. Frederick II, over the next years, spent his time in peace reforming various administrative and governmental entities within Prussia.¹²⁶ The Prussian Army even in peace time maintained fanatical discipline and protected their dynasty vigorously. Blanning states that, "Rising at 4 a.m. he began his day with a searching inspection, imposing on his fellow officers a regime so rigorous that many sought to reign."¹²⁷ Frederick's economic policies sought to also improve the life of the peasant population who had given so much to the defense of the fatherland which it was coined.¹²⁸

Frederick II also in his later years began the process of annexation of Polish territory and joining these lands to the state of Prussia.¹²⁹ In 1786, the great King of Prussia died passing the throne to a lesser man Frederick William II (1744-1797) who inherited a prosperous state both economically and militarily. Frederick William II and his predecessor Frederick William III (1770-1840) initiated a static unchanging doctrine in the Prussian military. Frederick William II during his short reign failed to evolve the very principles of dynamic reaction that made the Prussian force so dominant in the years of Frederick II.¹³⁰ The Prussian Army from 1740 to 1806

¹²⁴ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 71.

¹²⁵ Blanning Pg 268-269

¹²⁶ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 70.

¹²⁷ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 99.

¹²⁸ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 213.

¹²⁹ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 286-287.

¹³⁰ Kitchen, *Military History of Germany*, 31-33.

changed little. Its tactics, uniforms, drilling, discipline, and politics remained identical for 66 years.¹³¹ The Prussians believed that the victories of Frederick II solidified its power enough not to change and adopt newer revolutionary modern military tactics that were being developed in France and other European nations. Prussia in essence remained a relic of the past living off past victories and glory from decades before.¹³²

The French Revolution and the events following its ascent to a modern military are applicably noticeable in the Prussian military during the 1780-1790s in which the Prussians under performed in numerous campaigns and battles such as Valmy (1792).¹³³ The Prussian army though large did not utilize its advantage of surprise and maneuver which distinguished it in the past years. Largely during the campaigns in and around France during the Revolutionary period, the Prussian army did very little only making brief uncoordinated attempts at bluffing the ever-growing French army. The decisive factor that the Prussians prided themselves on evolved into indecisive actions without solid military objectives or planning. The Prussian army on paper signified the most effective fighting force in Europe notable because of its legacy, but in reality, it lost much of its former understanding of tactical effectiveness and operational planning.¹³⁴ The Prussian Army was the same army of the Seven Years War that it was by the 1790s. In essence, it was a museum piece by Napoleon's time. It was at the battle of Valmy that French General Francois Christophe Kellermann led the rag-tag French military which smashed the "invincible" Prussian army effectively saving Paris. The French army commanded by Kellermann comprised of French royal troops and inexperienced revolutionary troops that joined together to fight the professional armies of Prussia and Austria.

¹³¹ Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 23-36.

¹³² Demeter, *The German Officer-Corps*, 6-7.

¹³³ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 288-289.

¹³⁴ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 288.

The performance of the Prussian army demonstrated the great need for reforms in the wake of the old era of warfare against a modern inspired revolutionary France. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) who present at the battle stated that, “Here and today, a new epoch in the history of the world has begun, and you can boast you were present at its birth.”¹³⁵ This comes in light of Goethe analyzing the conditions and morale of the Prussian troops after Valmy and their lack of pride or ambition. Goethe in his book, *Die Kanonade von Valmy 1792*, describes the poor state of the Prussian forces and their utter state of existence.¹³⁶ Even in the wake of the disastrous performance at the Battle of Valmy, the Prussian army changed little sticking to its traditions and linear tactics of Frederick II. The First Coalition in 1792-1797 proved disastrous for the allies against the precarious situation in Revolutionary France. Even with the French forces fighting on multiple fronts and outnumbered by the larger allied contingents, the Prussian Army acted indecisively and did nothing to press its advantage when in position to do so. The Prussian state under Frederick William II remained in a state of decay along with its army and its economy. The Prussian army continued to remain in this state until reforms were forced upon them to adopt a modern military doctrine modeled off Napoleon I (1769-1821).¹³⁷

With the crowning of Frederick William III in 1797, Prussian remained isolated from any form of conflict against the French choosing to remain neutral in the affairs of Europe.¹³⁸ Frederick William III decided that a position of neutrality with the French Republic guaranteed a better position to peace in the grander scheme of European affairs. However, this ill-advised

¹³⁵ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 88.

¹³⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die Kanonade von Valmy 1792* (Paderborn, Germany: Urheberrechtlich Geschütztes Material, 2011).

¹³⁷ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 107-108.

¹³⁸ Andrew Roberts, *Napoleon: A Life* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), 292-293.

method seemed acceptable, but as the French Revolutionary Army continued its success, a great deal of pressure began mounting for Frederick William III in which Austria, Great Britain, and Russia urged for a coalition of powers to stop Napoleon's swift advance into central Europe. The disastrous Battles of Ulm (1804) and Austerlitz (1805) during the Third Coalition initiated a response from the Prussian King whether he would take military action against the French or remain neutral in the affairs surrounding his kingdom.¹³⁹ By this point, the Prussian army and its leadership failed to respond or learn from the victories of Napoleon Bonaparte over the Austrian and Russian armies. Furthermore, Napoleon began moving troops into various German nations such as Bavaria, Hannover, Hesse-Kassel, and others threatening Prussian influence over these areas.

The response from Frederick William III gave no indication that Prussia desired war with France and even began delicate negotiations of peace. This is not to argue that Napoleon believed the Prussian army as weak. Napoleon greatly admired and respected the Prussian army and its staunch discipline and traditions. Andrew Roberts in his book, *Napoleon: A Life*, notes that Napoleon remarked to Joachim Murat (1767-1815), "Your role is to be conciliatory, very conciliatory with the Prussians, and not to do anything to upset them, he wrote. Faced with a power like Prussia, one can't take it slowly enough"¹⁴⁰ The state of Prussia by early 1806 drifted back and forth between the peace party and the war party with the war party led by Duchess Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (1776-1810), wife of Frederick William III. William III was both timid and indecisive, began gathering political and social support from the Prussian aristocracy and lower population to counter the actions of Napoleon.¹⁴¹ Louise's early death in 1810 made

¹³⁹ Roberts, *Napoleon*, 378-380.

¹⁴⁰ Roberts, *Napoleon*, 410.

¹⁴¹ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 304-305.

her a symbol for German women going as far as the creation of The Order of Louise as a symbol of Germanic pride. This order carried on becoming Queen Louise League and was used in Nazi Propaganda during the 20th century.¹⁴² German women throughout the reign of Prussian history became national symbols of unification and royalty amongst the various Hohenzollern houses. Prussian and German women alike were considered the bearers of future Prussian soldiers and considered an integral part of society. Their status only continued to grow throughout the 19th century up to the creation of the Third Reich. Nazi propagandists used images of strong German women working in the fields and within the factories to give the impression of a unified people and moreover to enforce an ideology of purity.¹⁴³ This idea of a pure bloodline is reminiscent to that of Prussian history and eventually all German history by the 1930s-40s.

As Frederick William III feared, the war with France approached the doorstep of the neutral kingdom of Prussia and the situation pointed towards war as the last option. Queen Louise contained a powerful alliance with many Prussian ministers becoming very popular with the courts and the Prussian populace. Her very cautious husband William III hated war to a point he remarked, “I abhor war and know nothing greater on Earth than the preservation of peace and tranquility as the only system suited to the happiness of humankind...”¹⁴⁴ Prussian indecision to pick sides during the now Napoleonic Wars began to strain the diplomatic alliances between France, Austria, Great Britain, and Russia. The Prussian army, unlike the experienced and well-seasoned veterans of Napoleon’s *La Grande Armée*, remained stagnant to operational preparation.¹⁴⁵ The last and brief action the Prussian army saw was in 1792 at the Battle of

¹⁴² Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 115.

¹⁴³ Leila J. Rupp, “Mother of the “Volk”: The Image of Women in Nazi Ideology,” *Signs* 3, no. 2 (1977): 362-379, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173289>.

¹⁴⁴ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 298-299.

¹⁴⁵ William O. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms 1786-1813* (New York, NY: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), 74-75.

Valmy fourteen years prior. Queen Louise and Prince Louis Ferdinand (1772-1806) now gathered a large contingent of political and social support for the declaration of war against France. Baron vom Stein (1757-1831) and Karl August von Hardenberg (1750-1822), both key reformers in the eventual unification of Germany, argued for reform first as they knew Prussia's administration, military, and economy lacked decades of reform compared to the French Empire.¹⁴⁶ In the end, the pleas of Hardenberg and Stein's proposals fell on deaf ears against the temperament of Frederick William III.

The last incident that thrust the Prussians into war with France arrived in the form of Napoleon's creation of the Confederation of the Rhine¹⁴⁷ and the dismantlement of the ancient Holy Roman Empire which urged Queen Louise to convince William III to draw a declaration of war against France on October 9th, 1806, leading to one of the most decisive defeats in modern military history collapsing the entire Prussian state and ushering in the long overdue reforms. These reforms stretch broadly across the political, diplomatic, administrative, cultural, and military situation in Prussia removing the old feudalistic approach to the state and replacing it with a modern form of government.¹⁴⁸ Though the reforms were instrumental in creating a modern Prussian state, Prussian tradition and the emphasis on military drill and order continued to be the epicenter of Prussian culture. The disastrous Fourth Coalition in 1806 began the foundational stages of the modernization of Prussia and eventually Germany throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

The battles of Jena and Auerstadt began the events that transcended the Prussian military to the great power post-Napoleonic wars. This defeat ultimately forced the Prussian leadership

¹⁴⁶ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 103-104.

¹⁴⁷ Roberts, *Napoleon*, 406-407.

¹⁴⁸ Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter*, 48-49.

and nobility not only to adopt military changes to the army but also broaden reforms politically and economically.¹⁴⁹ These much-needed reforms ushered in an era of Prussian nationalism that ultimately in time began to spill over into the political and cultural domination of the German states such as Saxony, Bavaria, Hannover, and the Westphalia regions closer to France.¹⁵⁰ Prussia, largely up to the point before the defining battles of Jena and Auerstadt, remained neutral in their stance on revolutionary France. Napoleon's remarkable victories over the combined forces of the Austrian and Russian forces at the battles of Ulm and Austerlitz in 1805 demonstrated the absolute resolve of the French army and its ability to win decisive battles. Though Prussia under King William III hesitated to engage in the Third Coalition, political pressure began to mount within the Prussian government. Unlike the Austrian and Russian armies who at this point were learning from mistakes made and learning Napoleon's manner of advanced warfare, the Prussians were nothing more than a museum piece largely unchanged since Frederick II twenty years earlier.¹⁵¹ The Prussian army from the top down consisted of outdated linear tactics, weapons, and old generals with an average age of seventy years.¹⁵² These generals contained little understanding in which warfare consistently changed with Napoleon's *Grande Armee* and the way Napoleon's forces moved and fought with incredible speed and precision. The Battles of Jena and Auerstadt began the catalyst of the reformed Prussian state and the necessary changes to enlightenment.¹⁵³ Many nations are born from victories in war and solidify their governments from these victories.

¹⁴⁹ Kitchen, *A Military History of Germany*, 34-35.

¹⁵⁰ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 386-395.

¹⁵¹ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 91.

¹⁵² Demeter, *The German Officer-Corps*, 8.

¹⁵³ Feuchtwanger, *Prussia: Myth and Reality*, 99,103.

For the Prussians, it existed in the form of a humiliating defeat and capitulation of its state and sacred honor that pushed them to become one of the most dominant nationalistic (*Germandom*) military forces throughout the mid-19th and 20th century.¹⁵⁴ *Germandom* is a modern term in which Germans placed their lineage of ancestry dating back to the ancient Germanic tribes before and after the Roman Empire. This should not be confused with the Prussian conception of their ancestry who place their lineage within the Norse tribes and more particularly the Teutonic Order. Interestingly enough, some modern historians consider Prussians to have a mix lineage of Polish and Lithuanian ancestry contrary to the typical Nazi propaganda during the 20th century.¹⁵⁵ Though even throughout Prussia's short history, they still considered themselves separate from other "German" speaking peoples and viewed themselves with a higher degree of perfection and more notably arrogance. To understand the Prussian mindset of the 19th and 20th centuries, it is critical to also understand the various ideologies and traditions they held amongst themselves and why they spread them to other German regions.

The Prussians declared war on France in 1806, being joined by Great Britain, Russia, Saxony, and Sweden, also known as the Fourth Coalition (1806-1807). Austria signed the Peace of Pressburg in 1805 ultimately excluding themselves from the Fourth Coalition.¹⁵⁶ Also, Austria did not have the capacity to wage war with Napoleon after the mauling of its army that same year. Great Britain up to this point did not engage Napoleon's forces directly within continental Europe; rather, they only harassed the French via its powerful Royal Navy which previously the year before decimated the combined French and Spanish fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.¹⁵⁷ Ultimately, this setback for Napoleon dashed his plans for a future invasion of the

¹⁵⁴ Breuille, *Austria, Prussia and the Making of Germany*, 22-23.

¹⁵⁵ Werner May, *The German National Catechism* (Breslau, Germany: Verlag von Heinrich Handel, 1934), 22-26.

¹⁵⁶ Roberts, *Napoleon*, 393-394.

¹⁵⁷ Roberts, *Napoleon*, 374-375.

British mainland and refocused his attention on continental Europe itself. Napoleon's recent victories against Austria and Russia in 1805 also forced William III of Prussia to cut ties with Britain as Napoleon demanded the enforcement of his continental system which prohibited European nations to trade with Great Britain.¹⁵⁸

In 1806 with the dismantlement of the Holy Roman Empire, the Prussians under the leadership of the timid William III and his wife Queen Louise began the mobilization of the Prussian Army that had not mobilized since the Battle of Valmy in 1792 fourteen years prior. Napoleon's demonstration of his decisive and strategic tactical victories over his opponents did not force the Prussian military to adopt and learn from this new way of fighting. As Prussia remained static and indecisive during the last twenty years, French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's *Grande Armee* grew into a well-organized, disciplined machine consisting of many hardened veterans and a vigorous nationalistic zeal.¹⁵⁹ Napoleon over the course of many battles proved that his men were more than ready for any circumstance. The Prussians, though very well organized and trained, did not have the veterans that comprised the *Grande Armee* nor the leadership required to plan operations on the scale of Napoleon and his marshals. Though no evidence suggests that William III of Prussia knew the war could not be won, which explains his stance on neutrality. By 1806 and the mounting pressure of the war party led by Queen Louise, the Prussian Army began to mobilize for the inevitable war with Napoleon I. The formation of the Confederation of the Rhine and Napoleon's movement into German speaking territories such as Hannover could not go unnoticed any longer by Prussia.

From the moment the Prussian Gardes du Corps sharpened their swords on the French embassy in Berlin in 1806, the diplomatic situation ultimately deteriorated and no peace between

¹⁵⁸ Geoffrey Ellis, *The Napoleonic Empire* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 109-110.

¹⁵⁹ Ellis, *The Napoleonic Empire*, 54-58.

the victorious French under Emperor Napoleon or the proud Prussians under William III transpired. Bering states that, “Cocky Prussian officers were seen sharpening their sabres on the steps of the French embassy in Berlin. But things had stagnated since Frederick the Great’s day. “Behind the fine facade, all was mildewed,” Carl von Clausewitz noted.”¹⁶⁰ The Prussian military was a parade-ground army of what military historian David Chandler called “walking muskets,” to whom war had become an abstract, geometric system. The Russian army under Czar Alexander I (1777-1825) did not have the forces necessary to assist Prussia directly before Napoleon mobilized. The Russian army could not mobilize the forces it needed until late 1806.¹⁶¹ The Prussians, did not anticipate how quickly Napoleon’s Grande Armee could effectively and precisely mobilize in such a brief period of time catching them by surprise before the coalition could join forces.

The genius of Napoleon’s victories was to separate and isolate allied forces and defeat them one by one never allowing them to join together. The only allied force the Prussians contained in the field were a small contingent of 24,000 Saxon troops who in theory helped little in the grand scheme of the upcoming battle as the alliance between Prussia and Saxony existed only on paper and shaky at best.¹⁶² Nothing could prepare the two allied armies for the decisive engagement and overall modern military forces of Napoleon arrayed against them. Lastly, the now mobilized French and Prussian armies sent ultimatums to each other with each calling for the other to retire from the state of Saxony and both declining. The situation also deteriorated on

¹⁶⁰ “Prussian Maneuvers,” Henrik Bering, accessed January 28, 2023, <https://www.hoover.org/research/prussian-maneuvers>.

¹⁶¹ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 305.

¹⁶² Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 310. Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 91.

the 6th of October 1806 even further when both Prussia and France gained intelligence of each other's 200,000 troops now opposing each other concentrated in and around Saxony.¹⁶³

Both the French and Prussian armies were similar in size, but the difference boiled down to leadership and structural command. The Prussian army was led by three major commanders, Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick (1735-1806), Frederick Louis, Prince of Hohenlohe (1746-1818), and Ernst von Ruchel (1754-1823).¹⁶⁴ The original plan of the Prussian army called for a defensive approach gradually engaging and strategically retreating towards Berlin giving time for the Russian army under general Levin August von Bennigsen (1745-1826) to arrive with 100,000 Russians. This plan ultimately called for caution but did not satisfy the war party who saw this as a demoralizing factor for the Prussian army. All three Prussian generals failed to solidify a plan and rather focused on settling old rivalries leading to the decision by the Duke of Brunswick to adopt a bolder plan of attack.¹⁶⁵ The Prussian Army's leadership consisted of veteran aristocrats from previous wars during the reign of Frederick II, many of whom were over 70 years of age by 1806. Prussian officers unlike French officers were recruited from the nobility and given these positions based solely off status rather than merit or action. Napoleon's system allowed for citizens of the lowest order to earn their officer positions expanding the capabilities, variety, and flexibility of his army. These differences between France and Prussia demonstrated a clash of actual ideologies rooted in government and society.¹⁶⁶

Prussian soldiers, unlike their French counterparts were constantly drilled and beaten to instill order and discipline creating low morale. Prussian officers and generals did not have the same connection that Napoleon created within his *Grande Armee* and furthermore amongst his

¹⁶³ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 91-92.

¹⁶⁴ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 296-298.

¹⁶⁵ Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 33-34. Roberts, *Napoleon*, 414.

¹⁶⁶ Ellis, *The Napoleonic Empire*, 58-61.

generals. Prussian generals did not have that leadership quality from the top down, and ultimately, the indecisive personality of King William III did not make the situation better. The Prussian attitude remained rooted in the ways of Frederick II constantly hanging on to the coattails of past glory failing to realize that the world and ways of war changed dynamically. Ultimately, nations such as Austria and Russia and their wars with the French propelled them to greater heights than the Prussians in 1806.¹⁶⁷ Russia and Austria immediately began to reform their army years ago before the Fourth Coalition and understood that the linear tactics of the past were no match against Napoleon's corps system and furthermore his introduction of battery and massed column formations. The clash between the Prussians and the French in 1806 only solidified the need for Prussian reform when tens of thousands of Prussian soldiers were killed or captured during Jena and Auerstadt.

As each side did not back down, Napoleon and his marshals began to move rapidly throughout Saxony still unaware of the main Prussian Army. As the French columns moved on the narrow Saxon dirt roads, many smaller battles or skirmishes took place before the main forces clashed at Jena and Auerstadt. The first encounters between the French and Prussian forces occurred at the battles of Schleiz and Saalfeld with the French Corps under Jean Lannes (1769-1809) consisting of 12,000 men and the Prussian division under Prince Louis Ferdinand of 9,000 men.¹⁶⁸ The Prussian force also contained a small contingent of Saxon troops who ultimately, upon meeting the skirmishing units of the French Corps, broke and fled the field in disorder. The Prussian division attempted to salvage the situation, but the faster French cavalry and the new and effective French skirmishing forces broke the Prussian advance. The French were also at an advantage due to the superiority of organization of the Napoleonic order of battle.

¹⁶⁷ Breuilly, *The Making of Germany*, 16-17.

¹⁶⁸ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 306.

They were able to concentrate and outflank the static Prussian force in every phase of the battle. The Prussian forces also were in a position with the river Saale to their back making an orderly retreat almost impossible. Towards the end of the battle with the Prussian and Saxon armies in full retreat, Prince Ferdinand attempted a heroic charge to create a rearguard action for his battered division only to meet the French 10th Hussar calvary and be given the option of surrender. With his refusal of surrender, Prince Ferdinand received a saber thrust to his chest killing him almost instantly.¹⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the Prussian main armies now under Prince Hohenlohe and Ernst von Ruchel still lacked any information on where the main French force under Napoleon was. Unknown to them, the plan to cross the Saale River and cut Napoleon from his reinforcements did not materialize as Napoleon's main force moved rapidly to the Prussian left flank cutting the main Prussian army off from Berlin.¹⁷⁰ Napoleon's rapid movements kept him one step in front of the Prussian generals demonstrating the importance of quick and decisive action. This adoption of the corps system allowed Napoleon's army to be broken down into multiple independent command structures with Napoleon and the Imperial Guard remaining at the center. This is called the *Le Bataillon Carré* in which each corps acted independently as its own army relaying all information to Napoleon himself at the center.¹⁷¹ The Prussian army did not have this system as each main body depended solely on the few generals for orders. It is evident that the slow lumbering Prussian army could not match the speed and quickness of Napoleon and his

¹⁶⁹ Robert E. Everson, *Marshal Jean Lannes in the Battles of Saalfeld, Pultusk, and Friedland, 1806 to 1807: The Application of Combined Arms in the Opening Battle* (Auckland, New Zealand: Pickle Publishing Partners, 2014), 40-45.

¹⁷⁰ Roberts, *Napoleon*, 414-415.

¹⁷¹ Kitchen, *A Military History of Germany*, 34-35.

marshals. As a result, they were at an absolute disadvantage regardless of Prussian discipline and drill.

After the battles of Saale and Schleiz, Napoleon did not know the true whereabouts of the main Prussian contingent, but he gauged that the main force existed towards the east placing his forces in between the Prussian army and Berlin. The Prussian Army could not withdraw to the capital as the Prussian commanders completely underestimated the speed of Napoleon's army therefore making a critical mistake by allowing Napoleon to position himself between the two main Prussian forces and Berlin. Once Napoleon agreed with his commanders that the main Prussian force existed towards his left flank, he gave the order for the entire army to move east where he met the Prussian army at Jena and Auerstadt.¹⁷²

The Prussians divided their forces into two with the main contingent at Auerstadt under the command of Brunswick and the second army at Jena under the command of Prince Hohenlohe. King William III of Prussia remained with the main army at Auerstadt where he ultimately gave or received little information on the situation. The Prussian cavalry whose reputation as the 'best' in Europe failed to gather the critical evidence needed to position the main Prussian forces to face Napoleon. Napoleon's main force commanded by himself met the Prussian army at Jena on October 14th, 1806 believing that it was the main Prussian army in which Napoleon remarked after the battle that he made a mistake.¹⁷³ Napoleon sent Marshal Louis Nicolas Davout (1770-1823) and his corps to the northeast to outflank the Prussians at Jena, Davout however encountered the main Prussian army. As each side began to receive reports of the other's positions, the Prussians prepared to fight. They ultimately had little choice. Napoleon also began the main thrust at Jena where he sent in light skirmishers, cavalry, and

¹⁷² Roberts, *Napoleon*, 414-418.

¹⁷³ Roberts, *Napoleon*, 420-421.

artillery to gauge the enemy's strength and position before he moved forward with the main columns of his *Grande Armee*.

The introduction of light and mixed tactics by the French proved to be an important piece of Napoleon's modern military reforms. These troops moved ahead of the main columns to harass the enemies' positions and relay information back to central command.¹⁷⁴ The Prussian army experimented with this design during the later years of Frederick II's reign but ultimately never adopted it. However, many Prussian reformers urged for its implementation into the army. Again, the old Prussian aristocracy did not continue to build and reform their army, and these elements within the French army proved critical to their success.¹⁷⁵ The morning of the battle presented heavy dense fog that prevented Napoleon from understanding the entirety of the situation. The contention from Prussian officers and men at the battle was that the soldiers were in good spirits and singing. Prussian soldiers sang old songs such as the *Hohenfriedberger Marsch* which signified a great victory over the Austrians during the reign of Frederick II.¹⁷⁶ The *Marsch* is also symbolic of the German Kaiser in later years celebrating the victory over the Austrians at the Battle of Koniggratz in 1866. Opposite, the French during their main advance sang the French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, as they reached the order of battle. Napoleon gave Marshal Jean Lannes the order to advance the main army forward for the assault against what Napoleon believed to be the main Prussian army. As the French advanced, small engagements between French skirmishers and Saxons began, pushing the Saxons backwards in a confusing manner. The Prussian commander Hohenlohe during the initial stages of the battle was still present at Prussian camp leaving the entire Prussian left flank open for attack. A division of

¹⁷⁴ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 103.

¹⁷⁵ Kitchen, *A Military History of Germany*, 30-34.

¹⁷⁶ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 194-195.

20,000 Prussians were given the order to march to the left flank and secure the situation.

Hohenlohe became outraged that an order was given without his permission.¹⁷⁷

The slow and ineffectiveness of Prussia's old generals placed the army at Jena in a precarious position. Prussian generals seemed more concerned with authority than the situation evolving around them. Each army stopped for a time due to the heaviness of the fog which allowed the Prussians to get into battle formation. A Prussian sergeant from his memoir states that, "The platoons were already dispatched to columns. All officers were dismounted. The drummers were drumming and the pipers playing. We marched to the deployment zone with officers on the flanks, then we stopped and deployed in battle formation. Once the division was in position, our platoon was signaled to march forward. We loaded our muskets during marching."¹⁷⁸ Another Prussian high-ranking officer stated that, "I was right behind the formation, with an officer of the fusiliers from the neighboring battalion, we shook hands and promised to support each other in the bravest manner. A moment later the prince Hohenlohe himself appeared riding up the line from the left flank. The soldiers of each battalion cheered loudly as he passed by. All my troops were in high spirits. Their cheers ring in my ears to this day. The enthusiasm shown by my men made me proud."¹⁷⁹ The church tower which is visible in the village of Vierzehnheiligen due to its size became the point at which the Prussian army stopped on the commands of Frederick William III. There are very few sources from Prussian soldiers and officers during the battles of Jena and Auerstadt, and ones that survived demonstrate the discipline and conviction of the Prussian army. The Prussians did not lack in training or

¹⁷⁷ "The War of 1806 Essay Concerning the War Napoleon Fought in 1806 Against Prussia. This War had Two Major Battles, Jena and Auerstedt," Morphy, accessed January 28, 2023, <https://www.writework.com/essay/war-1806-essay-concerning-war-napoleon-fought-1806-against>.

¹⁷⁸ Morphy, "The War of 1806 Essay."

¹⁷⁹ Morphy, "The War of 1806 Essay."

courage but rather in leadership. Years later during the era of eventual unification by the Prussians, many military historians and reformers noted that for all great militaries to achieve the goals set before them, they required even greater leadership.

Hohenlohe's orders from the King are not to accept any engagement and to draw back off the advancing enemy. Hohenlohe's mission is to screen for the main army that is operating twenty to thirty miles away from Jena at Auerstadt. Hohenlohe does not engage in the main attack but chooses to take resistance being reassured that his close lines can provide maximum firepower to the advancing French. Unknown to the Prussian commander is that before he meets the main French advance Napoleon ordered his light skirmishes forward. The French skirmishing forces upon reaching the plateau and the village of Vierzeñnheiligen immediately spotted the forces under Hohenlohe arrayed in perfect order as they were drilled to do. A Prussian soldier remarks that, "On the crest of the hill ahead of us we could see part of the French army engaged with our vanguard. Several French were beginning to spread over the field ahead of us, some of them moved closer than fifty feet to our regiment. Our cannons had unlimbered some distance ahead of us and were firing at Vierzeñnheiligen."¹⁸⁰ Also upon the chaos developing in the village of Vierzeñnheiligen, a Prussian cavalry regiment retreating could only be stopped with a friendly volley from their own cannons according to Prussian rules. Instances like this in the old tradition of the army only instilled fear and low morale for the troops. A Prussian artillery officer reported that, "They refused to fire! The men were clearly confused, as was made obvious by the astonished cry of one officer: "Sir are we supposed to fire at our own men?" Apparently, he believed we had mistaken them for enemies."¹⁸¹ Eventually the Prussian cavalry rallied together.

¹⁸⁰ Morphy, "The War of 1806 Essay."

¹⁸¹ Morphy, "The War of 1806 Essay."

However, the damage to morale was unmistakable amongst the Prussian soldiers now in confusion on the situation happening. A Prussian soldier says much about this confusion:

By this time, we had lost confidence in our cavalry. They were held back for the rest of the day. They were not placed with a purpose, or a plan and no single officer was given command of the cavalry. We were beginning to take noticeable losses, yet the bulk of the enemy was hidden. A thick curtain of fog made their positions almost invisible to us. Enemy skirmishers used every hole and ditch as cover. Our lines fired volley after volley often without a target to shoot at. The enemy had occupied the village buildings, making it impossible to approach. We were lined up a few hundred feet from their artillery batteries. Canister fire swept through our ranks leaving gaps of devastation, which we could not fill. The field in front of the village entrance was a horrible bloodbath. The enemy's primary target were the officers, however these held firm until the order would come to fall back.¹⁸²

Like the soldiers in the Prussian army, the officers were indoctrinated with supreme order and obedience and to go against a superior's orders held severe consequences and even death. These ideologies were considered an act of desertion even in unbearable conditions of musket and artillery fire soldiers remained in formation.¹⁸³ This is the way Frederick II fought and trained his army decades before, to place discipline more than anything else, but Frederick II nor any of his officers faced the new military doctrine arrayed against the Prussians in 1806. This new form of war did not register with the traditional form of Prussian fighting, and the Prussian leaders themselves could not effectively counter it because static reforms and moreover indecisiveness.¹⁸⁴ This indecisiveness became one of the cornerstones of future Prussian military strategists who used the disasters at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt to their advantage against drawbacks and opposition within the army. Even during the era of Imperial Germany and the Third Reich, military men of Prussian heritage stressed the importance of past defeats and why these defeats were critical for constant military reform.

¹⁸² Morphy, "The War of 1806 Essay."

¹⁸³ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 312.

¹⁸⁴ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 305-307.

As thousands of French skirmishes engaged the main Prussian lines, the Prussian regiments fired multiple volleys into the village in vain as the Prussian forces did not have cover in addition to their deployment in open field. The Prussian general Hohenlohe expected to encounter the main French lines and did not expect the French “mixed formations” of skirmishers, cavalry, and cannon. These decisions and lack of command structure ultimately cost the Prussians thousands of lives before the main phase of Jena and Auerstadt began. A Prussian soldier states that, “Our cavalry was lined up alongside the infantry! They held out under canister fire till men and horses could bear it no longer.”¹⁸⁵ After an hour under intense firepower from the French skirmishers and indecision from the Prussian command, the Prussian soldiers were given order to drive the French out from the village. An artillery soldier states that, “Finally our artillery crews requested permission to use incendiary grenades. This was granted, and the village was soon aflame. Now, the enemy was forced out of the buildings.”¹⁸⁶ Napoleon still assumed that the Prussian main army is in front of him and does not attack as his 70,000 strong main army is still getting in position to attack. As Napoleon’s skirmishers peppered the main Prussian lines, more reinforcements began arriving for Napoleon and positioning themselves around the Prussian flanks. The ineffectiveness of the Prussian cavalry did not see these maneuvers as they were not given the order to do so. This form of Napoleonic fighting with skirmishers ahead of main army allowed Napoleon to pin the enemy element in one position whilst screening his true intentions. The Prussian army under Frederick II did not have the mixed elements of skirmishers, artillery, and cavalry working together nor the size compared to the French, but they did effectively use their cavalry to screen and gather invaluable information. Frederick II constantly stressed the importance of intelligence and issued orders to his generals and commanders on where the enemy positions were always. Napoleon

¹⁸⁵ Morphy, “The War of 1806 Essay.”

¹⁸⁶ Morphy, “The War of 1806 Essay.”

remarked months later on his victorious entrance into Berlin and visiting Frederick II's tomb that, "Hats off gentlemen, if he were alive, we wouldn't be here today."¹⁸⁷ Napoleon admired Frederick II and his past victories giving him a great deal of respect and honor. The Prussian leadership at Jena did nothing to gather information or to support the main divisions.

The Saxon division supporting the Prussian flank near Auerstadt, who were not engaged, could see the entire situation at Vierzehnheiligen with a Saxon officer stating that, "We were forced to witness a shocking scene. The village was almost burning to the ground. Yet we were pleased to see, that our Prussian allies had mastered the situation. However, more enemy troops were forming up."¹⁸⁸ Once the fog began to lift on the battlefield of Jena at 11:30 am, Napoleon sent orders for all divisions to attack at the precise locations given to his corps commanders. Soult IV's corps engaged the Prussian left flank and annihilated it scattering Prussian regiments across the battlefield. Instead of pursuing the broken Prussian formations, he wielded his corps left to attack Hohenlohe's main center. During the same time, Marshal Michel Ney's (1769-1815) cavalry division, Jean Lannes's corps, and Napoleon leading the Imperial Guard attack Hohenlohe simultaneously. The main French force is now twice the size of the Prussians at Jena making the situation unsalvageable. Superior French tactics and infantry break the Prussian center collapsing the entire army. Prussians up to this point have never engaged or seen the French Attack Column which combined with mass artillery marched through the gaps in the Prussian line.¹⁸⁹

The French in previous battles used mass and numbers to break through key points in the enemy formation something the Prussian military failed to recognize in its years of neutrality and stubbornness. A Prussian soldier upon seeing tens of thousands of advancing French stated that,

¹⁸⁷ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 307.

¹⁸⁸ Morphy, "The War of 1806 Essay."

¹⁸⁹ Kitchen, *A Military History of Germany*, 35.

“By now the superior numbers of enemy troops were fully revealed. They began an aggressive charge, with drums and music playing. They were everywhere. We were forced to give ground, and as we did the men’s morale began to wear away.”¹⁹⁰ By 12:00 pm, Marshal Murat’s heavy cavalry entered the battle vigorously pursuing the Prussian army capturing and killing thousands of Prussian soldiers. The Prussian army ultimately could not retreat towards its friendly territory due to Napoleon’s main force’s placement between them and Berlin. General Hohenlohe in a last desperate attempt to stop the mass route of the Prussian army ordered General Ernst von Ruchel and his two divisions to attack the main French center ultimately ending in the complete destruction of the Prussian divisions ending the battle of Jena. The Prussian army lost multiple standards and thousands of dead with Prussian casualties at Jena consisting of 26,000 dead or wounded compared to 6,000 French dead or wounded. Napoleon’s victory over the Prussians signified to European monarchs that absolute military reforms were needed to combat Napoleon and that combined strength of arms and mass mobilization (*Levee en masse*)¹⁹¹ must be a necessity. Prussia not only lost its entire army, but also lost its state. Though the humiliation did not end at Jena, the battle of Auerstadt 20 miles north drove the final nail in the coffin for King Frederick William III and the notorious Prussians.

As the battle of Jena became apparent to Napoleon, it did not register with King Frederick William III who believed he was fighting the main French Army. In fact, William III only faced one singular French Corps under Davout. Duke Brunswick immediately understood the situation and began the necessary procedures to attack the French columns. Prussian artillery began to open fire on the French battle formations to great extent. Brunswick though old did salvage the situation for a short period of time unaware that half of the Prussian army twenty miles south just routed

¹⁹⁰ Morphy, “The War of 1806 Essay.”

¹⁹¹ Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 28.

from the field and that Napoleon now began giving orders to send divisions north to support Davout's Corps. The Prussian leadership did not communicate very well during the two battles which ultimately left them in a confused and static position. Everything that Frederick II taught his generals did not accumulate into rapid actions based on the situation even though the main Prussian army numbering 65,000 men outnumbered the French Corps of 27,000 men.¹⁹²

Even with the tactical and military superiority of Napoleon's army, the Prussians should have won a decisive victory at Auerstadt. As the battle began to unfold, Brunswick ordered his cavalry to attack the French squares at Hassenhausen under the command of the Prussian Junker Blucher. The entirety of the Prussian cavalry against the French squares and constant fire of French artillery using grape shot accumulated in a slaughter of men and animals. Brunswick upon seeing this ordered the entirety of the Prussian army to attack which they did in good order. The Prussian regiments moved in perfect unison as they were taught to do in the Prussian tradition of drill and discipline. The issue for the Prussian army stimulated from their linear formations which could not transition and reform compared to the French Corps system. Once the Prussians were in battle formation, they remained in that formation until a decisive variable occurred as in this case the route of the entire army.

The Prussian commanders could not understand how the French were able to move so quickly around the battlefield and attack at precise locations. Again, this reverts back to the notion of not studying and learning from the decades before and the French victories against the Austrians and Russian armies who by now already implemented the Napoleonic Corps system.¹⁹³ Also with the destruction of the Prussian cavalry now scattered many miles in every direction, the Prussian

¹⁹² J. Holland Rose, "A Report of the Battles of Jena-Auerstädt and the Surrender at Prenzlau," *The English Historical Review* 19, no. 75 (1904): 551-553, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/549384>.

¹⁹³ "Battle of Auerstädt, 14 October 1806," J. Rickard, accessed January 28, 2023, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_auerstadt.html.

leadership could not gather important information surrounding the events occurring. Cavalry for many millenniums were the eyes and ears of all military forces and the direct link of communication from the bottom up. Nevertheless, the Prussian attack stunned the French Corps, and each side pressed their advantage. The French situation from their perspective also became dire as they knew they were outnumbered 3:1 and perhaps 4:1 in many areas of the battlefield. As the battle carried on, Brunswick was carried from the battlefield from a fatal shot in which he died soon after. The Prussian army's last hope for a competent commander now faded. King William III did nothing to improve the situation as he depended entirely on his commanders. By noon, the entirety of the Prussian army collapsed, and King William III ordered a withdraw which eventually became a route. The main Prussian army was driven from the field by a singular French Corps sealing up the fate of a once proud Prussian military.

When Napoleon learned that a single French Corps under the command of Davout defeated the main Prussian Army he responded that, "Your marshal must be seeing double."¹⁹⁴ From that point forward, small contingents of Prussian troops were ruthlessly hunted down by Napoleon's cavalry. Martin van Creveld in his book, *Command in War*, stated that, "Thus Napoleon at Jena had known nothing about the main action that took place on that day; had forgotten all about two of his corps; did not issue orders to a third, and possibly a fourth; was taken by surprise by the action of a fifth; and, to cap it all, had one of his principal subordinates display the kind of disobedience that would have brought a lesser mortal before a firing squad. Despite all these faults in command, Napoleon won what was probably the great single triumph in his career."¹⁹⁵ Though the defeats at the battle of Jena and Auerstedt served as a grave reminder to the Prussian

¹⁹⁴ "Battle of Auerstadt, October 1806," Manteuffel, accessed January 28, 2023, <https://www.wargamingftb.net/?p=6537>.

¹⁹⁵ Martin van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 96.

government of the consequences of pride, arrogance, and failing to reform, the humiliation only began. Over the following months, the true indignity and embarrassment that many Prussians remember throughout their history accumulated in the manner in which Napoleon acted on his victory setting the stage for reforms on a broad scale. The seeds of vengeance and the rise of Germany through Prussianism became a historical turning point for the future of European history.

Chapter 3

Prussian Reform Period 1807-1815

The events following Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 demonstrated a great need for reform in the Prussian military and state starting with administrative and cultural changes. Prussian reforms specifically designed to cover a broad area with the military situation at the epicenter began as early as 1807 with the signing of the Treaty of Tilsit between Napoleon I (1769-1821) and Alexander I (1777-1825). The Treaty of Tilsit laid out the final humiliation for the Prussian King Frederick William III (1770-1840) and his now occupied country.¹⁹⁶ In section VIII of the Treaty of Tilsit, it states that, “The kingdom of Westphalia shall consist of the provinces ceded by his Majesty the King of Prussia, and of other states which are at present in possession of his Majesty the Emperor Napoleon.”¹⁹⁷ The Prussian state lost vast amounts of its territory. The Prussian state lost vast amounts of its territory. Christopher Summerville states that,

By the time of his death, Frederick's army was the envy of Europe, and his concepts regarding army structure, organization, tactics and drill much-copied... Thus, by 1806 war had been – to use Napoleon's word – ‘revolutionized’. The Prussian Army, however, remained rooted in the past: a fossil preserved in Baltic amber.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 98-99.

¹⁹⁷ “Treaty Between Prussia and France, Tilsit, 9 July, 1807,” C. M. Talleyrand, Count Kalkreuth, and Augustus Count Goltz, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://www.napoleon.org/en/history-of-the-two-empires/articles/treaty-between-prussia-and-france-tilsit-9-july-1807/>.

¹⁹⁸ Christopher Summerville, *Napoleon's Polish Gamble: Eylau and Friedland 1807* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Military, 2005), 39-40.



Figure 1. Preussen 1801-1807¹⁹⁹

Prussia further suffered the indignity of French troops occupying its major cities and key fortresses. Frederick William III did not get an invite to attend the meeting between Napoleon and Alexander which placed the Prussian state at the mercy of Napoleon I. The two main contingents of the Prussian army were destroyed and routed at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt. What remained of them scattered north and east being pursued ruthlessly by Napoleon's cavalry under his trusted marshals. As mentioned before during the Napoleonic period, Napoleon's greatest victory occurred against the Prussians due to the utter destruction of the military might of Prussia and the state entirely. What remained of the Prussian soldiers now attempted to reform against the rapidly advancing French in an attempt to fight a defensive war and hope for terms of conditions. Napoleon entered Berlin as a hero and immediately set out to visit the grave of Frederick II. He immediately set in place the Berlin Decree setting in motion the continental system. Many French troops are reported to have participated in large scale plundering of the

¹⁹⁹ "Under Prussian Rule 1793 – 1805," Ralph Salinger, accessed January 30, 2023, <http://www.jewishvilkaviskis.org/History%20Prussian%20Rule.html>.

city. The memories of Leuthen in 1757 remained very relevant to the memories of French soldiers. Napoleon knowing that smaller contingents of the Prussian army were forming in East Prussia took his time to marvel at the late king who he admired and studied. Napoleon took 340 Prussian standards and the sword of Frederick the Great. In 1814 with the allies approaching Paris, Frederick's sword and the 340 standards were burned by the French such is the nature of warfare.²⁰⁰ The old outdated Prussia died soon afterward with its aging generals only being replaced by younger officers and generals who led Prussia to its ultimate glory and set the path for a modern military.

The Prussian Army in Napoleon's terms was reduced to a fraction of what it had been and obligated to fill the ranks of the La Grande Armée with fresh troops whenever Napoleon needed them. Napoleon's desire and master plan from a historical perspective began with the conscription of tens of thousands of Germans into his military from various German states. This accomplished two goals. First, it replenished his ranks, and secondly, it released pressure from the French populace on the conscription mandates. Napoleon's army became a moving international military force comprised of various cultures and languages from Europe. Anton Wilhelm von L'Estocq (1738-1815), a major general by the climax of the Jena and Auerstadt campaign, began an attempt to salvage what remained of the Prussian army and link up with the main Russian contingent. L'Estocq marched 15,000 Prussian troops through February in freezing conditions fighting a brilliant rearguard action against Napoleon's cavalry. Citino states that, "a model of the way in which a flank march in the face of a near and powerful adversary should be conducted."²⁰¹ The Prussian Army before the Treaty of Tilsit saw its last action against the

²⁰⁰ "Prussian Cavalry Standards 1808-1815," Dallas Gavan, accessed January 30, 2023, https://www.napoleon-series.org/military-info/organization/c_prusflags.html.

²⁰¹ Citino, *The German Way of War*, 125.

French at the Battle of Eylau (1807) in which the small Prussian contingent of 9,000 troops demonstrated a great deal of gains against the French Army along with the main army of Russians.²⁰² These gains did not culminate the disasters at Jena and Auerstadt but only assisted the Russian army in halting Napoleons rapid advance into central Europe. Frederick William III attempted to barter for a better deal with the French in saving his territory and state. Napoleon did not take any mercy on Prussia especially King William III who Napoleon saw as weak and unworthy to lead the Prussian people. Napoleon also noted the treatment of Poles by the Prussians and the annexation of their territories over the years in which Napoleon then created the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Section XIII of the Treaty of Tilsit states that,

His Majesty the King of Prussia renounces for ever possession to all the provinces which formerly constituted parts of the kingdom of Poland, have at different periods come under the dominion of Prussia, excepting Ermeland, and the country to the west of Ancient Prussia, to the east of Pomerania and the Newark, to the north of the Circle of Halm, and a line which passes from the Vistula by Waldau to Schneidesmuhl, and passes along the boundaries of Bromberg and the road from the Schneidesmuhl to Driesen, which provinces, with the town and citadel of Graudentz, and the villages of Neudorf, Parschken, and Swiethorzy shall in future be possessed, with all rights of proprietorship and sovereignty, by his Majesty the King of Prussia.²⁰³

For the Prussians though, the continued war inevitably meant nothing for the state of Prussia which by now was hopelessly lost. Most of the Prussian soldiers and commanders were either captured, dead, or cut off behind enemy lines defending key forts. Secondly, Napoleon post-1807 created French allied states which included Saxony, Bavaria, Westphalia, Duchy of Warsaw, and others who were all too happy to support Napoleon's new government and his Napoleonic Code (1804) which was enacted in all conquered territories.²⁰⁴ Many of these German states, especially the Polish populace, loathed the Prussians and their aggression by usage of military

²⁰² Stoker, *Clausewitz*, 66-67.

²⁰³ Talleyrand, Kalkreuth, and Goltz, "Treaty Between Prussia and France."

²⁰⁴ Kohn, "The Eve of German Nationalism," 259-265.

intimidation. These German territories in terms of liberal reforms were much more advanced in comparison to Prussia's largely feudalistic practices. The Confederation of the Rhine for example pushed for a constitutional government with unlimited sovereignty instead of a monarchy. Kingdoms such as Wurttemberg and Bavaria became critical components of Napoleon's campaigns. The stipulations were that each of these kingdoms provide men and equipment to the French military. These German kingdoms in time became more loyal to the French emperor than their previous Hapsburg masters.²⁰⁵ Napoleon dissolved the Holy Roman Empire and diminished any Prussian influence within the German states. The era of old Prussia became little more than a footnote in history, and the reform period instantly began to take shape adopting and learning from the mistakes that were so easily observable and predictable beginning with Valmy in 1792.

The French occupation of Prussia did not end until 1813, and for seven years, the Prussian reforms began to implement the necessary measures to field and train a modern Prussian army based largely off the French model with a touch of German nationalism. The first steps that many of the reformers began to examine were the battles of Jena and Auerstadt themselves and what exactly went wrong. Conrad Lanza translates Carl von Clausewitz's *Notes on Prussia in Her Grand Catastrophe of 1806* stating that, "The Prussian army had made but two campaigns in 45 years and these were only partial wars. The principle of promotion by seniority had resulted in filling the high grades with old men. They carried along poorly in times of peace; but in the field, in a war to the death against young and vigorous leaders, it was foolish to employ such means."²⁰⁶ This examination began with the failure of the Prussian government to support the Third Coalition (1803-1806) which allowed Napoleon to defeat the combined allied army at the decisive battle of

²⁰⁵ Michael Rowe, "France, Prussia, or Germany? The Napoleonic Wars and Shifting Allegiances in the Rhineland," *Central European History* 39, no. 4 (2006): 611-640, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20457179>.

²⁰⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *Notes on Prussia in Her Grand Catastrophe of 1806*, trans. Conrad H. Lanza (Fort Leavenworth, KS: The General Service Schools Press, 1922), 517-518.

Austerlitz in 1805. The battle of Austerlitz allowed Napoleon to gain an enormous foothold in the heart of central Europe which gave him an important tactical and political advantage.²⁰⁷ The ineptitude and gentle demeanor of the Prussian King Frederick William III isolated Prussia from its Russian and Austrian allies who at that point sued for peace to rebuild their battered armies. The earlier campaigns in Italy against the Austrians were largely ignored by the Prussians as the Prussian monarchy saw this as an opportunity to lessen the Hapsburg influence over central Germany and place Prussia in a more favorable position to implement its policies and presence. Unknowingly for the Prussian state, the Austrian's campaigns against Napoleon gave them an opportunity to study Napoleon's new military procedures and implement them into their own military. Napoleon stated that, "You must not fight too often with one enemy, or you will teach him all your art of war."²⁰⁸ Archduke Charles (1771-1847) oversaw reforms of the multinational Imperial Austrian Army during the Napoleonic period with major victories such as Aspern-Essling (1809) and Leipzig (1813); however, their defeats outweigh their victories. Nevertheless, compared to the Prussian army, the Austrians were reforming as they saw it necessary from past mistakes. This does not dilute the genius of Napoleon to win battles though. Austria's army also survived unlike the Prussians during the 1806 campaign, and ultimately, this accumulated in the training and veteranship of young Austrian officers and field commanders who were eager to prove themselves.

Secondly, Prussia made another critical mistake by declaring war on Napoleon virtually alone during the Fourth Coalition without consideration of how long it would take for the Russian army to mobilize its own forces to help support the Prussian army. Von Clausewitz goes on to state that, "With Russia there was still a sort of an alliance, and Colonel Krusemark was sent in

²⁰⁷ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 88-89.

²⁰⁸ Walter Runciman, *Drake, Nelson and Napoleon* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), 123.

September to Petersburg to reopen negotiations concerning supporting troops which Russia was to send.”²⁰⁹ The Russian army one year before suffered one of its greatest defeats in military history at the battle of Austerlitz resulting in the destruction and route of an entire army. The Russians learned from their previous mistakes on fighting in foreign territory and adopted a more defensive strategy regarding their own nation’s borders. This fatal and ill-advised decision allowed Napoleon’s genius to separate and destroy the Prussian Army decisively at Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 forcing the examination of the entire state from the bottom up.

The financial situation in Prussia also elaborated the decision for reform as France now forced Prussia to pay a substantial war indemnity for the Fourth Coalition and to support Napoleon’s next conquest. The Prussians according to the Treaty of Tilsit were to pay 154,500,000 francs to the French emperor which was an impossible sum to pay due to other stipulations within the treaty. The Prussian leadership from Frederick William III and down showed limited leadership and accountability. To address the military financial situation and to pay for Napoleon’s occupying forces, the Prussian reformers began to rethink the economic modalities Prussia needed to sustain the state. The present economic situation could not sustain the financial burdens that France placed upon Prussia, nor could its populace keep up with the demands especially since the annexation of Prussia’s major populated centers in which four million Prussian citizens were now separated from Prussia after the Second Treaty of Tilsit.²¹⁰ These areas contained much of Prussia’s economic revenue and sustained the Prussian economy. Most of Prussia’s industrial base lay within the annexed regions now under full control of the French hegemony. The Prussian populace which contained a large contingent of Polish nationals that were under the yoke of Prussian rule were more than willing to accept Napoleons entrance into territory once belonging to them. Years before

²⁰⁹ Von Clausewitz, *Notes on Prussia*, 517-518.

²¹⁰ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational*, 89-90.

his death, Frederick II in 1786 set out with the Russians to annex Polish territory, which became East Prussia. Frederick II in a letter to his brother states that, “It is a very good and advantageous acquisition, both from a financial and a political point of view. In order to excite less jealousy I tell everyone that on my travels I have seen just sand, pine trees, heath land and Jews. Despite that there is a lot of work to be done; there is no order, and no planning and the towns are in a lamentable condition.”²¹¹ The partition of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795 by the Prussians and Russians accumulated in Poland’s nonexistence as a state. These Polish nationals under the guardianship of Napoleon set in motion the future conflicts between Poles and Germans for years to come. The Poles and Prussian’s distain for one another dates to the 12th century. The notions of Germanizing these areas created an unstable regional gap within Prussian history.

The 1807 reformers did not have to create an entirely new revised government from scratch as these ideas were already brought forth years before. Towards the end of Frederick II’s (1712-1786) life, the General State Laws for the Prussian states was introduced, but ultimately, they never materialized due to his death and the passing of kingship to Frederick William II (1744-1797).²¹² The new laws called for the modernizing of the Prussian state linking the middle class more closely to the government and to have all citizens equal under the law regardless of class structure. Prussia ultimately did not capitalize on these reforms as they were constantly pushed back for revision and never fully materialized as a whole. Prussian nobility constantly drove a wedge in between civil reforms only entertaining bits and pieces of the overdue document that at this time during the French Revolutionary period sparked criticisms from the upper classes.²¹³ Prussian nobility

²¹¹ Giles MacDonogh, *Frederick the Great: A Life in Deed and Letters* (New York, NY: St Martin’s Press, 1999), 363.

²¹² “The General Law Code for the Prussian States, proclaimed on February 5, 1794, effective June 1, 1794,” German History in Documents and Images, accessed January 30, 2023, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3550.

²¹³ Robert M. Berdahl, *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility: The Development of a Conservative Ideology, 1770-1848* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 14-23.

opposed these reforms in that they were too closely related to the dangerous situation in France and perhaps limit their overall power. Some of these reforms included private land ownership for the lower classes and the removal of the serfdom structure. The General Law Code for the Prussian States, proclaimed on February 5, 1794, effective June 1, 1794 in short states that,

The “rationalization” of public and private law through systematization and codification was an Enlightenment precept that Frederick II aimed to fulfill. The overseer of the project was jurist Carl Gottlieb Svarez (1746-98). The “General Law Code for the Prussian States” was first published in 1791. At the time, some of its provisions, particularly those curbing acts of government by royal fiat (i.e., monarchical “absolutism”), appeared as dangerously radical to Frederick William II and his advisers, especially against the background of the unfolding French Revolution. Withdrawn and issued in a more conservative form in 1794, the Code, with its some 19,000 detailed paragraphs, exerted great influence on Prussian law until its supersession by the German Empire’s Civil Law Code [*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*] of 1900. Notable was the Code’s effort to establish equality before the law and a general “rule of law” [*Rechtsstaat*] while maintaining the social inequalities of the Old Regime “society of estates,” including peasant serfdom in those east-Elbian districts where it had survived. The Code also often descended into petty detail, but its provisions concerning divorce and women’s property rights were relatively liberal.²¹⁴

This arrogance and contempt for the lower orders did not set well with the peasant classes who were the bloodline of the economy and the army. The enlightened revolutionary French concepts of liberty and freedom moved literally with Napoleon and his army, and these ideologies threatened the Prussian monarchy. The Prussian state kept the unlikable structure of the Ancien Régime that too closely resembled tyranny in the eyes of a period of revolutionary fever. Prussian nobles and the hierarchy in general did not want the precarious situation in France to spread to their country as it challenged years of class struggle. The only greatness Prussia had during this period was the past victories of Frederick the Great and the events surrounding his life. The connection between civil life for the commoner and the military is evident in that a man is more likely to fight for a nation of principles and rights rather than a system of absolutism.

²¹⁴ German History in Documents and Images, “The General Law Code.”

Though the absolutist system in Prussia worked in time of war, it drew criticisms in time of peace. The monarchial system in Prussia and many European nations during the 17th and 18th centuries and even before worked because of the situation, but civil laws and a government for and by the people could not be ignored forever even post-Napoleonic Age as is noted in the 1830s revolutions in Europe.²¹⁵ Prussian reformers sought to create a constitutional framework that also lived and thrived alongside of a monarchial system. Though the creation of a constitution did not occur until years later, the Prussians began improvising the much needed reforms.

The nobility within the Prussian army and its long-standing tradition dates back to the foundation of the Prussian state. Another factor contributing to the Prussian demise in its military infrastructure was the stubbornness of the nobility within the army. The Prussian nobility held high positions within the military based upon wealth, status, and connections to the court. From the generals to the officers' classes, this idea of the nobility commanding worked for a while until Napoleon's reforms demonstrated the importance of promotions not on position within society but the merits, action, and conduct of the average soldier on the field.²¹⁶ Napoleon stated that, "equality under *"epaulette"* and *"a Marshal's baton in every haversack"*.²¹⁷ Napoleon's reforms produced countless officers that had few connections to the nobility which allowed a separation from politics and court life. These soldiers proved to be critical in his legacy and success on the battlefield. This also opened a much larger pool for potential officer candidates from the middle and lower classes driven by competition. The Prussian army by 1806 retained

²¹⁵ Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10.

²¹⁶ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 121-122.

²¹⁷ François Cailleteau, "Elite Selection in the French Army Officer Corps," *Armed Forces & Society* 8, no. 2 (1982): 257, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45346256>.

the old form of promotion based on status and in very few instances were middle class soldiers promoted over their aristocratic masters. This system kept the Prussian military static and unable to change in the face of revolutionary ideals now challenging the whole of European governments.

Napoleon understood that for his army to be a cohesive unit it needed certain factors that enforced discipline, knowledge, and above all trust from its leaders. Donald Horward states that, “Once, [Napoleon] said, “who is the bravest man in this unit?” The officer said, “this man.” He took the Legion of Honor off his own coat and stuck it on the soldier’s uniform. Can you imagine how that would spread in the army?”²¹⁸ The Prussian soldiers did not have that same cohesion amongst peasant men and the officers leading them. Many of the Prussian officers, some very young, were thrust in that position because of their noble ties and not because of their military actions within battle.²¹⁹ A large majority of Prussian soldiers held these aristocratic officers with a degree of disdain in that the crucial link between commoners in the infantry and the officers did not develop especially during Jena and Auerstadt. Class structures within the Prussian military created a void within the ranks leading to disunity. Veteran Prussian soldiers did not trust officers who were not battle hardened even though they listened because of the harsh Prussian discipline and consequences of death and beatings also called running the gauntlet.²²⁰ By the time Carl von Clausewitz began implementing his military reforms, the running of the gauntlet ceased to exist as a punishment.

There is a great difference between a very well-trained army like the Prussians who drilled and marched more than any other army in Europe, and an army that experienced the

²¹⁸ “The Soldier’s Life,” PBS, accessed January 30, 2023, https://www.pbs.org/empires/napoleon/n_war/soldier/page_1.html.

²¹⁹ Stoker, *Clausewitz*, 4-5.

²²⁰ Henderson, *Blücher and the Uprising*, 32-38.

baptism of fire in combat like Napoleon's La Grande Armée in countless battles and campaigns up to 1806 and the war of the Fourth Coalition. Historians argue that Napoleon's 1806 army is perhaps the best army he ever fielded in his conquest of Europe filled with countless veterans and a unified cohesive strategy where all operations from the top down understood objectives and the overall grand strategy. Napoleon also the head of state amongst the French Consulate allowed him to implement policy in his overall grand strategy of military conquest. The Prussian army's only advantage was its illusion of invincibility and drill, nothing more. The Prussian general mindset still believed what worked in the past would work in the present. Napoleon stated that, "The idea that Prussia could take the field against me by herself," he said, seems so ridiculous that it does not merit discussion."²²¹ Prussian historians present during this period also concluded the dire need for reform and the continuation of those reforms in the years afterward. These reformers emphasized the continuation of reforms, not only limited to a situation. A dynamic Prussia instead of a static one benefited a greater need for German unification eventually. In essence these many reformers emphasized to never allow Prussia to suffer the defeats like the ones in 1806.

Heinrich Friedrich Karl vom Stein (1757-1831) and Karl August von Hardenberg (1750-1822), the two most notable reformers, stressed before 1806 the need for civil reforms across a broad spectrum of Prussian society. Even though some were implemented, it was not enough by 1806.²²² Some of the changes called for the outlawing of monopolies on certain trades and the dissolution of import and export taxes between territories that hampered the middle class from growing. Stein quoted in his proposal that, "There should be a new and improved organization of

²²¹ "Prussian Disaster I," Mitch Williamson, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://weaponsandwarfare.com/2015/09/29/prussian-disaster-i/>.

²²² Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 88-91.

state affairs, to the measure of the state's needs born of circumstances. The main aim is to gain more strength and unity across the administration.”²²³ Even though Frederick William III recognized the importance of these measures and the expertise of these ministers, powers of the nobility triumphed over logic, and the proposals were once again postponed. The Prussian state, even though unified on paper, consisted of many powerful independent fiefdoms or regions of the nobility that only caused discourse and factionalism within the government. These aristocratic landowners saw the reforms as a potential weakening of their power and more importantly their large holdings of wealth. The gap between the wealthy and poor needed reforms that emphasized a strong middle class to initiate cohesion. Factionalism between powerful independent princes amongst the aristocracy and monarchy did not allow for agreed notions of better Prussian unity. Though the Prussian army ultimately answered to the king, many of these regiments within the military were more loyal to their princes. Von Clausewitz states that, “But the small princes scattered in the middle of Prussia made but one political system with it; they could and should be led to the same degree in the extraordinary efforts which Prussia then itself made.”²²⁴ The Prussian army consisted of many regiments trained, clothed, and armed by various princes and Junkers. Prussian military reformers wanted a military more reminiscent of the state itself with a greater cohesion as seen in 1813-1815. Independent regiments were to acclimate into the overall new army without personal connections to princes.

Frederick William III did not have the fortitude of a leader to rule on these decisions and usually left it up to various nobles of the court to compromise. This never happened due to internal strife and personal battles. Many of the nobles used their positions of authority only to

²²³ Klaus Türk, Thomas Lemke, & Michael Bruch, *Organisation in der modernen Gesellschaft: Ein Historische Einführung* (Wiesbaden, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 104.

²²⁴ Von Clausewitz, *Notes on Prussia*, 518.

gain personal satisfaction and to get closer to the king for greater influence. The large Prussian military during this period remained static and unprepared for any form of combat as the decisions within the kingdom were administered from the top down.²²⁵ For instance, Prussian generals did not give their subordinates any form of flexibility to take advantage of a situation. As mentioned at the battle of Jena, the Prussian cavalry and the infantry were to remain in position as the French decimated their ranks only to react based off the commands of their superior commander. Disobeying an order immediately led to being court marshaled or even incurring death, and the Prussians made no exceptions to this rule. Practicality and logical reaction became one of the main principles of the Prussian military reformers. The discourse within the Prussian courts and government only trickled down to the military to generals who were over glorified relics of the past that could barely muster the strength to get out of bed much less lead an army against Napoleon's genius. Von Clausewitz writes that, "Prince Hohenlohe did not lose only the battle. He was, in what was almost an unheard-of case, so crushed on the field of battle that of the 48,000 men, including Ruchel's corps, which were defeated there, not more than 10,000 could be assembled afterwards."²²⁶ Again, this stubbornness of the elites to bridge the gap between the nobility and the poor affected every aspect of Prussian life especially the military.

Following the defeats at the battle of Jena and Auerstadt, a distraught Frederick William III took measures in his Declaration of Ortelsburg (1806) that all deserters were to be shot and that any man regardless of class could be promoted to the officer's class if they continued the fight which by now consisted of unorganized skirmishes.²²⁷ Over the course of 1807, Stein was

²²⁵ Kohn, "The Eve of German Nationalism," 269.

²²⁶ Von Clausewitz, *Notes on Prussia*, 570.

²²⁷ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 95-96.

dismissed and recalled back into service by Frederick William III who now fully understood the need for reforms at all costs. These reformers gathered from all classes and were the brains and writers of a modern Prussian state. Though the reforms were critical to Prussia's successes during the 1813-1815 campaigns, they were designed to be dynamic always being built upon as Prussia's situation changed again during the mid-19th century during the revolutionary period in Europe. From the Treaty of Tilsit and most of his country annexed, the Prussian king took the time to form competitive measures to garnish the best means possible to rebuild the Prussian state and its military. These broad state reforms promised to modernize the state and the military whilst keeping the monarchy intact.

The survival of the reforms depended on the constant maintenance and attention to the modern Prussian army and to use it as a symbol of authority and unity between the classes by implementing patriotism in the form of hatred amongst the French occupiers. Hardenberg upon being reappointed for the sole purpose of reforming the state wrote to Queen Louise stating that, "I believe that queen Louise could tell the king what the queen of Navarre, Catherine de Foix, said to her husband Jean d'Albret, "If we were born, your dear Catherine and my dear Jean, we would not have lost our kingdom," for she would have listened to men of energy and asked advice, she would have taken them on and acted decisively. What the king lacks in personal strength is replaced in this way. An enterprising courage would have replaced a tolerant courage."²²⁸ The key reformers did not hesitate to press their advantage against Frederick William III who by this point had little power against the will of Napoleon or moreover the Prussian populace who now benefitted from a more liberal French ideology. The conservative restorationist and the liberal reformist began a long series of debates and discussions eventually

²²⁸ Karl Griewank, *Königin Luise, Ein Leben in Briefe* (New York, NY: Olms-Weidmann, 2003), 14.

initiating a longer conflict in the future Prussian history directly impacting society and the military simultaneously.

The reform period in Prussia 1807-1813 saw a great deal of challenges presented by Stein, Hardenberg, and many others against the old nobility within the army. Old generals and officers of the nobility fought hard to retain their positions and used their influence to levy against the proposals.²²⁹ Though the aristocracy and ruling class resisted, the situation in Prussia did not allow for this, and the army began an immediate rebuilding phase under the strict laws of the occupying French. The new system imitated Napoleon's system and would continue up until the end of World War II with the Prussian philosophy of war being the example of the German people. This meant that the nature of the Prussian army and eventual German army could remain flexible and able to adapt to modern tactics and weaponry.²³⁰ Whereas before, the only individuals allowed in the various academies were of the ruling nobility many of whom were forced in that position, now officer schools were introduced on a larger scale allowing applications from all classes of society.

The Prussian Staff College refounded by Carl von Clausewitz became a prerequisite for officers of the Prussian General Staff. Students who attended the War Academy were rigorously drilled in the art of modern warfare largely that of Napoleonic tactics. The great conception of these Prussian teachers existed in their firsthand knowledge of Napoleon and his means of war personally. Students were lectured 20 hours a week and expected to grasp modern conceptions of artillery and battlefield maneuvers. Clausewitz believed in competitive competition to drive the young Prussian officers to achieve what Napoleon implemented years before. Before an officer could gain entry into the academy, they needed five years of experience and a high score on the

²²⁹ Berdahl, *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility*, 108.

²³⁰ Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare*, 155-156.

entrance examination. There were four examinations, and by the end, only a handful of the brightest made it through to become part of the General Staff. Pupils were also required to have a strong knowledge of French, mathematics, and battlefield surveillance of geography which Prussia benefited from due to their geographical oddity.²³¹ The curriculum within the academy tested the mental fortitude of the eager Prussian minds. Though incredibly difficult, the academy went on to produce the top Prussian and German military minds in history revolutionizing warfare. More importantly this military staff college called upon the growing middle class to determine who amongst the Prussian population acquired the military genius needed to lead Prussia on and off the battlefield. The Prussians now combed through all orders of its society to produce the best military strategists and statist.

Allowing for a strong growth of the middle class and combining that with potential military advancement of promotion ignited a sense of patriotism within the Prussian ranks again. Prussian drill and discipline remained a cornerstone of its identity, but punishments such as brutal beatings were outlawed something reminiscent of aristocratic authority. Stein and Hardenberg immediately set out to publish their works with each of them taking a different approach to how they wanted the new layout of the state and government to look. It should be noted that each man carried different ideas regarding the government. The importance of their two philosophies is that they were both unified in modernizing the Prussian state even if the approach was different.²³² German historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) regarded the Stein-Hardenberg reforms as the first steps of the unification of Germany and the creation of the

²³¹ Spenser Wilkinson, *The Brain of an Army: A Popular Account of the German General Staff* (London, England: Constable & Company Ltd, 1913), 158-162.

²³² Henderson, *Blücher and the Uprising of Prussia*, 35-36.

German Empire.²³³ He states that, “Our military organization remains a glorious manifestation of German political idealism; without admitting the fact, all our neighbors regret that they have not been able, some because of the inadequacy of their culture, others because of their extreme individualism, to imitate these institutions with complete success.”²³⁴ Though Treitschke a liberal believed in a unified Germany, he never faltered from the notion of a Prussian catalyst driven by military prowess. Andreas Dorpalen when discussing Treitschke states that, “That, later on, Prussia recovered that land from the Poles who had taken it from the Knights was proof to him of Prussia's German vocation: by 'ruthlessly furthering her own interests' she also served those of Germany.”²³⁵ This reinforces the idea of Prussian militarism being the external variable to unite Germany through liberalism and conservatism to a degree. Stein and Hardenberg's reforms both agreed upon a notion of political, civil, and military reforms built around an existing monarchical system. Both men are considered invaluable to the rise of Prussia.

Stein published *Nassauer Denkschrift* in 1807 outlining his positions on what he believed to be the solution to modernizing the state of Prussia.²³⁶ Stein's main argument was to reform the administration and decentralize the bureaucracy which he saw as a corrupting power that did not benefit the state. Stein did not like the idea of absolutism as he saw how the previous bureaucracy's inability to make important decisions led to the collapse of the state in 1806. Stein also took a very strong step against a military controlled by the aristocratic class as he believed they were responsible for the deterioration of the army and static approach on reform.²³⁷

²³³ Andreas Dorpalen, “Heinrich von Treitschke,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 7, no. 3/4 (1972): 21-30, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/259903>.

²³⁴ W. W. Coole, *Thus Spake Germany* (London, England: George Routledge & Sons, 1941), 59.

²³⁵ Dorpalen, “Heinrich von Treitschke,” 25.

²³⁶ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 87-88.

²³⁷ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 88-90.

Stein took a liberal approach when viewing the military which meant that he saw the military bureaucracy as nothing more than an instrument to suppress the lower classes. This is not to argue that Stein was anti-war as he was an advocate for war in 1806, rather, he saw an opportunity to reinvent the army as a weapon for the people and not against them. Stein did not want the military situation in Prussia to revert to its old roots where the lower citizens were forced into service and the nobility given positions of officers based on birth, or merit. Stein envisioned a citizen army comprised of all orders of Prussian society. This allowed for an equal representation within the Prussian military between the class systems and ensured that the nobility did not have absolute command of the army. Stein also called for a people's army of not only Prussia but Germany acting as one united body under a constitutional government. Stein also did not remain in office long due to the more favorable propositions by his rival Hardenberg, but both men did agree on nationalism within Prussia and the creation of a modern military.

Stein's position as an anti-absolutist and anti-statist caused a great deal of push back from the monarchical system within Prussia especially with King Frederick William III.²³⁸ Stein on many occasions personally explained to the king the meaning of the reforms and the purpose of them. For Stein and Hardenberg, it seemed impossible to increase the strength of the middle and lower classes whilst decreasing the absolutism of the bureaucracy and creating a reformed government around a king. Through the circumstances of differing opinions, the primary goal remained to free Prussia from the yoke of Napoleon. Stein proposed that the administration be split between two branches which were the public revenue branch and the state-policy branch to increase the revenue or financial modality bypassing the previous system that added to the poor

²³⁸ Brose, *The Politics of Technological Change in Prussia*, 73-74.

administrative organization. Stein believed that regions should be self-governed in order to harmonize the balance between the main government and the local government. His emphasis on landowners and the average citizen speaks of the first national unity of the Prussian people without losing the sense of Prussian pride and honor. He states that, “The economy as regards administrative costs is however the least important advantage gained by the landowners' participation in the provincial administration. What is much more important is to stimulate the spirit of the community and of the civic sense, the use of sleeping and poorly led forces and spreading knowledge, the harmony between the spirit of the nation, its views and its needs and those of the national administrations, the re-awakening of the feelings for the fatherland, independence and national honor.”²³⁹ For Stein, the task of reforming the Prussian system and moreover the army centered around educating the populace in politics and forms of self-governing practices. Stein felt as though the Prussian populace and not the government were the true pillars of the Prussian state in which he set out to reinforce the idealisms of education, individualism, patriotism, and economic modalities. His contention that the Prussian army is only as strong as the people that reside within it and that an educated military combined with the modernization only reinforced the idea of German unity and moreover the Volk.

The Prussian populace needed better educational opportunities in which they could be less dependable on the aristocratic notions. This is not to argue that the Prussian educational system lacked in basics, but rather, it needed to stretch to the broader portion of the populace. Prussian citizens needed education in certain fields to increase their ability to act independently within the system of reforms meaning private ownership and entrepreneurship. Stein ultimately did not want the Prussian populace to lose sight of the idealism of Prussia and the achievements

²³⁹ Walter Demel & Uwe Puschner, *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung* (Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam, 1995), 280.

that the Prussian military achieved during the reign of Frederick II. Prussian pride, vigour, zeal, and above all nationalism were still the foundation of recreating and reforming a system that needed decisive change. The battles of Jena and Auerstadt were one instance of a much larger issue for the Prussian state, and for the military to achieve success on the field, the Prussian populace needed a rallying call and a government they could depend on. This government called for the respect and protection of all Prussian classes and the pillars of law. Without law, reformers feared that the monarchy could revert backwards and solidify their power through force. The General State Laws provided some degree of cohesion, but it still favored the aristocratic nobles and their authority within the government. The reformers began to challenge these systems especially within the agricultural sectors. “Any nobleman is authorized, without prejudice to its estate, to take up a bourgeois job; and any bourgeois or peasant is authorized to join the bourgeoisie in the case of the peasant or the peasantry in the case of the bourgeois.”²⁴⁰ This seemed revolutionary for the time, but as the new reforms began to take shape, the fallacies within the granting of new liberties created a newer group of nobles who used the new reforms to gain considerable power over time. Nevertheless, these steps are crucial in the Prussian revival. Ernst Huber a professor of public law states that, “one of the tragic ironies of German constitutional history. Through it was shown the internal contradiction of the bourgeois liberalism which created the liberty of the individual and his property and at the same time – due to its own law of the liberty of property – unleashed the accumulation of power in the hands of some people.”²⁴¹ These issues are natural for any form of government implementing major

²⁴⁰ Demel and Puschner, *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung*, 138.

²⁴¹ Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Vom Ancien Régime zur Wiener Kongress* (Munich, Germany: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1986), 119.

reforms in such a short period of time within a state who remained largely static within its history; nevertheless, it became the driving force to rally the populace behind the monarchy.

Hardenberg's approach to the situation rooted itself in enlightenment ideas much like the model of the French Revolution.²⁴² Hardenberg's statist ideals sought to reinforce the government through a centralized administration which contrasted with Stein's overall approach to lessen the overall power of the bureaucracy. For Prussia, Stein and Hardenberg's approach were both different but very important dynamic realities for reforming the overall variables within the Prussian state. For instance, the Prussian serfdom system was abolished, and Prussian subjects could now own land.²⁴³ This not only helped the Prussian economy become a stable and more efficient entity in the realm of Europe, but it also instilled a sense of connection between the Prussian subjects and the aristocracy. This in time became a crucial element of the reform period in that Prussian citizens were more encouraged to fight for their private property when Prussia would rejoin the war effort against Napoleon in 1813. Hardenberg and Stein were not new to the situation after the defeats of 1806 but in fact had called upon these reforms years before within the Prussian government. It was only during the defeats in 1806 and the collapse of the Prussian state that they pressed their advantage upon a distraught Frederick William III.

These reformers were drawn from all sectors of Prussian society and each focused on the various elements within Prussia especially the economy and military doctrine. Hardenberg in his proposal, *Rigaer Denkschrift* (On the Reorganization of the Prussian State 1807), states that, "The delusion that one can most safely counteract the revolution by clinging to the old and by strictly following the principles asserted by such principles has contributed in particular to promoting the revolution and giving it ever-increasing expansion. The force of these principles is

²⁴² Henderson, *Blücher and the Uprising of Prussia*, 57-58.

²⁴³ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 90.

so great, they are so universally recognized and widespread, that the state which does not accept them must face either its demise or its forced acceptance.”²⁴⁴ Hardenberg insisted that the French Revolution in both its productive and counterproductive tendencies was a natural movement for the good of mankind in the idea that a democratized monarch could exist and prosper as long as law prevailed and the accountability of all who lived amongst it. Though the Prussians ultimately detested the idea of a full French occupation and the manner in which the army and its commanders conducted themselves amongst the Prussian populace, the Prussian reformers nevertheless saw this as an opportunity to study their conquerors and implement the revolutionary ideals that placed France above all other monarchial systems in Europe.

Hardenberg in his *Rigaer Denkschrift* stated that,

The folly of thinking that one can access the revolution in the safest way, remaining attached to the ancient regime and strictly following the principles for which it argues has only stimulated the revolution and made it continually grow larger. These principles' power is so great they are so generally recognized and accepted, that the state that does not accept them must expect to be ruined or to be forced to accept them; even the rapacity of Napoleon and his most-favored aides are submitted to this power and will remain so against their will. One cannot deny that, despite the iron despotism with which he governs, he nevertheless follows these principles widely in their essential features; at least he is forced to make a show of obeying them.²⁴⁵

Though Stein’s work, *Denkschrift*, proposed many great features regarding the state of man within the old system and the struggle against the government, Hardenberg acknowledged that each variable of citizen’s rights and freedoms could work together within a strong state without abolishing the bureaucracy. Hardenberg argued that there were three class systems including the nobility, middle class, and the peasants and that the middle class and peasants were responsible for “the most numerous and most important, but nevertheless the most neglected and belittled

²⁴⁴ “Karl August Freiherr von Hardenberg, “On the Reorganization of the Prussian State,”” German History in Documents and Images, accessed January 30, 2023, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3551&language=german.

²⁴⁵ Demel & Puschner, *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung*, 88.

class in the state” and added that “the peasant class has to become the main object of our attention.” Ultimately, this ideology of Hardenberg presented many challenges to an old, outdated Prussian system that was rooted in the absolutist ideas of the aristocracy.²⁴⁶

Commoners within the Prussian state now had the opportunity to not be limited by advancements within society, and this proved most important regarding the Prussian military and the officer’s class. Stein’s reforms were critical in the theater of fixing the financial crises within Prussia and redrafting the conception of the new laws that did not go into place until 1808. Nonetheless, Prussia rapidly made progress on important aspects within the Prussian state even with the opposition from the nobility.²⁴⁷ Stein did not stay in office for long, and the task fell to Hardenberg who continued to push Prussia in the direction of enlightenment ideals based off the model of the French Revolution. The Prussian reformers emphasized that the tradition and heritage of the Prussian army should remain in-tact but reinforced with a much more modern system. Hardenberg remained in office until 1822, and thanks to him and Stein the Prussian state developed into a more modern, economically stable power setting Prussia on a grand stage for other German states to witness, though Napoleon still remained an obstacle.

The main goals of the Prussian state during the reform period were based off the concept of understanding the citizen’s rights protected by law. In order to regain the occupied territory from the French invaders, the reformers and monarchy needed the trust of the people especially the lower orders. Giving the poor more economic opportunities allowed for a more flexible administrative government that did not have the overall burden of all state affairs.²⁴⁸ The idea was that citizens could and should govern themselves on a local level and not be dependent on

²⁴⁶ Brose, *The Politics of Technological Change*, 28.

²⁴⁷ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 103-105.

²⁴⁸ Berdahl, *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility*, 231-233.

the bureaucracy. This freedom provided by the reformers acknowledged the importance of the lower classes to move upwards in the class system and have more available opportunities within Prussia. Secondly, having a diverse society meant that each individual's skills and knowledge could be fully utilized within all parts of the Prussian state. Some of the main issues within the Prussian military and its disastrous defeat at the hands of the French in 1806 were the treatment peasants that formed the majority of the army itself and their state of living.

The Prussian system before the reform period depended on the lower classes to fill the ranks of the military, and in many cases, these serfs were forced into the military against their will under the threat of imprisonment or death. The Prussian army during the 1806 period faced a great deal of challenges, and one was the lack of morale within the army due to the great strain of the lower classes providing for the economy and also fighting when forced. The psychological and physical factors of this system strained the peasants, and the interjection of Prussian nationalism wore off by 1806-1807. This gave very little reason for Prussian citizens to remain within a system that was ruled by an aristocratic class who monopolized many areas of the economy and did not have a system set in place for the poor to participate in the modalities of economic advancement.²⁴⁹ The heart of the Prussian military reforms as underlined by Stein and Hardenberg started with the poor and middle class and understanding how critical and instrumental they were for the survival of the state of Prussia. The state provided its citizens with the ability to participate in public affairs with the protection of the law and the protection of personal freedoms. The equality of the classes created trust between the bureaucracy and the poor and regenerated a renewed spirit that ultimately transformed Prussia into a military and economic power within central Europe for years to come. These reforms moreover regarding

²⁴⁹ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 87-90.

Prussian history again were challenged during the revolutionary crisis in 1848 in which conservatives and liberals battled on the future of Prussia in regard to the direction of the state and moreover the continuation of reforms.²⁵⁰ The Prussian military again needed reforms to determine its overall role and existence between these two ideologies of conservatism and liberalism and what exactly was its role in a modern state.

The new organization of the industrial and agricultural sectors also contributed to the abolishment of serfdom and the freedoms of the peasants to participate in a system that did not restrict their economic movements. Secondly, the war indemnities placed on Prussia by France encouraged even further economic reforms within the Prussian peasant class as to encourage economic development with the country. This also prompted the old systems of cabinets with the Prussia bureaucracy to be abolished and replaced by the ministry of state which was a much more modern solution to the economic situation in Prussia. The Prussian system before this saw a lack of understanding regarding the economic structures within Prussia due to the centralized authority of the king and his administration who could not coordinate with local municipalities.²⁵¹ These reforms were completed in 1810 during the Hardenberg period in which a newer form of government and administration were set in place to simplify the process of the Prussia state. The *Staatsministerium* was put into place and contained five different ministries that were each responsible for the Prussian state. The minister for justice, interior, foreign affairs, finances, and war were created and answerable to Frederick William III and the people of Prussia. Though for these new ministries to work, the Prussian reformers dissolved the absolutism of the statist system and reduced the power of the king and bureaucracy.²⁵² Prussian

²⁵⁰ Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 10-12.

²⁵¹ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 98-100.

²⁵² Simms, *The Impact of Napoleon*, 307.

absolutism means the total control of the Prussian state safeguard the Church over the Prussian populace in regard to the economic, civil and military matters by the bureaucracy. This system allowed very little modalities amongst the lower orders which forced change either by the will of the people or more importantly the events at Jena and Auerstadt. Never again should a foreign soldier triumph through the Brandenburg gate.

In time during the Hardenberg era, a prime minister would be implemented to create a more balanced approach to the governing of the state and to have some control over the ministers' relationships with the king. This system allowed a modern form of checks and balances within the Prussian government so that each position focused not on political connections to the king and favors of the courts but the security and well-being of the state of Prussia and its citizens.²⁵³ The state of Prussia during the reform period underwent the necessary modern changes that ultimately led to its rise over the next decades. Many historians even argue that the new reformed Prussia performed much better than their Germanic counterparts especially Napoleon's Confederation of the Rhine.²⁵⁴ Prussia in later years during the German nationalistic movements became the main focal point of the ones to unite all German states under a liberal ideology. The reformers also understood that in order for the Prussian populace to buy into these new measures, the government needed to relinquish some of its power and also solidify the rights of the citizens through an eventual constitution. This created a trickle effect of strong nationalism within the Prussian state and a need for independence from the French occupational forces known as the Wars of Liberation between 1813-1815.²⁵⁵ The reforms took time, but in the Prussian fashion, the populace distanced itself from the outdated models and

²⁵³ Aaslestad and Hagemann, "1806 and Its Aftermath," 550-552.

²⁵⁴ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 105-108.

²⁵⁵ Henderson, *Blücher and the Uprising of Prussia*, 72-80.

allowed a form of liberalism to take place within all Prussian society. This liberalism also shared power with conservative ideals such as maintaining the strong nationalistic integrity and discipline within the army.²⁵⁶

Hardenberg and Stein were very clear on the importance of the Prussian military and the expectations of its generals and officers. The reforms swept across a broad spectrum of the Prussian state with the military always remaining at the center. Even though the defeats at Jena and Auerstadt were catastrophic, they were also necessary in forcing the Prussian bureaucracy to adopt changes and reform.²⁵⁷ As rapidly as these reforms were incorporated into society, the Prussian's still lacked a parliament which would not occur until 1848 during the revolutionary crises in which the Prussian government again continued the necessary reforms pushed by the populace. The most important reforms that occurred between 1807-1813 were military reforms due to the overall complexity of the army. In order for the military reforms to take place, the Prussians reformed towns, customs and tax, agricultural, industry, education, universities, and the Jewish question.²⁵⁸ Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) one of the humanistic reformers stated that, "Each student who does not give evidence of becoming a good artisan, businessman, soldier, politician is still a man and a good citizen, honest, clear according to his rank without taking account of his own job. Give him the necessary training and he will acquire the particular capacity for his job very easily and always hold onto liberty, as is the case so often in life, going from one to the other."²⁵⁹ This new form of humanistic thought and practice reinforced the idea

²⁵⁶ Marion W. Gray, "Prussia in Transition: Society and Politics under the Stein Reform Ministry of 1808," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 76, no. 1 (1986): 15-35, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1006408>.

²⁵⁷ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 91.

²⁵⁸ Aaslestad and Hagemann, "1806 and Its Aftermath," 566-567.

²⁵⁹ Hermann Giesecke, *Einführung in die Pädagogik* (Munich, Germany: Juventa, 1991), 82.

of a strong and prosperous Prussian government, military, and overall populace to face not only present challenges but the challenges of the future.

Stein and Hardenberg immediately set out to surround themselves with officers and rising generals not entirely from the aristocratic class but of lesser nobility for many reasons. These individuals were not only professional soldiers but soldiers who understood Napoleon's art of war. When the military reforms began to take shape, there was a great deal of resistance from the nobility and the aristocratic Junker class. The Junker class was an aristocratic land-owning class that owned great estates worked by the peasant population. They took great measures to fight against the reforms especially in the military where they believed only royalty should be allowed in officer schools and in officers positions. Eventually, most of these Junkers either joined the new reform proposals or resigned their position, and in many cases, they were forced to give up their rank. Their thinking dictated that the average peasant did not have the education or ability to lead troops into battle. This was another example of the struggle in Prussia as compared to the French system. The Junker class is very similar to the feudal system in Europe during the Middle Ages where power and land is given to lords in return of servitude to the king. The Junker Class like medieval lords were answerable to the king alone. They used their previous credentials from past victories under Frederick II as an excuse to remain static and unmoving in their contempt. Some of these Junkers were too conservative and were ultimately replaced by more eager and brighter enlightened minds in modern warfare. These individuals and even many that were close to the king were dishonorably discharged for their cowardness and failed leadership amongst the autumn of 1806.²⁶⁰ Key Prussian military reformers studied every aspect of the 1806 campaign and presented it carefully to King William III as not to insult his actions that day as well.

²⁶⁰ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 95-103.

Agreeably William III acknowledged the great faults and moved towards a major military revival. Lanza in his edited book with Clausewitz describes the proposals that were made when reviewing the campaign and battle of 1806.

As a result, the following extraordinary measures should have formed a part of the preparations for war: 1. The assembling of a considerable sum of money, either through a loan or through war contributions. 2. The raising of 100,000 men during the months of August as soon as the war was decided upon to organize the reserve battalions. 3. The organization of field batteries in numbers corresponding to the number of bronze guns withdrawn from forts and replaced by iron guns. 4. The purchase of 200,000 muskets in Austria and England. 5. The transfer of all military stores from undefended towns into fortresses. 6. The construction of bridgeheads over the Elbe, the Oder, and the Vistula. 7. The retirement of those generals, field officers and captains who were too old; the promotion of some young men to high grades; the assignment to command of forts, of some young men who would have had to determine their fate. 8. Finally, an amicable but powerful action on the little states.²⁶¹

Stein and Hardenberg sought to reform the army in the Napoleonic manner but to also continue the tradition and pride of the Prussian military. This endeavor forced many of the Prussians' more eager military minds to reform the army from the top down which constituted a new military manual and the creation of officers' schools filled with middle class Prussians now able to advance without the restraints of the old Prussian aristocratic class. The main Prussian military reformers such as Boyen(1771-1848), Gneisenau(1760-1831), Scharnhorst(1755-1813), Grolman(1777-1843), and Clausewitz(1780-1831) now had an opportunity to reform the military based on the actions of Jena and Auerstadt and the primary observation of Napoleon's La Grande Armée.²⁶² All of these men knew very well before Jena and Auerstadt that the Prussian military needed a change in tactics, but their superior officers consistently ignored their pleas. These individuals also were of the new stock of Prussian military strategists similar to Napoleon's famous marshals of France. In essence, the new generation replaced that of the old. A great

²⁶¹ Von Clausewitz, *Notes on Prussia*, 518.

²⁶² Petre, *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia*, 202-203.

military leader always considers the advice of his subordinates as too demonstrate soldiership and leadership amongst their men. The military reforms were directly and secretly aimed at the French occupation of Prussian territory.

During the occupation, the Prussian military followed the rules Napoleon set in place after the Second Treaty of Tilsit which included a much smaller military force than Prussia fielded in 1806 and conscription to fill the ranks of Napoleon's army. Many Prussians unwillingly participated in the Invasion of Russia in 1812 and with that defeat defected to the Russians in 1813. The Prussians during the occupation were required to train and field new regiments for Napoleon's military ultimately against the will of the Prussian populace, but during this time, these Prussian officers were able to observe the manner in which the Napoleonic forces operated from a personal, tactical, and strategic level. The Commission for Military Reorganization met in Königsberg in 1807 to discuss the desperate changes needed for the modern Prussian army.²⁶³ The first reforms that were brought to Frederick William III by Scharnhorst consisted of simplifying the military in the manner in which other militaries of the time did. In 1808, the Prussian ministry of war and the army staff college were created to draw in new recruits under the new and reformed Prussian government. This is the first time that barriers between the military and society were removed in order to create a new citizen army of Prussians driven by patriotism and ethical treatment.²⁶⁴ This newfound patriotism and nationalism did not limit itself to Prussia alone but encouraged a broader German nationalism by 1813-1814. The image and representation of Prussia went from that of an oppressor amongst its German neighbors to that of a liberator.

²⁶³ Henderson, *Blücher and the Uprising of Prussia*, 56-60.

²⁶⁴ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 92.

One of the main outliers that the Prussian military reformers saw during the 1806 campaign was the inability of the Prussian army to maneuver. The Prussian army could not react as quickly to the rapid movements of the French and were unable to communicate as effectively as Napoleon's new corps d'armée.²⁶⁵ The Prussian columns were far too big and heavy and unable to move only a few miles a day compared to Napoleon's who could cover vast distances and continue to maintain excellent communication and command. In order for the Prussian army to model itself against modern armies, there needed to be laws that made military service compulsory which the Prussians adopted from the French model. These laws ensured that Prussian soldiers would not be beaten to induce fear as before but to give a sense of civic duty as a citizen to protect the liberties and freedoms of the Prussian populace. This combined with broad state reforms initiated a sense of pride and duty for every Prussian citizen to defend and serve for their nation. This is the defining era for a generation of Prussian officers that solidified the importance of constant military reforms and understanding the evolution of warfare even during times of peace. From the creation of the Imperial German Army to the creation of the Wehrmacht, German historians constantly draw from the foundational roots of the reform period from 1807-1813.

The Prussians under the strict observation of Napoleon's terms were only allowed a standing military force of 42,000 men. In the Napoleonic era, this was little more than a corps which was hardly enough to challenge Napoleon.²⁶⁶ The Prussians under the leadership of General Scharnhorst created six new corps consisting of 7,000 men strong.²⁶⁷ These new corps became the foundation to the new Prussian army modeled off that of Napoleon. In order to

²⁶⁵ Petre, *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia*, 198.

²⁶⁶ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 128-129.

²⁶⁷ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 110-111.

follow the 1807 treaty, the Prussians devised a system in which new recruits were trained and drilled for a certain period of time then sent home and another new batch from the Prussian citizens filled their positions to incur the same training. By doing this, the Prussians were able to achieve notable successes in that they trained and educated their populace in this new form of warfare but also did not allow the army to exceed 42,000 troops. This is a brilliant and cunning way to have an entire populace be able to work in the civic life but also be ready for war at any moment's notice with military training. Secondly, the Prussian army adopted newer more modern uniforms in resemblance to other nations at the time. The uniforms in 1806, though beautiful, looked like a "museum piece" from the days of Frederick II. These newer uniforms were plain as to create a more unified look amongst the army and to cut down on the amount of fabric needed and not creating an economic strain. Through Prussia's new industrial reforms, uniforms, weapons, and equipment were produced much faster instead of princes raising private regiments with their own funds. Prussian soldiers now were equipped better, and regiments were raised quicker.

This model followed the Prussians throughout their history for many decades, and by having the military at the center of all life, it reinforced the notions of duty, honor, and nationalism. Secondly, officers were not promoted or given rank based on age or status as it was within the old Prussian army. Rather officers and soldiers alike were given rank based on their professionalism, ability, and conduct in battle. By refining the officer corps, it allowed the Prussians to use the concept of duty and competition amongst all class structures. This competitive competition generated a large, experienced pool for the state to pull from in times of war. For the first time in the Prussian army, there were professional soldiers that were not of the aristocracy, and these professional soldiers also performed civil duties in their respectable

regions of the Prussian state.²⁶⁸ This way of training the populace in military procedures became more effective than Napoleon's system of using levees. Napoleon called upon levees in time of war, and in many instances as historians retrace the Napoleonic campaigns from 1813-1815, these levees were not professional soldiers and did not have the training necessary to replace veterans killed in combat.²⁶⁹

Another critical piece of Prussian military history resided in the creation of the *Landwehr* and the *Landstrum*. The *Landwehr* were not part of the regular army but worked closely with it during the Wars of Liberation in 1813-1815. The *Landwehr* consisted of mass militia groups that filled in the gaps and provided numbers for the Prussian army. The creation and arming of a large militia group formed by the populace demonstrated the resolve of the Prussian government and the seriousness of their convictions. The *Landstrum* became a national guard unit, though very similar to the *Landwehr*, their goal consisted of guarding key towns and fortresses that contained munition depots. Many historians consider the *Landwehr* and the *Landstrum* a critical element in Prussian history as it bridged the gap for a time being between the civic class and the regular army controlled by the aristocracy. Tens of thousands of Prussian volunteers enlisted in these regiments demonstrating the ability of the Prussians to raise men very quickly. Though these groups did not receive the training of the regular army, they nonetheless operated in unison with the new modern reforms.

The Prussian model ensured that all males of fighting age were trained for certain months in the art of warfare. In contrast, the average Prussian citizen in 1813 compared to that of a French conscript were drastically different. Moreover, the new Prussian reforms stressed the importance of education. They believed that an educated soldier improved the quality of the

²⁶⁸ Shanahan, *Prussian Military Reforms*, 177-185.

²⁶⁹ Paret, *Yorck and the Era of Prussian Reform*, 195-196.

military from the bottom up in which each man was encouraged to think for themselves.²⁷⁰ This allowed for commands during battles to be executed to an independent level instead of a system where all commands derived from the generals as was the case at the battle of Jena and Auerstadt. Though the years of 1807-1813 were not easy to implement the Napoleonic Corps System and other variables, the Prussian staff ultimately succeeded. In seven years, the entirety of the Prussian military doctrine changed in unparalleled time. Lastly, the armaments program improved in Prussia in large part to the sweeping reforms of the industrial sector. The Prussian government now understood the importance of industry which it lacked many years before. Many factories began to emerge within the Prussian state that not only had part time professional soldiers working them to generate financial capabilities for the economy but centers where thousands of modern munitions and weapons were mass produced.²⁷¹ Before the reforms, the state of Prussia monopolization on weapons limited any form of private competition. Also, the reform of trade amongst Prussia and its neighbors like Austria allowed for an influx of materials and weaponry. Everything the Prussian soldier required during the campaigns of 1813-1815 derived from the state which allowed them to move much faster and more precisely.

From 1810-1813, the Prussians were able to produce 170,000 firearms and hundreds of modern field artillery pieces. Compare this to the Prussian soldiers from 1806, many of whom still used muskets from Frederick II's era some thirty to forty years before. This new and modern army stood as a symbol of change that Prussia desperately needed not only to combat the forces of Napoleon but to eradicate an ancient mindset and establish Prussia as a modern state both economically, militarily, and civically. For the Prussian reformers, the dilemma it faced was how

²⁷⁰ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 96-99.

²⁷¹ Dennis E. Showalter, "Manifestation of Reform: The Rearmament of the Prussian Infantry, 1806-13," *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 3 (1972): 365-367, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1876417>.

it could create a mass army driven by revolutionary nationalistic tendencies against a similar ideology occupying its country. Carl von Clausewitz in his book, *On War*, states that, “The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.”²⁷² The means to go to war for the Prussians presented itself in the form of Prussian nationalism and duty to liberate not only Prussia from French aggression but the German people as a whole which included the German states. The ideology transforms from an independent Prussian people to that of a collective German unity against the competitive nature of other European nations.²⁷³

From the moment Napoleon’s Grand Army of almost 700,000 French, Italian, and German troops began the disastrous march back to Central Germany and perished in the freezing temperatures, the Prussian government immediately began negotiations with Great Britain, Austria, and Russia. Secondly, the Prussian contingent with Napoleon under the command of Johann Yorck (1759-1830) ignited a ceasefire with the Russians called the Convention of Tauroggen beginning the process of Prussian aggression against the French. The coalition powers began mass mobilization in which they saw an opportunity to challenge Napoleon. Though Napoleon lost a great deal of his strength, he also set out to raise a new force as rapidly as possible which he did masterfully in his genius. Though the Prussian army was now reformed, modern tactics and maneuvers still needed to be put into action, and the events in late 1812 provided that opportunity. King Frederick William III in his speech *An Mein Volk* states that,

To my people! ... Brandenburgers, Prussians, Silesians, Pomeranians, Lithuanians! You know what you have endured for nearly seven years, you know what will be your sad fate if we do not end with honour the fight we have begun. Remember past times, the Great Elector, the great Frederick [II]. Keep in your minds the good things our ancestors won

²⁷² Von Clausewitz, *On War*, 88.

²⁷³ Telp, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, 126-127.

under his command: freedom of conscience, honour, independence, trade, industry and science. Keep in your minds the great example of our powerful Russian allies, keep in your mind the Spanish, the Portuguese, even the lesser people who have declared war on powerful enemies to win the same good things and have gained victory [...] Great sacrifices are demanded of all classes, for our beginning is great and the numbers and resources of our enemies are great [...] But whatever the sacrifices demanded of the individual, they pale beside the holy goods for which we make them, for the things for which we fight and must win if we do not wish to stop being Prussians and Germans.²⁷⁴

From the speech the great rallying call, not limited to only Prussians but to all Germans, began the great nationalistic movement of German speaking peoples. Though it is noted that this call for unity amongst Germans did not register with the German states under Napoleon as these states in the Confederation of the Rhine still remained very loyal to Napoleon and moreover feared his military. The death of Queen Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz in 1810, the wife of Frederick William III, also became a rallying cry behind Prussian independence as she exemplified everything Prussian. The same King William who was timid and a large cause for the defeats at Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 looked and acted remarkably different in the years 1813-1815. This opportunity provided the opportunity to honor and remember those at Jena and Auerstadt and to also exact revenge. Prussian men from all orders of society began mobilizing in rapid order for the great Wars of Liberation. On March 17th, 1813, Frederick William declared war on France and began meetings with Alexander I of Russia to discuss the plans.

By 1813 and the ending of a ceasefire between the Sixth Coalition, Prussia, Russia, Sweden, and eventually Austria joined forces together and perused a single allied strategy to defeat Napoleon. The allies met at Trachenberg castle to discuss and coordinate their war effort. Part of Napoleon's success in the past centered around the lack of communication amongst the coalition powers and Napoleon's ability to destroy armies separately. From that meeting, Gebhard von Blucher commanded around 92,000 Prussians in what became the Army of Silesia.

²⁷⁴ Demel & Puschner, *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellung*, 414.

Learning of this, Napoleon ordered Marshal Nicholas Oudinot (1767-1847) and around 70,000 men to take Berlin to knock the Prussians out of the war. Unfortunately for Prussia, the allies predicted this, and they implemented their Trachenberg Plan which called for the allies avoiding any large engagement with Napoleon until they had gathered an overwhelming numerical superiority. The allied plan also called for defeating Napoleon's marshals in separate isolated battles to weaken Napoleon. Eventually, the French army under order from Napoleon attacked Berlin which was defended by the Army of the North under the command of Crown Prince Charles John of Sweden (1763-1844). The Battle of Grossbeeren and Kulm resulted in an allied victory in which the Prussian soldiers performed exceptionally well. These battles occurred before the Battle of Dresden but were necessary in the overall allied strategy. Though this not being the major battle, the allies needed it demonstrating how the reforms for the Prussian army were working. Frederick von Bulow (1755-1816) commanded the Prussian III Corps which defended Berlin and kept the Prussians in the Sixth Coalition. From that battle, the elements of weather and the exceptional defense of key areas by the Prussian corps under Bulow thwarted the campaign against Berlin.

In August 26-27, the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians faced Napoleon and his Saxon allies at the battle of Dresden accumulating in a French victory. Other battles such as Lutzen and Bautzen occurred before the battle of Dresden in which Napoleon remarked, "These Prussians have at last learnt something—they are no longer the wooden toys of Frederick the Great."²⁷⁵ Though Napoleon did not have the favorable numbers he needed against the coalition, he still remained a tactical military genius second to none. The Allies defeat did not result in the destruction of their armies as Napoleon did years before; but rather, they regrouped to replenish

²⁷⁵ Charles Walker Robinson, *Wars of the 19th Century* (London, England: The Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, Ltd, 1914), 89.

their numbers which became a critical factor in the coming years. The reformed allied armies were able to do this based on the new corps system and logistical doctrines modeled off Napoleon to retire in good order and remain flexible. Napoleon by this point did not have the numerical superiority, and most of his troops were fresh conscripts lacking the veteranship Napoleon lost in Russia. Dresden became the last great victory of the First French Empire as these coalition forces were not the same as in previous years. Napoleon's tactics and overall grand strategy were used against him. The weight of numbers now favored the allied powers. Though the Prussians fought within the allied army, Blucher still wanted to face Napoleon himself and observe how the army performed as the matter became personal for Blucher.

The Leipzig campaign accumulated in the defeat of the French at the battle of Dennewitz (1813) in which the Prussians fought the majority of the battle defeating Marshal Ney. From this moment forward, Napoleon and the allies began to prepare for a major engagement to decide the fate of Germany which became known as the Battle of Leipzig or the Battle of Nations. The Battle of Leipzig resulted in the largest concentration of forces in European history during this time period, and all allies combined their forces against the main contingent of Napoleon himself. The Battle of Leipzig lasted four days in which Napoleon's main forces were defeated by the numerically superior coalition. Though Napoleon fought brilliantly against a numerically superior force, he ultimately could not turn the tide of battle, and eventually, the French forces collapsed in confusion whilst crossing the Hanau bridge. Nevertheless, a large portion of the French army survived with Napoleon crossing back over the Rhine River. Also, during the battle, many German contingents loyal to Napoleon switched sides and joined the coalition. From this, Napoleon sought to refit his battered army and levy support from a war weary counsel and populace. The young German party led by Blucher persuaded the allies to press their advantage

against Napoleon, and in 1814, the allies invaded France forcing the abdication of Napoleon. The Prussians demonstrated to the coalition that they were an invaluable force up to the task of holding themselves against the French in battle. The allies proceeded to march through Paris in which Prussian soldiers acted moderately well.

In 1815, Napoleon escaped the island of Elba and made his triumphant return to Paris raising an army of around 150,000 men. Upon learning this, the allied powers formed the Seventh Coalition consisting of the main powers such as Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia. The initial stages of the campaign went well in Napoleon's favor as he knew that the coalition powers could not be allowed to unite into one singular force. Blucher and a Prussian army of around 85,000 Prussians met Napoleon and 67,000 French at the battle of Ligny in 1815. This became Blucher's opportunity to face Napoleon with a pure Prussian force without other foreign contingents. The Prussian army made every preparation possible and gained valuable intelligence of French movements and concentration of forces. Once the battle commenced, the Prussian and French forces fought a vicious series of attack, defense, and counterattack.

In all, the Prussian military and its leadership applied everything they knew and matched Napoleon in every move. Inspired by Prussia's newfound patriotism, the soldiers remained steadfast and determined. Blucher a veteran at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt led the Prussians personally in a counterattack in which his horse was shot beneath him almost killing the Old General. Nevertheless, with the Prussian army exhausted, Blucher ordered an organized retreat. William Siborne states that, "The Prussian infantry compelled to evacuate Ligny, effected its retreat in squares, in perfect order, though surrounded by the enemy, bravely repelling all further attacks, made in the repeated but vain attempts to scatter it in confusion."²⁷⁶ Though the

²⁷⁶ William Siborne, *The Waterloo Campaign 1815* (New York, NY: E. P. Dutton & Co, 1902), 243.

Prussians lost the battle, this proved to Napoleon that this was not the same Prussian army he witnessed at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt and that the Prussian general staff and its command were a determined entity. Clausewitz remarks that, “Under the circumstances, the overall results of Ligny cannot appear out of the ordinary. It is a battle which 78,000 men lost to 75,000 by very slight tipping of the scales, after a long struggle, and without any truly glorious results for the victor, since his trophies consisted of only 21 guns and perhaps a few thousand prisoners.”²⁷⁷ From this point forward, Napoleon turned his attention to the English army at Waterloo under the command of Duke Wellington (1769-1852) which resulted in the climatical end to the Napoleonic Wars.

The Battle of Waterloo ended up being one of the most famous battles in the Napoleonic era and the final defeat of Napoleon and his legacy. There are many turning points argued by historians for this battle with one of them being the arrival of the Prussians under Blucher on Napoleon’s right flank. The Prussians under a forced march arrived at Wavre in which the French forces eventually collapsed. Napoleon did not calculate that the Prussian army after the last weeks of vicious fighting could tip the scales of the battle which they did. The end of the Napoleonic period proved to be the catalyst for Prussian history forcing much needed reforms from the battles of Jena and Auerstadt. Though the reign of Napoleon ended, the rise of the Prussian state began.

²⁷⁷ Christopher Bassford, Daniel Moran, and Gregory W. Pedlow, *On Waterloo: Clausewitz, Wellington, and the Campaign of 1815* (Clausewitz.com: 2010), 123.

Chapter 4

German Unification 1815-1871

The defeats at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 forced the overdue process of Prussian reform throughout militarily, economically, educationally, politically, and civically. These reforms were led by many, but the most notable in regard to contemporary history was Stein and Hardenberg in their attempt to create a liberal hegemony of revolutionary policies around the old aristocratic monarchical government. Prussian history dictates that many of these reforms did work to a certain degree but also failed in many other areas of the overall agenda of revamping Prussia into a modern state on the model of other German states and more importantly Napoleonic France.²⁷⁸ Before the introduction of French Revolutionary ideals, many of these same German states followed the Prussian model of enlightened despotism; however, from poor decisions and the crumbling internal structures of the Prussian government, weaknesses presented themselves. For instance, when Stein began the process of reforming the Prussian state, he used the English models during the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to question the centralized military bureaucracy. Stein's approach settled on defensive modernization against Napoleon, but his methodology against the aristocracy and limiting their authority eventually led him to disfavor and dismissal.²⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Stein's traditional approach encouraged anti-enlightenment theories separate from Hardenberg. Again, both Stein and Hardenberg believed in a revamped Prussian military and government, but to build a modern state around an existing monarchy became a great challenge for both men. Gneisenau believed that the Prussian reforms needed to be part of a single movement revolving around a constitution, knowledge, and arms. Prussia faced the tedious task of building a modern enlightenment state whilst also retaining old

²⁷⁸ Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War*, 104, 132-133.

²⁷⁹ Fehrenback, *Vom Ancien Régime*, 109.

models from conservative elites who above all believed in tradition placing Hardenberg as the accepted reformer by King William III. It is this arrogant tradition that ultimately led to the disasters in 1806, but the differences in 1807-1813 were that the reformers successfully created a more organized government with specific cabinets and a modern military rooted in Napoleonic organization whilst keeping certain Prussian military ideologies.²⁸⁰ This ultimately culminated with the creation of the new Prussian army (1810-1815) and the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 at the Battle of Waterloo (1815) thus ending the Napoleonic Wars in Europe effectively with the Treaty of Paris in 1815. For Europe, the monarchial powers solidified a great victory, and by placing Louis XVIII (1755-1824) back on the throne, their intentions shifted to the balance of power within Europe. From this lull in war, revolutionary tendencies began festering again amongst the monarchs, and for the Prussian state, the great questioning of continued and promised reforms by German nationals began another series of important events for the various aristocracies namely Prussia.²⁸¹

For Prussia and its overdue redemption against the French incursion, the central idea remained on how the reforms would continue in a post-Napoleonic Europe and more importantly within the state of Prussia itself. The Prussian monarchy along with the landholding elites, above all things, desired power and opposed any support of constitutional rights of the lower classes if not in their best interest. Nevertheless, the Stein and Hardenberg reforms continued for a short period of time before the revolutions in mid-19th century Europe. A series of identity crisis accumulated amongst the German speaking populace on possibly establishing a unified Germany

²⁸⁰ Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Verlag, Germany: C. H. Beck München, 1994), 51.

²⁸¹ Eda Sagarra, *A Social History of Germany 1648-1914* (London, England: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1977), 37-55, 183-202.

by the Prussian state.²⁸² These reforms were a series of constitutional, social, military, economic, educational, administrative, and industrial reforms. Post-Napoleonic period, the Prussian reforms did not stop but gradually slowed down once again pressuring the monarchy's motives and priorities within the different class systems especially the growing educated middle class. An empire, or for this matter a Reich, is not built in a day; however, the Prussians were on the way to establishing themselves as the central power within Europe. Even though the battle with Napoleon ended, the battle for greater German influence began especially economically and industrially. Old rivalries with the Hapsburg Austrians were rekindled, and the future of Europe lay in the balance of newer and greater ambitions. Clausewitz observes that war is the "mere continuation of political activity (*Politik*) by other means."²⁸³ Prussia and its various European neighbors from 1815-1860s began competing amongst each other on an economical and industrial scale. For Prussia, it began with the industrial revolution and the emphasis on education. German liberals believed that education remained a strong factor in a unified Germany, and for Prussian conservatives, they remained more isolated and focused more on Prussian matters and not those of various German states.²⁸⁴ In the course of the remaining of the 19th century, historians see a connection between economic rivalries, opportunistic imperialism, military buildups, and secret alliances accumulating in diplomatic tension. The events post-Napoleonic period in Prussian history are critical in which the Prussian state united Germany in their way and none other by the 1870s.

²⁸² Gordon A. Craig, *The End of Prussia* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 21-24.

²⁸³ Antulio J. Echevarria II, "On the Clausewitz of the Cold War: Reconsidering the Primacy of Policy in *On War*," *Armed Forces & Society* 34, no. 1 (2007): 90, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48608806>.

²⁸⁴ James J. Sheehan, *German History 1770-1866* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 398-410; H. M. Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System 1740-1815* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 329-361.

The great powers in their celebration of the defeat of Napoleon, including Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, began the process of deciding the future of Europe and the conception of spheres of influence. The Congress of Vienna (1815) concluded with France regaining its original territories and pre-Napoleonic borders and the restoration of its Bourbon monarchy.²⁸⁵ However, the taste and appetite of revolution were not suppressed long as the revolutions of 1848 throughout Europe demonstrate. For Prussia, its original territories and more before 1806 were reestablished and included in the greater kingdom of Prussia. Austria immediately set about to establish its direct influence over the once Holy Roman Empire which concluded with the Confederation of the Rhine and eventually the German Confederation.²⁸⁶ With Napoleon defeated, many of these smaller German nations ruled themselves independently still using the very notions of Napoleon during his reign and alliance over them. However, the issue remained amongst educated liberals on who would unite Germany into one federation with a constitutional government at the core against the wishes of the more conservative Prussian faction who favored independent monarchial German states. Though the idea seemed appealing to the Prussian King William III, many of these German states wanted their own constitutions thus creating a dilemma on constitutional authority and relevancy.²⁸⁷ This largely deterred Prussia from uniting earlier and peacefully as many conservative Prussians saw liberal nationals as a challenge against ruling monarchies. Prussia did join the German Confederation in 1815; nevertheless, they remained largely independent amongst other German kingdoms. Frederick William III eventually did not entertain the idea of uniting Germany into a unified entity as not

²⁸⁵ Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 279-281.

²⁸⁶ Eric Dorn Brose, *German History 1789-1871: From the Holy Roman Empire to the Bismarckian Reich* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2013), 82-90.

²⁸⁷ J. A. R. Marriott and C. Grant Robertson, *The Evolution of Prussia: The Making of an Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1917).

to project the wrong intentions amongst the Austrian-Hungarian empire. Rather, he wanted to solely focus on Prussia and maintain peace through diplomatic relations.

Prussia and Austria both understood the power vacuum that remained in the central German states and why the sphere of influence dictated who would unite the German speaking peoples. The idea that peace is temporary and war inevitable relegates to the notion that one enemy is defeated and another soon rises to the occasion. For the Prussian monarchy and their gradual continued reforms post-Napoleonic era, this was very evident. The reforms in their understanding exceeded the idea of a neutral Prussia, but they in fact warned of static Prussian nation that placed them in the same position as they were in 1806.²⁸⁸ The Prussian government and its reformers believed that it was a necessity to remain competitive either through governmental, economic, political, diplomatic, or most importantly militarily to gain the strategic initiative against future enemies both internally and externally.²⁸⁹ The Prussian government, both liberals and conservatives, did support a strong Prussia through civil, economic, and governmental reforms as that ultimately kept them competitive amongst other European powers. The issue arrived when liberal nationals began questioning the standing army and the authority of the monarchy. Liberals also pushed for a constitution that bound the aristocracy and the people both to law.²⁹⁰ Prussian conservatives were largely militaristic, and they intended to keep the integrity of the army intact along with its traditions. Also, Junkers within the army were still a very strong component and great influence amongst the aristocracy and king. From a historical

²⁸⁸ Paret, *The Cognitive Challenge of War*, 33-40.

²⁸⁹ Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals: The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848-1849* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

²⁹⁰ Sheehan, *German History*, 610-615; David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 176-179.

perspective though, Prussia did reform both by liberal and conservative variables working parallel to one another.

The greatest challenges that distraught the Prussian monarchy of the period were the difficulties concerning the nature of the state and the people and how to balance power between the two. Again, Prussia did not implement a constitution that limited the authority of the aristocracy over the populace. The creation of a legitimate constitution argued by Prussian liberals prevented too much power shifting back into the hands of the aristocracy and the rising bourgeois.²⁹¹ Many contemporary historians agree that the reforms moderately failed besides the military aspect of them. Jasper Heinzen states that,

To consolidate their hold on mediatized territories with whom they shared little political or religious common ground, rulers embarked on an extensive state-building project. What was new about governance since the French Revolution were the unprecedented demands that the state made on society, a case in point being conscription. The introduction of the draft represented a significant incursion into ordinary people's lives, as it deprived families of their breadwinners for long periods of time, but populations managed to adapt, if not always for patriotic reasons, then at least out of convenience.²⁹²

The reforms ushered in a greater dependance on the state which in turn led to the depletion of the rural middle class in large part of the alliance between the educated bourgeois and the landholding elites. This ultimately created another critical gap within the class structure as wealthy bourgeois began taking advantage of the agricultural reforms, and a great deal of the poorer populace were dependent on these wealthy landowners and moreover the state. Secondly, the reforms ushered in greater dependance on the state which led to state-controlled coalitions controlling the supply of goods. The agrarian capitalistic class emerged alongside the landed aristocracy which suppressed the democratic movements for a time.²⁹³ Though from a historical viewpoint, these were the

²⁹¹ "Speech to the Frankfurt Assembly, 1848," Johann Gustav Droysen, accessed February 13, 2023, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/germanunification.asp>.

²⁹² Heinzen, *Making Prussians, Raising Germans*, 27.

²⁹³ Otto Büsch, *Handbuch der Preussischen Geschichte* (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 21.

necessary measures that Prussia adopted to transition into an eventual constitutional monarchy. There exists no government in human history that is without its blemishes. In time, these reforms ironed themselves out, and the Prussians stabilized themselves.

The reforms intended to emphasize the great importance of a Prussian education. However, it failed to consider the rapid advancement of the newer rising powers which were the educated bourgeois who through the new reforms flourished throughout the government and worked closely with the monarchy. Hagan Schulze in his book, *The Prussian Reformers and Their Impact on German History*, states that,

As a result of the reforms, a ruling cartel of state bureaucrats and landed aristocracy emerged, which succeeded in suppressing liberal and democratic movements. When considered in this light, the reform era appears to be a turning point in German history, the time when Prussia Germany left the mainstream of Western democratic development in order to take a different and peculiarly German path, leading away from Western ideals of liberty and equality.²⁹⁴

In Schulze's work on why the reforms failed, he fails to understand the significance of the cost of a modern liberal democracy which set its reforms carefully around a still ruling aristocracy. For instance, the reforms ushered in economic growth, freedoms, and stabilization. The downturn of these capitalistic freedoms though are potential monopolies and inequalities in social divisions.²⁹⁵ Any new democracy, as history notes, takes time to establish the foundations of capitalistic notions and the concept of a free market. The Prussian reforms post-Jena and Auerstadt when viewed from a historical perspective succeeded in more ways than they failed in large part because it forced Prussia to modernize and set the foundations for the eventual

²⁹⁴ Hagen Schulze, "The Prussian Reformers and their Impact on German History," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 100 (1999): 63, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/3834/100p061.pdf>.

²⁹⁵ Ernst C. Helmreich, "Prussian Economic Policy," *Current History* 16, no. 91 (1949): 151-155, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45307468>.

unification period.²⁹⁶ Secondly, Prussia needed to jump start in its economy by promoting economic movement which forced many Prussians to improve, innovate, and motivate themselves in the modern state system. Eventually, a vast majority of Prussians began urbanizing and working within the industry. This is not to suggest that the agricultural reforms completely failed, but it migrated the populace around to seek newer opportunities. Prussia could not remain largely agricultural if it wanted to be competitive amongst other European nations. Also with an economically sound populace, it produced more capital generated for investments by the government especially in industry and science. Money began to circulate which initiated demands for goods and services which provided stability. Adam Smith discusses in his *The Wealth of Nations* that humans are self-serving by their nature. However, the material needs of the society whole would be met if each individual would seek out the fulfillment of their own self-interests.²⁹⁷ By doing so, the government would not be needed or any other outside force to regulate the market or intervene. The making of profit would be the incentive that the individuals needed in order to keep the government from interfering with the market.²⁹⁸ Nevertheless, this economic theory within the Prussian government did contain its drawbacks from state and government intervention and monopolies creating a gap amongst the poor and wealthy which were not addressed until decades later as the Prussian reforms were still in their infancy and lacked a constitution. Prussia economically reformed in large part because it allowed for a much larger pool of the populace to test their skills and capabilities through competition and determination which ultimately created a much stronger society and the adoption of the

²⁹⁶ Laura Claudia Achtelstetter, *Prussian Conservatism 1815-1856: Ecclesiastical Origins and Political Strategies* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021), 65-71.

²⁹⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London, England: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776).

²⁹⁸ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*.

Zollverein (German Customs Union), which was a coalition of German states to manage economic policies.²⁹⁹

The Prussian reform movement did not fail in a larger understanding of German history but rather slowed down or lay dormant until the events of 1848 forced the continuation of broader changes and a creation of a constitution.³⁰⁰ Schulze also does not consider that when the reforms were put into place the Prussian population harbored a common enemy. Napoleon's occupation of Prussia and the German states (1806-1813) ignited a sense of German unity and nationalism which in theory distracted from the social and economic consequences of greater change. In theory, Prussia seems to flourish in the desperate time of war and conquest, and the success of the military on the battlefield exceeds everything else. When viewing Prussian history from 1815-1848, it is easy to enlighten or entertain the idea that the reforms began to slow down, but it is noted that from a broader perspective they did succeed as demonstrated in the eventual events post-1848.³⁰¹ The reforms emphasized personal liberties amongst the Prussian populace and more importantly stressed the concept of law. Most importantly, "personal liberties" compared to liberties before 1806 were much different in that a vast majority of the population were subject to agricultural duties ruled by an overlord. Agrarianism within the Prussian populace became an inherited aspect passing from one generation to another with very few seeking better opportunities due to a static system of serfdom.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ David T. Murphy, "Prussian Aims for the Zollverein, 1828-1833," *The Historian* 53, no. 2 (1991): 285-302, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24447861>.

³⁰⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm and James Harvey Robinson, "Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 5, no. 8 (1894): 8-12, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1009032.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aaf98f50c358770287ee1d2e0866fcdf&ab_segments=&origin=.

³⁰¹ Berdahl, *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility*, 231-250.

³⁰² Manfred Botzenhart, *Reform, Restauration, Krise: Deutschland 1789-1847* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1985), 51.

The Prussian economy flourished, and over time, the populace began to mold to the new system. The reformers knew that the potential setbacks to the populace were inevitable such as state intervention and the rise of the wealthy bourgeoisie class but that future challenges could be corrected through the continuation of reforms implemented in (1807-1813), especially in education. Schulze states that,

The unavoidable conclusion the reformers drew from this resistance was that the Prussian people were not yet ready to grow together into a nation of free citizens. What was needed was education: and who better suited for this task than the bureaucrats and professors, who had personally experienced the blessings of good education and culture in the form of higher social status.³⁰³

Schulze goes on to argue that the older generation continued the outdated traditions and that they ultimately would not be equal in theory to the newer educated Prussian generation that sought educational practices. The reforms throughout the entirety of the Prussian populace worked better for the younger generation as it was ultimately intended for them. The new Prussian state under the leadership of Frederick William III continued to adopt a balanced liberal-conservative approach to the creation of a modern Prussian state that still retained the old traditional concepts of Prussian militarism and duty. The biggest improvement and the greatest of all the reforms were the Prussian army and the creation of the General Staff in 1814.³⁰⁴ The General Staff continued to be the foundation of the army combined with modern officers' schools and military academies open to all forms of society. The Prussian General Staff studied and adopted newer military practices that extended beyond those of France, Austria, and Russia and would continue to serve as one of the best in Europe. The concept of the military reformers centered around the idea of a citizen army that practiced nationalistic concepts. The *Landwehr* and the *Landsturm*

³⁰³ Schulze, "The Prussian Reformers," 71.

³⁰⁴ Brose, *German History*, 53.

continued to serve as an important and critical piece to regular Prussian Army.³⁰⁵ The *Landwehr* became a massive reserve militia force that fought directly with the regular army in the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815) whilst the *Landstrum* served as a national home guard protecting vital towns, munition depots, junctions, and cities. It is also important to understand that the citizen army was equal theoretically to that of the regular army and that each entity acquired representation as not to make the other more favorable.³⁰⁶ This means that the aristocracy did not want the regular army to be viewed separately as opposed to the *Landwehr* by representing them differently. William III wanted these two forces, the regular army which represented the aristocracy and the *Landwehr* which represented the middle-class liberals, to be equal in their overall objective to liberate Prussia. This is the bond the reformers wanted between the military and civilian society and to solidify these forces into one singular Prussian force or movement. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the regular army consisted of 157,000 men whilst the *Landwehr* militia amassed 164,000 men placing the Prussian fighting force around 300,000 soldiers.³⁰⁷ This increased the Prussian army by over one hundred thousand more than in 1806. For example, nationalism in the Austrian-Hapsburg monarchy worked to great success by emphasizing Austrian unity amongst its collection of cultural groups which consisted of Germans, Croats,

³⁰⁵ Martin Rink, "The German Wars of Liberation 1807-1815: The Restrained Insurgency," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 4 (2014): 837-838, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/09592318.2013.832933?needAccess=true&role=button>.

³⁰⁶ Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 50-56.

³⁰⁷ H. W. Koch, *A History of Prussia* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 216; Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 70.

Serbs, Hungarians, etc. The Austrian army by 1809 became a huge fighting force increasing its numbers (600,000) in a rapid fashion to face Napoleon.³⁰⁸

Date	Stand	German Regiments	Hungarian Regiments	Grenadier Battalions	Landwehr Battalions	Grenzer Battalions	notes
		line	line				
1802	Peace	3348	4068	852	--	1242	
1805	War	4838	5198	858	--	1272	
1805	Peace	2884	2884	516 *	--	774	
1806	War	4163	4163	804 *	--	1206	
1807 1809	Peace	3318	3638	816	--	1236	After 1809 regiment's Artillery (service or "bedienung" of 97 men) was lost
	War	4053	4401	870	--	1314	
1809 1816	Peace	3318	3638	816	--	1236	Hungarian line regiments. Had one Reserve division as Depot
	War	5160	5063	870	1308	1428	

Figure 2. Authorized Strength Numbers for Regiments³⁰⁹

Conscription for the Prussians during the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815) served a great purpose in replenishing the depleted Prussian military. However, by 1819, a constitutional crisis emerged within the Prussian state. Many conservative forces within Prussia, such as Wilhelm Wittgenstein (1770-1851), opposed the conscription of the Prussian populace into the regular army and the *Landwehr* contrary to Hermann Boyen (1771-1848) and Karl von Grolman (1777-1843) who favored the citizen militia and the concept of a citizen army.³¹⁰ After this, Frederick William III placed the *Landwehr* under the control of the regular army in hopes of

³⁰⁸ Mark Hewitson, "Princes' Wars, Wars of the People, or Total War? Mass Armies and the Question of a Military Revolution in Germany, 1792-1815," *War in History* 20, no. 4 (2013): 482, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26098243>.

³⁰⁹ "The Austrian Imperial-Royal Army (Kaiserliche-Königliche Heer) 1805-1809: Introduction," Enrico Acerbi, accessed February 13, 2023, https://www.napoleon-series.org/military-info/organization/Austria/ArmyStudy/c_AustrianArmyIntro.html.

³¹⁰ Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 80.

solidifying the distinction of the state and the citizens; however, this created the opposite effect post Napoleonic period. In summary, two military forces existed within Prussia by 1819 and on to 1848 including the citizen militia and the regular army. The citizen militia or the *Landwehr* represented the democratic liberal concepts of reform, and the regular army represented the monarchy and conservatism both of which became dangerous ideologies for the state of Prussia.³¹¹ Frederick William III and the leading aristocracy understood the dangers of two separate military forces and the probability of civil war. The issue became as follows: after Frederick William III used Napoleon's occupation as a solidifying factor to raise a large military force, he did not know how to disband the *Landwehr* without causing an uproar amongst its mostly liberal supporters in the government whilst also keeping a large standing army. Therefore, the *Landwehr* remained largely in a state of existence; however, it was gradually reduced in size.³¹² Secondly, as the liberals and conservative forces called for revolution in the 1840s, the regular army and the *Landwehr* stood opposite of each other with both harboring different ideologies. Frederick William III did not want a civil conflict with his own populace by any means.

With the *Landwehr* reduced in size and placed under the command of the regular army, many liberals began noticing the ending of the proposed reforms and the reversal back to the conservative elites.³¹³ Conservative Prussians within the military reverted back to keeping the regular army separate from that of civilian life. Heinzen states that,

Even after the official end of hostilities, the asymmetric relationship between vanquished and conquerors cast a long shadow on military identities because the primary duty of regular armies was to keep defeated parts of the country (Prussia) in submission lest they

³¹¹ Wilhelm and Robinson, "Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia," 33.

³¹² Dierk Walter, "A Military Revolution?: Prussian Military Reforms before the Wars of German Unification," *Forsvarsstudier* 2 (2001): 3-34, <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/99719>.

³¹³ David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1984), 241.

rise up in rebellion; only slowly did the armed forces become bipartisan symbols of the entire nation.³¹⁴

Prussian enlightenment thinkers began to see that conservative forces were using the standing army not as a bridge between the civilians and the state but rather as a weapon against the freedoms and liberties of the populace.³¹⁵

Liberals throughout Prussia began to slowly mobilize against the state's usage of a standing army that only suppressed liberal ideas throughout the countryside in theory. The previous liberal reforms now were seen as nothing more than a hastily organized ruse to gain support from the Prussian populace to liberate the monarchy from Napoleon only for the aristocracy and bureaucracy to revert to old ways that placed them at the mercy of Napoleon to begin with.³¹⁶ There needed to be a solution to continue democratic reforms whilst maintaining a monarchy. Schulze states that,

Of the two institutions in Prussia which competed with each other in claiming to represent the interest of the whole, the bureaucracy existed first. So the bureaucracy remained the constitutional core of Prussia. All in all, the Prussian reforms present a peculiarly vacillating picture, simultaneously revolutionary and conservative, just like the bourgeois-bureaucratic origins of its drafters.³¹⁷

The issue with liberalism from the perspective of the ruling elites stimulated from the relinquishing of power especially when it mattered amongst the landholding class and their financial purse.

Historians agree that the liberal reforms brought on by the catastrophe of Jena and Auerstadt could never be fully implemented as long as Prussia remained a monarchical society

³¹⁴ Heinzen, *Making Prussians, Raising Germans*, 27.

³¹⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (New York, NY: International Press, 1977), 157; Sheehan, *German History*, 407-408, 444, 613.

³¹⁶ Brian M. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 100-112.

³¹⁷ Schulze, "The Prussian Reformers," 72.

without constitutional representation. In theory, the reforms were a temporary solution to reform the military and place power back in the grasp of the monarch. This is not to state that the reforms were not successful; however, building a liberal society around a conservative entity would not be easy. Schulze goes on to say that “The aim of the reformers was not to do away with the king, although Frederick William III often stood in their way. It was to remove all obstacles between the people and the king.”³¹⁸ The majority of the Prussian population, which by now took full advantage of the educational opportunities lavished to them by the reformers, began to oppose the motifs and conviction of the Prussian government. Secondly from the military perspective when the social reforms began to slow down during peacetime, the regular army began to also see a decline in enthusiasm. Though still a potent force, the regular army mostly consisted of the poorer classes led by the Junker elites. German nationals across the various German states wanted a national German army much like Napoleon’s and not standing armies linked directly to a monarch. The *Landwehr* represented that liberating force within Prussia.³¹⁹

In 1819, radical liberal movements, mostly from the universities, began to protest in the notion of a unified German nation going as far as assassinating conservative August von Kotzebue (1761-1819) ushering in the Carlsbad Decrees.³²⁰ This decree aimed at extinguishing the liberal nationalist movements across the German Confederation and banning national fraternities. It also removed liberal university professors and expanded the censorship of the press. This ultimately limited liberal education and reform throughout Germany and ended the *Burschenschaften*.³²¹ German nationalistic liberals were rooted out and banned from publishing

³¹⁸ Schulze, “The Prussian Reformers,” 73.

³¹⁹ Eugen Weber, *Modern History of Europe: Men, Cultures, and Societies from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York, NY: Norton & Company, 1971), 586.

³²⁰ Brose, *German History*, 97.

³²¹ Brose, *German History*, 88-93.

works and engaging in nationalistic discussion in the public forum. The liberal movement throughout Germany brought fear into many of the monarchs around Europe especially in Prussia and Austria as they feared another revolutionary crisis could occur like the instances of 1780s'-90s France during its revolutionary period.

Revolutionary tendencies throughout Europe did not disappear as many monarchs would have liked them to but gained momentum over a period of time. Prussia and its reformers understood the dangers of a discontent populace, and the necessary measures began to take place with the drafting of an overdue constitution. In short, German liberal nationalism called for a unified German nation under one democratic representative government that promoted equal rights and liberties for all protected by constitutional law.³²² These liberal policies were directly rooted in educating the masses of all German speaking peoples and enlightening them to revolutionary ideas of the time period.

The German nationalists believed that once the German populace educated themselves, they could put into practice the concepts of a democratic government and rid themselves of the old monarchial system.³²³ These revolutionary concepts are not something new, but for the Germans, this was their time to finally make themselves equal to a representative government for and by the people essentially. Liberalism stemmed from the defeats at Jena and Auerstadt which forced conservative monarchs such as Frederick William III and others to adopt modern conceptions and liberties at the cost of the people eventually rising up against the old systems.³²⁴ An educated populace ruled by a monarch is dangerous from the

³²² Achtelstetter, *Prussian Conservatism 1815-1856*, 127-128.

³²³ Hermann Beck, "State and Society in Pre-March Prussia: The Weavers' Uprising, the Bureaucracy, and the Association for the Welfare of Workers," *Central European History* 25, no. 3 (1992): 322-331, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4546275>.

³²⁴ Brose, *German History*, 87-91.

viewpoint of those in charge. Though many aristocrats opposed the idea, the option of French occupation made the decision easier and by which the conservatives used that moment to unite German speaking peoples for a brief period of time to defeat Napoleon.

The issue post-Napoleonic era as seen in the 1820s-1830s Germany was to fulfill the liberal nationalistic promises made good through victory and brief unification. The German confederation, which included major states such as Bavaria, Wittenberg, Saxony, and Hannover, looked for the unifying major factor between Prussia and Austria.³²⁵ Prussia and Austria were the largest and most populous out of all the German states within the confederation, and smaller duchies with liberal movements began to call for unification and the implementation of a unified Germany. The issue for Prussia and Austria centered around the sphere of influence and who would unite the German peoples. The stipulation that both of these nations encountered was the adoption of liberalism and the removal of conservative ideologies as the liberals tended to be more aggressive on what they wanted from the unifying nation.³²⁶ In short, liberalism is not a new term for historical pedagogy or moreover human history as its roots go back to ancient eastern and Greek philosophies. Liberalism for mid-19th century Germany means the consent of the governed and social reforms without the interference or restraint of governing forces. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) contributed to liberalism in that he envisioned education as a means to create more independence amongst the German people against the indoctrination practices of traditional conservatism. Humboldt believed in educating the youth at an early age focusing on individualism.³²⁷ The issue for liberalism and conservatism in Europe was the predictable radicals within these movements that moved away from moderate logical

³²⁵ Achtelstetter, *Prussian Conservatism 1815-1856*, 155-163.

³²⁶ Koch, *A History of Prussia*, 236; Sheehan, *German History*, 656-710.

³²⁷ Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 33-44.

conceptions to those far more extreme. The great bane for these terms unfortunately creates division amongst any people or movement. For Prussia, they saw that the liberal movements became too radical shifting the pendulum against existing monarchical authority.³²⁸

From the Prussian perspective, the conservatives wanted a unified Germany under the command of Prussian conservative ideals which the military is an excellent example of. The Prussian government believed that a standing regular army consisting of Prussian Junkers and tradition should not disintegrate into a socialist people's army for that relinquished power from the monarch and from the bureaucracy and placed too much power in the hands of the people.³²⁹ As mentioned before, the Junkers were an old conservative aristocratic class within Prussia directly linked to the traditions and standards of the Prussian military. These individuals remained an integral part of German history up to the end of World War II. Europeans of all cultures for most of their history were ruled by a small group of educated aristocrats and viewed with suspicion in large part due to fear. The German revolution in the 1830s centered its entire efforts in educating the populace to rise against its overlords. The Prussian government knew very well the dangers of an educated united people living amongst a monarchical system and carefully released power in small antidotes until the bluff was called like the battles of Jena and Auerstadt demonstrated. The conception of liberalism and conservatism focuses on the balance of power and the ability to work together in unison. The major issue for Prussia and the German nationalistic movement were the radical extremists within the liberal groups that believed in a

³²⁸ William J. Orr, Jr., "East Prussia and the Revolution of 1848," *Central European History* 13, no. 4 (1980): 303-331, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4545906>.

³²⁹ Craig, *The End of Prussia*, 75-80.

German hegemony of equality which could not exist in reality especially in the mid-19th century around monarchies.³³⁰

Liberal university professors spoke of equality and liberties which in theory sounded ideal for a unified German government, but they were impractical and logically unsound when considering in the context of existing monarchical governments. From a historical perspective, liberalism works better implemented in smaller decrees alongside conservative ideologies so as to create a balance and not have one become more predominant than the other. For historical purposes, the Third Reich (1933-1945) existed as a far-right extremist party compared to the far left-party of soviet Russia (1922-1991). These were two very dangerous ideologies but similar in their methods to sustain power through brutality. Schulze states that,

Stein's belief that the municipality is the primary ground for civic self-determination, without which a free state cannot come into being. In my opinion a lesson for Germany can be drawn from above, namely, that those elements of the Stein-Hardenberg reforms should be resurrected in the collective German memory, which resulted not merely from the mastering of an emergency but stemmed from the liberal imperative of a state that has received its legitimacy and its structure from below, from its citizens. To learn from history means to learn against history: the state is not above us, we are the state.³³¹

Now from the Prussian reformers' perspectives regarding the populace, they did not want the monarchy to be viewed as an oppressive power but more as a unifying factor to unite the Prussian populace and the various class systems. The issue for the Prussian monarchy centered around the lack of a constitution.³³²

The king, as before, was the head of the state and represented the traditions and moreover the culture of the Prussian people in time of war and peace. The Prussian military conservative leaders felt as though liberal tendencies and ideologies would only weaken the honor and glory of

³³⁰ Theodore S. Hamerow, "History and the German Revolution of 1848," *The American Historical Review* 60, no. 1 (1954): 29-38, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1842744>.

³³¹ Schulze, "The Prussian Reformers," 76-77.

³³² Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 37.

the Prussian military and make it susceptible to dissentation and disobedience.³³³ Even in peace, the Prussian government maintained that the military be made ready in time of war as not to repeat the past defeats. Radical liberals countered this by blaming conservatives within the Prussian military for the failure of the Prussians at Jena and Auerstadt and believed that only through German unity and nationalism did they overcome the French in 1813-1815.³³⁴ Secondly for conservative Prussians, the Austrians and Russians still posed a great threat to them as the geographical situation of Prussia was unfavorable. The defeats of 1806 remained a constant reminder to that reality. In truth, both liberal and conservative doctrines together helped defeat Napoleon and eventually paved the way for a united Germany under Prussian conservative leadership.

The military situation acknowledged many newer liberal concepts such as modern tactics, conscription, and officer schools for the lower classes, but they also maintained strict conservative tendencies such as bravery, discipline, honor, sacrifice, and pride all of which created a formidable modern force. This is not to suggest that the *Landwehr* did not retain these key elements but that the Prussian aristocracy, when regarding the regular army, did not want liberal ideologies within the ranks. As mentioned before, the regular army comprised mostly of the poor led by aristocratic Junkers.³³⁵ There needed to exist a clear message on who is in control as to enforce a distinction between officers and regular soldiers. The newer officer's schools in Prussia were still in their infancy, and very few of the educated middle-class existed in the regular army, but in short time, they became more involved. Prussian officer academies were highly competitive and very

³³³ Achtelstetter, *Prussian Conservatism 1815-1856*, 8.

³³⁴ Dieter Langewiesche, *Europa zwischen Restauration und Revolution 1815-1849* (Munich, Germany: Oldenburg, 1994), 123.

³³⁵ A. Whitney Griswold, "The Junkers: Hostages to the Past," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 19, no. 3 (1943): 362-377, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26441464>.

selective. Conscription still retained a very important element for the Prussians especially the number of soldiers they mobilized later on in the 1860s-70s.³³⁶ Schulze states that,

For the older reformers, of whom Hardenberg can be considered typical, the real aim was the re-establishment and extension of state authority. And the French Revolution only served as a model by suggesting two ideas to the Prussian reformer: that a defeat like that of 1806 should never happen again, and secondly, as least for some of them, that Prussia too should produce its own version of Napoleon one day.³³⁷

This indeed stimulated from the Prussian concept of a strong military and continuation of military reforms throughout the post-Napoleonic period. The adoption of a liberal people's army ultimately watered down the integrity of the regular army. The Prussian government ultimately prepared for an eventual conflict with potential revolutionaries as they saw these movements as an unavoidable consequence of a prolonged peace. They also noted how a few radicals within France gained massive popular support and overthrew a monarchy and eventually moved on Europe militarily through Napoleon. So, from a monarchial perspective in Prussia, revolutionaries proposed a threat and were not taken lightly. For instance, the Prussians made this mistake before during the 1792 campaign in Valmy, France when they overestimated the French Republic.³³⁸ Though the Prussian aristocracy supported liberal reforms as they were necessary, they still remained cautious and treaded carefully as not to incite their own revolution by suppression. The *Landwehr* remained a highly effective force comprised of many veterans from the Napoleonic age and also led by very capable officers. The idea that Prussia seemed more unified in a time of war than peace is highly acceptable based off of historical events which is true for most nations. Frederick William III did not want to initiate a civil conflict amongst his

³³⁶ Citino, *The German Way of War*, 148; Peter F. Drucker, "What Became of the Prussian Army?," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 17, no. 1 (1941): 35-42, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26448467>.

³³⁷ Schulze, "The Prussian Reformers," 70.

³³⁸ Hewitson, "Princes' Wars, Wars of the People, or Total War," 477-478.

people and divide Prussia. By carefully and slowly diminishing the size of the *Landwehr* and not increasing the size of the regular army too much, it avoided any possible conflicts.

For the Prussian military leaders, the notion of defeating liberalism during peace only forced the possibility of using force which could do two things. First, it could suppress the movement brutally or grow it neither of which seemed ideal for Prussia at the time or its government. The very last thing King Frederick William III desired was a civil war amongst his own populace.³³⁹ For historians, this era for Prussia became a critical point in its history and furthermore for the history of Europe into the 20th century. Prussia now sat at the center stage of whether it would unite under liberalism or conservatism, and which favored the overall safety and well-being of the state of Prussia and its long military history. The increasing and growing number of liberal national Germans from the confederation states now began to spill over into the minds and hearts of the Prussian populace which increased the growing fear of a revolt or worse a violent revolution.

By the 1830s, the July Revolution began in France seeking to overthrow the French monarch Charles X (1757-1836) and establish the bourgeois monarchy under Louis Philippe I (1773-1848), only to be overthrown once more in 1848. Eventually Napoleon III (1808-1873) took the role as Emperor of France in 1852. As many monarchs across Europe feared especially an aging Frederick William III, the liberal revolutionaries were back in considerable numbers and their convictions strong.³⁴⁰ The Prussian monarchy again did not have a problem with liberties and rights for its citizens, but rather, they feared the idea of a revolution that overthrew monarchs violently. The Prussian government knew that it could not use the regular army to

³³⁹ Craig, *The End of Prussia*, 24-25.

³⁴⁰ Roger Price, *The Church and the State in France, 1789-1870* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 43-46.

suppress the larger movement of liberals as it had done during the 1830s and 1840s, and they now faced the full might of German national liberals. Conservative Prussia became a main target for liberal Germans in the essence to free them from conservative restrictions and force a constitution upon the monarchy.³⁴¹

The Prussian military before used policing actions to suppress liberal movements, but nothing accumulated to violent action on a large scale. Many liberal Prussians resented the regular army in policing actions and saw it as a direct suppression from the state itself. The regular army consisted of peasants and the Junker class fanatically loyal to the Hohenzollern monarchy. Many of these officers were professionals from the Napoleonic Wars and helped liberate Prussia and Europe from the reigns of Napoleon. These officers were drilled and educated in the most modern academies in Prussia. The traditions and honor of the army did not falter during the time of peace, and many soldiers were career professionals. The officers class consisting of a mix of classes, but mostly *Junker* descendants were well paid professional soldiers schooled in the art of war and modern military tactics. Though many of the officers were old, they nevertheless maintained professionalism during the revolutions of 1848 which in the same year France overthrew its monarch Louis Philippe I (1773-1850). With the death of Frederick William III in 1840 and crowning of King Frederick William IV (1795-1861), the situation throughout Europe became dire. Revolts and uprisings in Vienna, Austria (1848), Dresden, Saxony (1849), and various other places in central Europe demonstrated the peoples want and demand for a constitutional government.³⁴²

By 1848, the revolutionaries arrived in Berlin *en masse*. General Field Marshal Friedrich von Wrangel (1784-1877), a Prussian general in 1848, was given the task of suppressing the

³⁴¹ Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy*.

³⁴² Brose, *German History 1789-1871*, 239-242.

revolution in Berlin in which he ejected the liberal president and members of the chamber without bloodshed. Wrangel drifted between conservatism and liberalism remaining loyal to both ideologies but nevertheless remained a loyal component of the Prussian army.³⁴³ Demonstrators of the people's revolution demanded that the Prussian King Frederick William IV create a constitution, allow freedom of the press, and have parliamentary elections. The liberal movement consisted of the middle class and the working class both united in the same conception of more economic modalities, social reforms, and education. The Prussian military under the command of the Prussian government did not initially aggravate the situation as Frederick William IV addressed the crown personally promising a more democratic government and creation of a constitution. He stated to the crowd that, "Prussia was to be merged forthwith into Germany,"³⁴⁴ though the situation seemed to calm down and the truthfulness of Frederick William IV's claims are unknown, the situation seemed concluded until a demonstrator was shot.

Many thousands of demonstrators returned, and a barricade was formed. The Prussian demonstrators and the regular army battle for 13 hours until King Frederick William IV reassured his people that their demands were fulfilled. Many hundreds of protestors were killed in the battle in which King Frederick William IV himself attended the funerals and bridging peace between the Prussian government and his people. Field Marshal Alfred von Waldersee (1832-1904), at the time a sixteen-year-old student at the Royal Prussian Cadet Corps, gives a description of the events. He states that, "Those March days of 1848 left the most lasting impression on us young soldiers. From the so-called Spielhof alongside the Spree we could see

³⁴³ Hugh Chisholm, ed., *The Encyclopedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1911), 838-839.

³⁴⁴ "An Announcement by Frederick William IV," German History in Documents and Images, accessed February 13, 2023, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=428.

the erection of the barricades on the Marschallbrücke.”³⁴⁵ The Prussian King Frederick William IV demonstrated a great deal of restraint as to not generate a civil war within the Prussian state. The alignment of the conservative Prussian king and the liberal protestors demonstrated a critical event that ushered in unity amongst the citizens of Prussia and its government. The creation of the *Burgerwehr*, which was the civilian defense force, generated a sense of hegemony amongst the regular army and its citizens as had been before with the local Landwehr and Landstrum.

By 1848, Frederick William IV reluctantly issued the Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia. Though the constitution being largely a conservative document, the liberal opposition succeeded in creating a long overdue parliament. The role of the Prussian army remained only subject to the king and maintained the dominate presence of the Prussian state. Though the reform period slowed down post-Napoleonic era, it did not disappear and the effects of Jena and Auerstadt and the second reform era once again created the Prussian identity that ultimately united Germany through a series of conquests. Moreover, the liberal parts of the Prussian society felt as though they succeeded in creating a more modern Prussia whose government answered to the people and abided by law representatives characterized by their placement within the Prussian society. The Prussian government eventually undermined the liberal bureaucrats and dissolved the national assembly and created the bicameral legislature in which Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) was elected to the first legislative assembly.³⁴⁶

For the Prussian government, it seemed that the liberal nationalist movement achieved many of the goals they set out to do in order to undermine conservative officials within the

³⁴⁵ Alfred von Waldersee, *A Field Marshal's Memoirs: From the Diary, Correspondence and Reminiscences of Alfred* (Burke, VA: Borodino Books, 2019).

³⁴⁶ H.W. Hemans, “Reviewed Work: Histoire de la Prusse depuis la Mort de Frédéric II by Eug. Véron: La Prusse contemporaine et ses Institutions by M. K. Hillebrand,” *The North American Review* 112, no. 230 (1871): 135-136, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/25109591.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ab4400b78f6d185986e391a1f0848ab5f&ab_sgments=&origin=.

government. The liberals forced a constitution even though it remained largely conservative in its nature and demonstrated that the will of the people could and would not be ignored.³⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the conservatives within the Prussian government worked tediously to enforce their own policies to maintain the order and conservative structure of the Prussian government and more importantly the standing army. The Prussian army still maintained the aura that it gained during the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815), but in the decades afterward, it needed a revamp in large part due to opposition within the parliament to financial support it. The spirit of German nationalism and unity accomplished its main goals of increasing personal liberties and enforcing education for the masses.³⁴⁸

Many Prussian conservatives, especially from the Junker class, saw German liberalism as a weakness and a plague amongst the military. Now that the Prussian military lay dormant, the attention of Prussian conservative nationalism took a backseat to the greater demands of the populace and their liberalistic ideologies. The reform movement that began during the Stein and Hardenberg era were now working together with the conservative government. However, the issue still remained on how the Prussian government would contribute to the German utopia of a hegemony of states and principalities. Though the revolution of 1848 did not evolve into a larger civil conflict as in some other nations, the Prussian government in its entirety looked weak and unified. Moreover, Prussia still viewed other European nations like the Austrian Hapsburgs with a great deal of disdain and distrust.

Prussia again needed to project attention away from the liberal nationalistic movements and refocus on the military and its past glories. The liberals in the lower houses of Parliament did

³⁴⁷ “Constitution of the German Empire (April 16, 1871),” German History in Documents and Images, accessed February 13, 2023, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1826; Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 554.

³⁴⁸ Sheehan, *German History*, 612; Blackbourn and Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*.

not believe that a large military budget should be appropriate during peace time and that the standing army projected an ideological and physical barrier between their views and the rights and liberties of the people.³⁴⁹ Many Prussian conservative pamphlets during this time acknowledged past victories to gather support for a larger military budget and better equipment.³⁵⁰ Though, the reembrace of the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815) is divided into two schools of thought by conservatives and liberals. Liberal Germans saw it as a war of liberty whilst conservatives such as Friedrich Gentz (1764-1832) saw the liberation as a triumph of the Prussian princes and monarchy. When discussing Gentz, Clark states that,

It was "the princes and their ministers," wrote Friedrich Gentz in the days following the Wartburg festival, who "achieved the greatest [feats]" in the war against Napoleon. "Not all the demagogues and pamphleteers of the world and of posterity can take that away from them. ... They prepared the war, founded it, created it. They did even more: they led it, nourished and enlivened it. ... Those who today in their youthful audacity suppose that they overturned the tyrant [Gentz refers to the students on the Wartburg], couldn't even have driven him out of Germany."³⁵¹

This division began during the Wartburg Festival in 1819 where nationalistic German students carrying the black, gold, and red flag (*Bundesdienstflagge und Dienstflagge der Landstreitkräfte der Bundeswehr*) protested reactionary politics and *Kleinstaaterei* which means the territorial fragmentation of Germany by princes and monarchs.³⁵² Again, the Prussian regular army and the *Landwehr* found itself in a precarious situation as both liberals and conservatives pitted the two entities against one another. When the Prussian military as a whole achieved success on the battlefield, the attention of the populace drifted away from other parts of the reforms, and the focal point rested at the epicenter of Prussian conservative nationalism rooted in its past military

³⁴⁹ Brose, *German History 1789-1871*, 258-259.

³⁵⁰ Christopher Clark, "The Wars of Liberation in Prussian Memory: Reflections on the Memorialization of War in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany," *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 3 (1996): 550, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2946767>.

³⁵¹ Clark, "The Wars of Liberation in Prussian Memory," 552.

³⁵² Joachim Whaley, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire: From the Peace of Westphalia to the Dissolution of the Reich 1648-1806* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2012), 653.

history. Secondly, the revolutionary movements throughout Europe lost the support of the middle-class weary of the conflict allowing Prussian conservatives to divide and defeat them over time. The battles of Jena and Auerstadt and the occupation of Prussia by revolutionary French forces united the Prussian populace under one common goal as did it during the wars with France and Austria in the 1860s-70s. Eventually as conservatives united Germany (1871), the *Landwehr* became a critical component of the main Prussian army generating millions of reserves through conscription.

In 1857, Frederick William IV suffered a stroke, and Wilhelm I (1797-1888) became king of Prussia with the common goal of rebuilding the military which became the second reform period based off the first in 1807-1813.³⁵³ All the previous reforms that occurred during the Napoleonic age now continued as intended. Prussian military reformers constantly stressed the critical importance of rebuilding the military and adopting modern technology for the preparation of war and conquest if needed. The military like the one in 1806 needed a boost in spending and a revamp of national honor and conservative Prussian tradition with some liberal aspects based off the French model. More importantly, the Prussian populace expanded greatly across many of the self-governing provinces of the Prussian state since the civil, economic, and educational reforms began. The Prussian increase in population consisted largely of the now educated middle class and working people.³⁵⁴ For the state of Prussia and its monarchy to produce a large standing army and reserve force, they needed to allow some aspects of liberalism within their government which succeeded and benefited both conservatives and liberals and moreover Prussia.

³⁵³ Hemans, "Reviewed Work," 144.

³⁵⁴ Brose, *German History*, 86-87.

The agricultural situation in Prussia also contributed to a better and well-fed population now that reforms pushed for self-sustainability without dependence from the state. Different Prussian ministries, as stated previously, all focused on certain aspects of the Prussian state rather than placing it in the hands of the aristocracy as it was previously done before the reforms of 1807-1813. The industrial complex in many Prussian cities also began producing, manufacturing, and competing with many other European rivals such as Great Britain and France. The Ruhr region gained by Prussia post-Napoleonic era by the Congress of Vienna granted the state a considerable number of natural resources such as coal and iron that were critical in the growth of Prussian industrialization.³⁵⁵ Iron and coal fueled the Prussian economy and eventually the Prussian military complex. Competition and the growth of a large populace now placed Prussia in a position to dictate economical terms throughout Europe and even abroad. Still the main objective of King Wilhelm I centered around consolidating power through conservatives and rebuilding the Prussian military which in 1856 consisted around 88,000 men during peacetime.³⁵⁶ Wilhelm I believed the army slowly degraded since 1820 largely due to liberalism, but this is highly subjective.

Albrecht von Roon (1803-1879) a Prussian Junker, statesman, and conservative acknowledged the situation and degradation of the Prussian army since 1820. Roon immediately set out to undermine liberalism within the army as he thought it weakened the army especially the *Landwehr* militia, as he believed the *Landwehr* should be conservatively dominated.³⁵⁷ Roon believed that the main objective of reforming the Prussian military existed in the notion of increasing the spending and size of the regular army and not the militia groups. When Roon

³⁵⁵ Schulze, "The Prussian Reformers," 74.

³⁵⁶ Lech Trzeciakowski, *Posłowie Polscy w Berlinie 1848-1928* (Warsaw, Poland: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2003), 68.

³⁵⁷ Brose, *German History*, 272-273.

became the Minister of War under the blessings of Wilhelm I, he set about a series of reforms in Prussian military. The *Landwehr* as Wilhelm I and many others saw it placed an obstacle in the way of expanding the regular army, and Roon's proposition declared that the *Landwehr* be combined with the regular army accumulating in combined regiments supporting each other. For instance, if a corps or division within the regular army needed refitting or support, the *Landwehr* were sent to the front. Eventually by 1859-60, the *Landwehr* was abolished as a separate military force and absorbed into the regular infantry increasing the size of the main army. Dierk Walter in "Roon, the Prussian Landwehr, and the Reorganization of 1859-1860" states that,

In a reform devised and – after the weak minister of war, Eduard von Bonin, had resigned in his favour – pushed through and implemented by Albrecht von Roon, the Landwehr was abolished as a separate military institution in 1859-60 and its manpower absorbed into the Line (active) regiments. The reform strengthened the power of the Hohenzollern monarchy both externally – by giving it an all-regular army worthy of a great power – and internally, by breaking the bourgeois hold over half of the military. Thus, Roon overcame the impasse created by 45 years of reliance on an outdated military system and made the Prussian army fit for the Wars of Unification (1864-71), which created a new German empire dominated by Prussia.³⁵⁸

For the conservatives to solidify their power, the regular army needed to have more control over the *Landwehr* with similar ideologies.

Secondly, removing that cohesive bond between the citizen's militia and the regular army was not the intention either. Rather, Prussian conservatives wanted full control of both as they saw the benefits of a large reserve force separate from the main army.³⁵⁹ Having two large entities with two differing elements of liberalism and conservatism did not make sense. The Second Italian War of Independence in 1859 drew concerns from the conservative monarchy of a

³⁵⁸ Dierk Walter, "Roon, the Prussian Landwehr, and the Reorganization of 1859-1860," *War in History* 16, no. 3 (2009): 269-270, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26070691>.

³⁵⁹ Edward Crankshaw, *Bismarck* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1981), 97-105; Erich Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire* (New York, NY: W W Norton & Company, 1968), 58-68.

potential civil war if division remained. Though in agreement with the revolutionaries in 1848 and the new Prussian Parliament, these actions permitted careful considerations and legal authority from the lower house of Parliament to gather the necessary funds from the finance minister. Eventually, the conservative Prussians gained a foothold and acquired the necessary support in favor of increasing the funds and size of the regular army and decreasing the role of the *Landwehr* who consisted of liberal and middle-class bourgeois Prussians eventually becoming more conservative over time.³⁶⁰ Walter argues that,

For another thing, having got rid of the name 'Landwehr' without actually reducing the Landwehr component in the field army by more than about half, Prussia's military leadership back-pedalled. In the Wars of Unification that followed hard on the heels of the reorganization, and pitted little Prussia against the two leading military powers of continental Europe (fortunately one at a time), manpower – sheer, brute, total manpower – became the overriding consideration. Far from employing the remains of the old Landwehr exclusively for garrison and occupation duties, as had been the explicit aim of the reorganization, all the available trained manpower was almost indiscriminately used for bringing units to war strength, replacing losses, even raising new units for front-line service, which were sometimes to a large degree composed of Landwehr.³⁶¹

Effectively, Roon's plan to decrease the size and funding of the *Landwehr* and combine these elements into the regular army to make it larger ultimately worked even though the Landwehr on paper technically still remained. Prussia knew that to challenge major European powers such as Austria-Hungary, France, and Russia they needed numbers in the field, and the *Landwehr* again provided those numbers. The difference stemmed from the *Landwehr* not being a separate force but rather a large conscription pool to replace regular army units in time of war which they did during the Wars of Unification and most notably World War I. Walter states that,

After 1871 things rapidly got worse. The mobilization plan of 1875 again provided for the raising of major wartime formations composed exclusively of reserves. In the end, 70% of the field army Germany mobilized in August 1914 consisted of reserve and Landwehr formations and even Landsturm.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ Wilhelm and Robinson, "Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia," 229.

³⁶¹ Walter, "Roon, the Prussian Landwehr, and the Reorganization," 284.

³⁶² Walter, "Roon, the Prussian Landwehr, and the Reorganization," 284.

The reorganization of efforts under Roon and Wilhelm I only accomplished the emphasis and scale of conscription in Prussia as the military leaders knew that a large field army only sustained itself through conscripted reserves.

The middle class was still viewed with a degree of contempt because of their actions during the revolution of 1848, by the rising success of the elite Junkers during the unification period. Eventually, the educated middle class became more conservative over time and integrated more into the regular army especially after the great success of the military against the Austrian Hungarians and the French. The Junkers who were largely responsible for the reorganization of the army 1859-1860 and the victories on the battlefield found themselves once again at the height of Prussian popularity. The Junker class even post-Napoleonic Wars still maintained a strong presence within the Prussian government and worked closely with the king.³⁶³ The Junkers descended typically from a strong Prussian military background and rooted their cause and conviction in Prussian tradition, honor, and glory. They were a highly conservative class structure that commanded a great deal of authority and respect from the peasantry class and some of the top military minds in Europe at the time from a historical perspective. For the continued support of the Parliament, the Prussian monarchy needed great military tacticians that could use the military to expand conservative Prussianism across German speaking states in the manner they felt was better suited for the ideology of a German hegemony through conquest and traditions. Prussia continued to separate itself from the other German states as they believed their traditions and adaptations of westernism diluted their culture.³⁶⁴ These were the same concepts

³⁶³ Brose, *German History 1789-1871*, 320-322.

³⁶⁴ Detlef Bald, "The Impact of Tradition on the Education of the Military in Germany," *Military Affairs* 45, no. 3 (1981): 109-112, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1987751>; Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany Since 1800* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2007), 26-27.

their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers passed down to them from the times of Frederick the Great. Adolf Hitler remarks in the 1920s that,

What a difference! The state of 1806 was a state that had sadly capitulated on all fronts, an unprecedented wretchedness of civic spirit dominated, and then, in 1813, a state emerged with a glowing hatred of foreign rule and with the patriotic spirit of sacrifice for its own people. What had really changed to make that possible? The people? No, in their innermost being they remained as before, it was only their leadership that has passed into new hands.³⁶⁵

Prussian conservatives during the 1850s felt as though Prussian tradition and honor again was under the threat of foreign rule not by an invading conqueror but from the liberal mindset of western Europe that proved very powerful and dangerous in a monarchical system.

From a historical standpoint, historians can agree that Prussia did not see other German states as equal to them but rather a people that were weak due to decades of liberal movements. In essence, the Prussians believed they were the ones to make these German nations stronger in their manner of Prussian militarism. These other German nations also did not seek the Prussian way and rather enjoyed the revolutionary ideas of freedom of the people unmolested by powerful aristocrats and the bureaucracy. Secondly, the French and Austrian Hapsburgs challenged the notion of Prussian militarism and the buildup of their armed forces. From the Prussian perspective, this necessity to militarize their society proved correct from the past lessons learned from a static and unchanging doctrine that collapsed their state in 1806.³⁶⁶

The eventual unification of Germany did not stop the Prussianization of the German people but only reinforced the logic of a superior mindset of what Prussians thought of themselves compared to the rest of Europe. They believed and as it continued into the 20th

³⁶⁵ Schulze, "The Prussian Reformers," 62.

³⁶⁶ Sheehan, *German History*, 900-904; Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe 1792-1914* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 4-32; Lucius Hudson Holt and Alexander Wheeler Chilton, *The History of Europe from 1862-1914: From the Accession of Bismarck to the Outbreak of the Great War* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1918), 75.

century that they were descendants of the true German people and representatives of strength, traditions, and honor. History delegates that Prussian military leaders throughout the unification period and further on throughout history into the 20th century changed the very nature of war through their military brilliance. For the Prussian military in the 1850s, they needed a leader to demonstrate why conservative Prussian ideals were stronger and more appropriate compared to liberal ones. As the planets aligned in the years of 1850 and the second reform period of the Prussian army, European history changed forever.³⁶⁷

The reforming of the Prussian army could only be made possible by Moltke the Elder (1800-1891) under the support of many brilliant conservative generals, officers, King Wilhelm I, Parliament, and most importantly Otto von Bismarck.³⁶⁸ Moltke the Elder became the very tip of the spear much like the revolutionary Prussian reformers did post-Jena and Auerstadt. Moltke the Elder was to Otto von Bismarck as what Gebhard von Blucher (1742-1819) was to Gerhard Scharnhorst (1755-1813). Both individuals needed one another. Bismarck used his influence in power to garnish support from the king and from Parliament whilst Moltke began implementing a series of new military manuscripts that were more revolutionary than the Napoleonic doctrine which many nations continued to rely upon.³⁶⁹ This is not to undermine Napoleon's military genius and his tactical innovations but to build upon his methods which Prussia failed to do before the reform period. Moltke believed that it was a critical necessity to constantly upgrade the army and introduce new methods and ways to conduct campaigns and win wars through rapid maneuvers.

³⁶⁷ Walter, "A Military Revolution."

³⁶⁸ Gerhard P. Gross, *The Myth and Reality of German Warfare: Operational Thinking from Moltke the Elder to Heusinger* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 27-28.

³⁶⁹ Hemans, "Reviewed Work," 149-150.

One of the first things he implemented and capitalized on was the usage of Prussia's railways and the industrial complex of Prussia's innovative technological advancements through the years. Early on Moltke published "What Considerations Should Determine the Choice of the Course of Railways?"³⁷⁰ With many military forces being too large to lead, it was almost impossible for one singular commander to have tactical control over the battlefield and to be able to move such massive quantities of men, equipment, and horses. Prussia began to stress the need for railroads in key locations across its territories to move tens of thousands of troops to a precise location in a brief period of time. This new way of warfare is considered by modern historians as the beginning the begging processes of industrialized warfare in that civilian technology became more common for military purposes. Moltke instead of waiting for a potential war to arrive at the frontiers of Prussia's territories as the case in autumn of 1806 planned and prepared through war games.

Wargames or *Kriegsspiel* developed in the later part of the 19th century to teach Prussian officers in training battlefield tactics. Officers in their testing phases at the academies were required to demonstrate their knowledge in the field, and failure to grasp modern tactics resulted in dismissal. This military tool became an instrumental part of the modern Prussian army that tested the knowledge of young officers in training on military maneuvers, tactics, topography of terrain, decision making, logistics, and mathematics. Early wargames attempted to create realistic situations where students were given command of certain military pieces that represented battalions, regiments, and divisions much like a game of chess. This eventually evolved into actual units on scenario battlefields where students personally made decisions in real time. The Prussian military used blank ammunition and divided the teams amongst each other with military instructors

³⁷⁰ Dennis Showalter, "Mass Multiplied by Impulsion: The Influence of Railroads on Prussian Planning for the Seven Weeks' War," *Military Affairs* 38, no. 2 (1974): 62-67, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1987237>.

creating scenarios. The instructors divided the teams up between Prussia versus either France or Russia. Wargaming in Prussia eventually incorporated the use of telegrams, railroads, topographical maps, and artillery pieces. Prussian wargaming drastically enhanced the Prussian military in the art of understanding their own geographical location. Secondly, using real life military procedures and technological advancements allowed for students to reenact real war scenarios. These wargames proved instrumental amongst the officer corps in the wars with Austria and France in the 1860s-1870s. Moltke the Elder emphasized the great importance of understanding terrain and how it could change the outcome of a battle or campaign.³⁷¹

Moltke achieved the same success by mapping every square-inch of Prussian territory and understanding where main railroad lines occurred and the availability to logistically support various army groups. He created the General Staff and introduced the peace time divisions such as the Geographical and Statistical Military History sections. Moltke also enforced the idea of not moving as one singular army but to split the ground forces up into various separate armies. This concept derives from one of the original Prussian reformers Scharnhorst who writes, “March Divided, Fight United” which also finds its roots in Napoleonic tactics where he used this concept at the Battle of Ulm in 1804.³⁷² The idea stemmed from one army pinning the enemy into position whilst the second army attacked the flanks or rear of those forces. For this tactical maneuver to work, Moltke emphasized the great need for his generals and his officers to think for themselves on a tactical level. This sounds very similar to the Napoleonic approach because they are indeed the same but with more modern means of transportation and weaponry. Also, as armies of the time grew bigger, so did the battlefields. For instance, the Battle of Waterloo in

³⁷¹ *Selected Professional Papers* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1898), 233-289; David L. Porter, “Origins of Military Wargaming,” *Phalanx* 20, no. 3 (1987): 29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43960914>.

³⁷² Richard Ernest Dupuy and Trevor Nevitt Dupuy, *The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History: From 3500 BC to the Present* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1993), 816.

1815 stretched 2.5 miles (4km) whilst by 1870, the Battle of Metz stretches around 7 miles (11.2km).³⁷³ To demonstrate the rapid growths of militaries of the time, the largest Napoleonic battle occurred at the Battle of Leipzig with approximately 200,000 French against a combined coalition force of around 320,000 soldiers with 90,000 of them Prussian.³⁷⁴ By 1870-1871 during the Franco-Prussian War, the French army consisted of 492,585 active troops including 300,000 reservists and a *Garde Mobile* of 417,366 men bringing the total deployment to 2,000,740 soldiers.³⁷⁵ The Prussian active forces consisted of 730,274 regulars and reservists and around 208,150 *Landwehr* militia forces bringing their total number to 1,494,412.³⁷⁶

Moltke and his General Staff also agreed that Prussia could not sustain a prolonged war or a defensive war as past defeats proved that the idea emphasized quick and decisive action complementary to the old conservative Prussian way of thinking during the time of Frederick II and the Wars of Liberation. Again, it is critical to understand that the events and leadership at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt by the Prussians were neither quick nor decisive but everything opposite of the characteristics of past Prussian victories. Secondly, Moltke studied a great deal on various campaigns throughout history and especially the mistakes and successes of the Napoleonic period. He believed that even the common soldier should strive to be a student of war and learn the concepts of drill and maneuvers and that it was an actual duty for every Prussian male to be ready at any moment in time. These were the characteristics of a great leader and the great revamp the Prussian military so desperately needed by the 1850s.

³⁷³ Alessandro Barbero, *The Battle: A New History of the Battle of Waterloo* (London, England: Atlantic Books, 2005), 80; "Metz, France: Battle of Metz Aug. 18 1870," WardMaps LLC, accessed February 13, 2023, <https://wardmapsgifts.com/products/metz-france-plan-of-the-siege-of-metz-1870-1911>.

³⁷⁴ David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon: The Mind and Method of History's Greatest Soldier* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1966), 1020.

³⁷⁵ Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1961), 39; Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Encyclopedia of Casualty and Other Figures, 1492-2015* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2017), 184.

³⁷⁶ Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts*, 184.

By 1859, the Austro-Sardinian War caused the Prussian military to mobilize. While it did not fight, this gave the chance for the Prussian conservative leadership to double the size of the army on the pretext of war based on the Roon reforms of combining elements of the Landwehr into the regular army effectively increasing its size. Moltke also used this opportunity to implement many of the changes he suggested within the Prussian military and would later publish his Instructions for Large Unit Commanders in 1869, stating that, “The modern conduct of war is marked by the striving for a great and rapid decision.”³⁷⁷ This is not to suggest that Moltke took unnecessary risks but that major decisions should be made in real time to gain the strategic initiative. For this to work, he introduced staff rides which were the observation and surveillance of the battlefield to gain important intelligence and information to conduct large scale maneuvers. This also required that his officers in the prestigious Prussian military academies understand the concepts laid before them. These were not the same robotic Prussians of the periods before but thinking soldiers that could operate on a personal level to fulfill orders. By 1859, King Wilhelm I, Moltke, and Albrecht von Roon marveled at the reorganization and completion of the second series of reforms within the Prussian Army.³⁷⁸ The issue now rested in whether the army could perform in the reality of war and put its new variables into action in which the opportunity presented itself in 1862 with a study of the Danish army and how it might be defeated.

Though Moltke and various others contributed largely to the new and modern Prussian army, none of this could have happened without the commanding presence of Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck stemmed from the wealthy Junker class of Prussian nobles whose

³⁷⁷ Gross, *The Myth and Reality of German Warfare*, 29.

³⁷⁸ Dennis E. Showalter, “Soldiers and Steam: Railways and the Military in Prussia, 1832 to 1848,” *The Historian* 34, no. 2 (1972): 242-259, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24442849>.

credentials ran deep within the conservative monarchy. Bismarck's early life centered around politics and statesmanship eventually leading him to significant roles within the Prussian government in his later years. One of the greatest feats of Bismarck centered around the idea of *Realpolitik* first coined by Ludwig von Rochau (1810-1873) that when applied to German politics simply states that,

The study of the forces that shape, maintain and alter the state is the basis of all political insight and leads to the understanding that the law of power governs the world of states just as the law of gravity governs the physical world. The older political science was fully aware of this truth but drew a wrong and detrimental conclusion—the right of the more powerful. The modern era has corrected this unethical fallacy, but while breaking with the alleged right of the more powerful one, the modern era was too much inclined to overlook the real might of the more powerful and the inevitability of its political influence.³⁷⁹

This form of modern political thought for the time period puts in perspective the mindset of the conservative Prussians and ultimately their plans on the manner in which Prussia conducted its diplomacy. It reinforces the idea of a strong Prussia with a powerful military and unified government at the core. This mindset of *Realpolitik* in the history of Prussia is very characteristic of Prussian diplomacy and furthermore the eventual path to a united Germany by the successes of the Prussian military and its commanders.³⁸⁰ For Prussia, their imperial goals remained confined to Europe and not so much global imperialism compared to the French and British colonial possessions. Though, Imperial Germany eventually did begin colonization in later years. The Prussian government before the plunge of events into unification believed that the will and might of the strong logically exceeded utopian liberalistic ideologies and that the internal strength of the Prussian people lay within the bulwark of conservative traditions and

³⁷⁹ August Ludwig von Rochau, *Grundsätze der Realpolitik angewendet auf die staatlichen Zustände Deutschlands* (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag von Karl Göpel, 1859), 1.

³⁸⁰ Otto Pflanze, "Bismarck's 'Realpolitik,'" *The Review of Politics* 20, no. 4 (1958): 492-514, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1404857>.

furthermore military might. Though it is important to understand that the Prussian government did not seek war as history likes to portray this, but rather, they carefully considered the political and diplomatic settings of other European nations during this period.

Otto von Bismarck knew that arguing from a strong position in the matters of international relations and maintaining peace kept Prussia ahead of the encroaching Austrians who by this point were in an economic, military, social, and political decline. The last thing King Wilhelm I wanted was a unified coalition against the delicate political situation in Prussia between liberals and conservatives. An example of this in 1862 arose from the *Landtag* a liberal diet who opposed a greater funding of the military and a greater emphasis of a military state.³⁸¹ Before, almost all the power existed within the monarchy, but limited successes of the liberals in 1848 gave conservatives a much stronger presence within the government. The Prussian government now abided by law and the legal process germane to matters of the military budget as to not give the impression of an absolute monarchy amongst its populace, even though the constitution was largely conservative in nature. For the conservatives, their intentions could not openly or forcefully declare their plans to reunite Prussia and its conservative ideologies through military intentions. The Prussian monarchy and those in favor of a stronger military also knew that in order to fully unite Germany in the Prussian manner they needed to unite the various factions within the government itself. Prussia did not simply emerge as a tyrannical aggressor, but naturally and slowly, they took on the role of leading German power through the military and its second stages of reform beginning in 1848.

Wilhelm I believed that Otto von Bismarck, now Minister President and Foreign Minister, could convince the liberal politicians the urgency of creating and maintaining a strong Prussia

³⁸¹ Wilhelm and Robinson, "Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia," 206.

through a modern standing army rivaling even the largest European nations such as Austria, Russia, France, and Great Britain who still controlled the sea with their Royal Navy. Otto von Bismarck in 1862 gave one of the most influential speeches to the Budget Committee known to historians as “Blood and Iron.” Bismarck made it known his intentions and belief for a united Germany through the unmistakable conception of a strong unified Prussia through a modern military. He states that, “Prussia must concentrate and maintain its power for the favorable moment which has already slipped by several times. Prussia's boundaries according to the Vienna treaties are not favorable to a healthy state life. The great questions of the time will not be resolved by speeches and majority decisions – that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849 – but by iron and blood.”³⁸² Moltke, Roon, and Bismarck now used the past examples of intelligence gathered from the disastrous Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Italian Wars (1848-1849) as an example of the weaknesses within the great European powers of the time diplomatically and politically.³⁸³

The Crimean War demonstrated and proved the necessity of a modern Prussian military armed with the best weaponry of the time period and the best educational military academies centered around modern concepts. Bismarck’s continuous pressure within the legislative assembly eventually worked as he found a legal loophole within the constitution during the deadlock period. He applied the previous year’s budget to keep the government afloat and also through tax collections. Though in the coming years, Bismarck again faced many challenges from the Alvensleben Convention in 1863 which eventually led to Bismarck becoming a very unpopular representative.³⁸⁴ His supporters diminished, and the conservative movement began to take a

³⁸² “Excerpt from Bismarck’s “Blood and Iron” Speech (1862),” German History in Documents and Images, accessed February 13, 2023, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=250.

³⁸³ Craig, *The End of Prussia*, 45-46.

³⁸⁴ Robert H. Lord, “Bismarck and Russia in 1863,” *The American Historical Review* 29, no. 1 (1923): 26-27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1839273.pdf>.

backseat to the liberals within the government. Through the blessings and fear of a liberal replacement, King Wilhelm I supported Bismarck and kept him as a strong ally. This all changed with the Second Schleswig War (1864) with the death of King Frederick VII (1808-1863) of Denmark.³⁸⁵

For William I, Bismarck, Roon, and Moltke, this presented the perfect opportunity to not only use Prussia's modern military in the field and see the effects of the reforms but to strengthen the conservative party and lessen the power of the liberals. From this moment forward, many contemporary historians see this as the great turning point in Prussia's history much like the reforms during 1807-1813. The Prussian army could now ultimately unite the feverish feeling of Prussian military prowess and nationalism through dominance and conquest with the backing of influential Prussian figures. Bismarck also saw an opportunity to unite the liberal factions within the government by invading Denmark in the name of unifying these territories into the larger liberal conception of a German state.

The war with Denmark occurred from a succession crisis between the duchies of Holstein and Schleswig with Frederick von Augustenburg (1829-1880) and Christian IX (1818-1906) both laying claims.³⁸⁶ Bismarck sided with Augustenburg and denounced Christian IX's annexation of the Schleswig, and with an alliance with Austria, Prussia invaded. The combined forces of the Austrian and Prussian alliance measured around 62,000 soldiers and 200 cannons against the smaller force of 33,000 Danish troops.³⁸⁷ The Danish government pulled back its military force and fortified it near the borders between Schleswig and Holstein in hopes that a prolonged war would force the great powers of Europe to intervene diplomatically, but they did

³⁸⁵ Brose, *German History*, 327-328.

³⁸⁶ Hemans, "Reviewed Work," 150-155.

³⁸⁷ Dennis Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification* (London, England: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 122.

not know that through Roon and Moltke that the Prussian concept of war depended on decisive and quick action. The supreme commander of the Prussian and Austrian forces was Field Marshal Friedrich von Wrangel (1784-1877) a veteran and a leading proponent of the reform of the Prussian army in 1807-1813.

Wrangel also fought in the War of Liberation in 1813-1815 making him a celebrated military figure throughout the Prussian state. Wrangel a very conservative military leader also is credited for the revival of the Prussian cavalry making it a critical component in the wars with Denmark. Wrangel, Moltke, Falckenstein, and Gablenz together pressed the Prussian army into an overwhelming amount of success against the Danish forces demonstrating the arguments made by Otto von Bismarck in his “Blood and Iron” speech that the state of Prussia could only be strong through decisive military action.³⁸⁸ The Prussian army attacked the line at Dybbol with resounding success with the support of massed artillery batteries and pushed the demoralized Danish to their main lines. During the second reforming period of the Prussian army, the Prussians adopted improved modern military technology suited for the type of warfare proposed by Moltke.³⁸⁹

The Prussian Dreyse needle-gun replaced the much slower muzzle loading muskets used by the Danish who still fought in the manner of Napoleonic tactics. The industrial reforms in Prussia allowed for the creation of the Royal Prussian Rifle Factory which produced the rifles in large quantities with a state contract and eventually shifting towards private ownership of the mass-produced rifles. Secondly, these rifles used a bolt operating system that increase firepower to six rounds per minute at 800-1200 feet per second making it the most modern rifle in the

³⁸⁸ German History in Documents and Images, “Excerpts from Bismarck’s “Blood and Iron” Speech (1862).”

³⁸⁹ Jürgen Müller, *Der Deutsche Bund 1815-1866* (Munich, Germany: Oldenbourg, 2006), 46; Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler, *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861-1871* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 268.

world. For the Prussians, the situation became a war of pursuit as even the Danes could not perceive the military might of the Prussians and their ability to advance rapidly in precise coordinated attacks.³⁹⁰

By April, the Prussians and Danish forces began another series of battles at Dybbol in which the Prussian artillery bombarded the Danish positions who stubbornly resisted taking massive casualties. The Danish forces eventually ceded Dybbol to the Prussian forces after a long battle withdrawing deeper into Danish territory forcing them to abandon Fredericia.³⁹¹ From that moment, a brief ceasefire occurred in which agreements could not be made ushering in secret talks between Otto von Bismarck and the Austrian representatives to completely separate the duchies from Denmark. In essence, the political situation of the war changed, and Prussia saw an opportunity to conduct their ambitions around the German confederation which in accordance with Bismarck's remarks was the plan all along. Historians note that Prussia only used a fraction of its forces during this conflict and that certain aspects of their military were not revealed entirely especially amongst Austrian military spectators.

The Treaty of Vienna ended the war in late October 1864 with the total and absolute victory of the Prussian military and to the great success of the conservative party who now obtained leverage and power to gather more support for a larger force.³⁹² Patriotism and nationalism were very high amongst the Prussian populace who for many years only reminisced about the past glories 51 years before during the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. Though the war was small, this event marked a larger momentous occasion for the Prussian conservatives

³⁹⁰ Bassett-Powell, *The Armies of Bismarck's Wars*, 212-214.

³⁹¹ Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 126-127.

³⁹² Mads Daugbjerg, "Pacifying War Heritage: Patterns of Cosmopolitan Nationalism at a Danish Battlefield Site," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 15, no. 5 (2009): 432-433, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13527250903072765>.

against the liberal nationalists within Germany and Prussia. For Otto von Bismarck, this event solidified his power and only enforced his belief that the German states call for a united Germany would not be on their terms but rather the terms of a conservative Prussia. For the history of Denmark, the war proved that they could not resist the armed might of the German people, and decades later, this contributed to the Cooperation Policy implemented by Nazi Germany during the Third Reich.³⁹³

³⁹³ Craig, *The End of Prussia*, 72.

Chapter 5

Imperial Germany 1871-1918

From the creation of the German Empire by the Prussian state under Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) and Wilhelm I (1797-1888), the Prussian government set about to implement its Prussianization amongst the North German Confederation excluding the Austria-Hungarian Empire. The Prussian's victory in the Second Schleswig War (1864), Austro-Prussian War (1866), and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) demonstrated to Europe the power and prestige of the Prussian army and its leadership.³⁹⁴ By challenging and decisively winning wars against its main Austrian competitor and the French, the Prussian state now controlled the vast majority of German speaking people. Though united, the conservative Prussian government now pressed its advantage to truly extinguish the liberal nationalistic threats both in the populace amongst the middle class and the government. The Prussian government continued social, economic, and industrial reforms in the Prussian manner which called for an emphasis on the military at the core of its policy. The military proved that Prussian conservatism worked alongside of Prussia's political, diplomatic, and economic goals. The wars with Austria and France also demonstrated that a strong military in numbers, modern tactics, and weapons consolidated a new form of warfare that did not accumulate in mass casualties.³⁹⁵ As before, individuals such as Moltke the Elder knew Prussia needed quick and decisive military victories to consolidate political and financial leverage amongst the Prussian parliament. Secondly, Otto von Bismarck saw this as a means to check the balance of power within Europe and unite Germany under one monarchical government. All of Prussia's policies and ambitions rested directly amongst its military and

³⁹⁴ Crankshaw, *Bismarck*, 299; Ernst Rudolf Huber, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte seit 1789: Bismarck und das Reich* (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 1988), 747.

³⁹⁵ Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 50-60, 75-79; Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 218-222.

persuading the Prussian and German populace to join it. In short, the best representative of Prussia rested in its military prowess.³⁹⁶

Though much of contemporary history views the unification of Germany as the work of Otto von Bismarck and possibly Wilhelm I, the main unifying factor remained the Prussian army and the state of Prussia through its successes. This is not to suggest that Bismarck did not play a major role, but in the end, the Prussian army remained the focal point and most important variable out of many. From the moment of unification in 1871, the Prussian government set its new constitution into effect amongst the German territories proclaiming Wilhelm I as Emperor of Germany and King of Prussia. All the power in the German empire flowed from the capital Berlin and moreover the Prussian state.³⁹⁷ Many of these larger German kingdoms, such as Bavaria and Saxony now part of the German empire, still distained the idea of Prussianization of their populace and government. These larger states, even though now part of the German Empire, still retained their own histories and cultural tendencies. For example, Bavarians and others such as the Saar region are very much Catholic in nature compared to Protestantism in Prussia. These two religions share a deep and violent history rooted in the Reformation period especially in Germany. These larger German kingdoms still retained a small sense of independence even extending to their military, but during unification, Prussia remained as the undisputed overlord of all. For Bismarck, the House of Hohenzollern remained a key link to Prussian dominance and the continuation of Prussia's aspirations for German hegemony.³⁹⁸

Jonathan Steinberg states that,

The scale of Bismarck's triumph cannot be exaggerated. He alone had brought about a complete transformation of the European international order. He had told those who

³⁹⁶ Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 255-257.

³⁹⁷ Sheehan, *German History*, 910; A. J. P. Taylor, *Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1955), 133.

³⁹⁸ Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 225-301.

would listen what he intended to do, how he intended to do it, and he did it. He achieved this incredible feat without commanding an army, and without the ability to give an order to the humblest common soldier, without control of a large party, without public support, indeed, in the face of almost universal hostility, without a majority in parliament, without control of his cabinet, and without a loyal following in the bureaucracy. He no longer had the support of the powerful conservative interest groups who had helped him achieve power. The most senior diplomats in the foreign service ... were sworn enemies and he knew it. The Queen and the Royal Family hated him and the King, emotional and unreliable, would soon have his 70th birthday. ... With perfect justice, in August 1866, he punched his fist on his desk and cried "I have beaten them all! All!"³⁹⁹

For the first time in Germany's long and fractured history, there remained a sense of gradual unification and centralization even if by Prussia. Though not the outcome many German liberals hoped for, the Prussian state still sought to increase the economic modalities of all its German citizens. More importantly, conservatism and liberalism still worked unilaterally within the monarchy emphasizing strict education, industry, science, mathematics, and statism.⁴⁰⁰ The Prussian government began indoctrinating these new Germans in the ways of Prussia, and by doing so, they sought to transform the populace as a whole into one thinking entity comparable to the military. Bismarck created the first modern welfare state in Prussia through social programs that included unemployment insurance, pensions, and better health care for workers.⁴⁰¹ All of these accumulated with the sole purpose to gain the populace's trust to join the military and to continue its growth.⁴⁰²

Prussia's new constitution called for the rapid industrialization of Germany and increasing the working class's means of producing and manufacturing goods for the broader European market. The Industrial Revolution initiated large migrations of Prussian agrarians from

³⁹⁹ Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 257.

⁴⁰⁰ Blackbourn and Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*, 39-50.

⁴⁰¹ R. Laurence Moore and Maurizio Vaudagna, *The American Century in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 226.

⁴⁰² E. P. Hennock, *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850-1914: Social Policies Compared* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

the rural parts of the country to the urban centers increasing the Prussian population rapidly. Railroads became a key component of Prussia's policies, and by the late 1890s, Germany created one of the largest rail networks in Europe and the world second only to the United States.⁴⁰³ These critical railroads became the bloodline of Germany not only to move goods back and forth but to move hundreds of thousands of troops and equipment in time of war. Competition amongst the British and French remained critical to Prussia's emphasis on an industrial society and always being improved. Though Great Britain industrialized before the Prussian state, the German empire soon gained momentum as they used previous research from the British factories to make theirs more modern and economically viable. Secondly, the Germans began implementing better research in the fields of chemistry and physics placing them above their French and British competitors. From this, Germany in a short time became the largest economy in continental Europe controlling a vast educated population and industrial base. Their industrial base which accounted for 12% of global industry by 1914 became a key element to their rise to power.⁴⁰⁴ More importantly as new methods of manufacturing and metallurgical engineering advancements continued, these all began the process of an industrialized military provided with the newest discoveries in military technology with Prussian ideals remaining at the core.⁴⁰⁵

Otto von Bismarck remained in office as Chancellor from 1871-1890 serving as Germany's longest-serving Chancellor. Bismarck directed Prussia on the path to unify the German states in the ways of Prussian conservatism. Bismarck's contention remained heavily focused in European affairs within continental Europe. He did not seek to expand the German

⁴⁰³ Sheehan, *German History*, 466-467.

⁴⁰⁴ Richard H. Tilly and Michael Kopsidis, *From Old Regime to Industrial State: A History of German Industrialization from the Eighteenth Century to World War I* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2020); Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1987), 271.

⁴⁰⁵ John H. Morrow, Jr., "Industrial Mobilization in World War I: The Prussian Army and the Aircraft Industry," *The Journal of Economic History* 37, no. 1 (1977): 36-51, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2119443>.

empire in the methods of Great Britain and France through colonialism. Historian Eric Hobsbawm states that, “Indeed the German chancellor Bismarck, who remained undisputed world champion at the game of multilateral diplomatic chess for almost twenty years after 1871, devoted himself exclusively, and successfully, to maintaining peace between the powers.”⁴⁰⁶ Bismarck’s foreign policy remains the cornerstone of 19th century political thought for German history in that he believed in expansion within Europe and not abroad as he believed colonialism diverted precious resources away from the main goals of Germany.⁴⁰⁷ Bismarck achieved his main goals of making Germany the leading economic power in Europe by preserving conservative Prussian ideologies and establishing the most dominate military force in existence. Though history notes after Bismarck, Germany indeed began its colonial ambitions under Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1918). Furthermore, the brilliance of Bismarck’s ability to understand Prussian/German geographical location within Europe also pushed his diplomatic measures by creating alliances with potential enemies. Alliances such as the *Dreikaiserbund* (League of Three Emperors) between Germany, Russia, and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire established a non-aggression pact between the three (1871-1890).⁴⁰⁸

Bismarck believed that the Franco-Prussian War and the humiliation of the French did not dissipate their intention to seek revenge. Also, the French military remained largely intact from that conflict despite their capitulation to the brilliant Moltke the Elder. Bismarck cunningly foresaw this and did not allow the French to establish a treaty with Austria or Russia to possibly attack Germany from three directions. Bismarck constantly sought peace after the unification

⁴⁰⁶ E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1987), 312.

⁴⁰⁷ Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911-1918* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1959), 4; “Wilhelm II (1859-1918),” BBC, accessed February 6, 2023, https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilhelm_kaiser_ii.shtml.

⁴⁰⁸ Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors* (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2014), 241.

period as his main objective centered around the preservation of the new German empire and furthermore the Imperial German army trained in the Prussian methods.⁴⁰⁹ Bismarck in his later years also remained very weary of Prussian conservative radicals who sought preemptive strikes against Russia as Bismarck believed this jeopardized his fragile relations amongst European monarchs. Nevertheless, historians see a shift in Bismarck's foreign policies from 1860s to the 1880s in that he avoided war at all costs but retained a position of strength. Furthermore, the German emperor Wilhelm I through the new constitution retained all power even above the chancellor placing him as the sole decision maker by this period.⁴¹⁰

The Chancellor of Germany only acted through the good graces of the emperor, and by 1888 with the death of Wilhelm I and the short reign of his successor Frederick III (1831-1888), Kaiser Wilhelm II grew tired of Bismarck's rhetoric and dismissed him in 1890. Bismarck hoped to guide Wilhelm II as he did with his grandfather, but the emperor surrounded himself with many radicals that persuaded the emperor that Frederick II would not have been great with Bismarck at his side, secondly this fulfilled the emperor's appetite of absolute power over all major decisions, further leading Germany's enemies to win the art of diplomacy.⁴¹¹ This in large part occurred from Bismarck's contention to stay away from colonialism and his great emphasis on non-aggression treaties with Russia and the Austrian-Hungarian empire which Wilhelm II did not renew. Historians consider this failure of Kaiser Wilhelm II to not renew the treaty with Russia ultimately predicted what Bismarck stated in his last days, "Jena came twenty years after the death of Frederick the Great; the crash will come twenty years after my departure if things go

⁴⁰⁹ "Law Concerning the Constitution of the German Reich," DocumentArchiv.de, accessed February 6, 2023, <http://www.documentarchiv.de/ksr/verfksr.html>.

⁴¹⁰ Huber, *Deutsche Verfassungschichte seit 1789*, 750-751; Ludwig Bamberger, *Bismarck Posthumus* (Norderstedt, Germany: Hansebooks, 2016), 8.

⁴¹¹ Harold Kurtz, *The Second Reich: Kaiser Wilhelm II and His Germany* (New York, NY: American Heritage Press, 1970), 60.

on like this.”⁴¹² The treatment of Bismarck by Wilhelm II undermined the delicate state in which Bismarck carefully constructed through strategic action and diplomacy. Bismarck upon giving his final advice to Wilhelm II states that, “Your Majesty, so long as you have this present officer corps, you can do as you please. But when this is no longer the case, it will be very different for you.”⁴¹³ Otto von Bismarck died in 1898 succeeded by Leo von Caprivi (1831-1899), Chlodwig Viktor (1819-1901), Bernhard Bulow (1849-1929), Theobald Hollweg (1856-1921), Georg Michaelis (1857-1936), Georg Hertling (1843-1919), and Maximilian Baden (1867-1929) all of whom served short terms under Wilhelm II. For historians, the death of Otto von Bismarck marked a period in European history where too much power rested in the hands of Wilhelm II and a powerful military at his disposal. Nevertheless, the German empire continued to expand its military and industrial strength within central Europe and its borders outside of Europe. In short, the reforms from 1807-1813 continued on a broad scale.⁴¹⁴

The late 19th century saw the German empire shift to *Weltpolitik* (World Politics) through Kaiser Wilhelm II’s advisor’s or “yes men.” The shift in foreign policy from continental Europe to the global stage began with Germany’s ambitions to colonize parts of the world as other major European powers were doing at the time such as France and Great Britain being its main antagonist. Also, Bismarck’s successors were constantly shifting in and out of alliances with the Austrian-Hungarian empire, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire. This eventually led to the Triple Alliance in 1882.⁴¹⁵ Colonialism for the German empire remained a great aspiration to aspire to due to the competitive nature of France and Great Britain’s overseas possessions. The very

⁴¹² Taylor, *Bismarck*, 264.

⁴¹³ Alan Palmer, *Bismarck* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976), 267.

⁴¹⁴ Steinberg, *Bismarck*, 449.

⁴¹⁵ J. A. S. Grenville and Bernard Wasserstein, *The Major International Treaties of the Twentieth Century: A History and Guide with Texts* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 38.

definition of imperialism in Europe shifted to a global theater by the 1760s. By 1884, the German empire acquired New Guinea, and by the 1890s, the Germans began expanding into Africa, Asia, and South America causing in frictions between France, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States.⁴¹⁶ The previous German regime left Kaiser Wilhelm II with a massive industrial base and a huge military force. Germany's colonization of parts of Africa alongside of the French and British began a series of conflicts such as the Herero Wars (1906-1907) a rebellion that led to the Herero and Namaqua genocide. The German empire led by the Prussian state wanted to settle German people within these areas to consolidate their intention of imperial expansionist policies outside of Europe.⁴¹⁷

Secondly, tensions only increased with Great Britain when the Imperial German Navy became the second strongest navy in the world behind the Royal Navy. Immediately, Germany's actions began a series of military buildup amongst European nations who saw the ideologies of Prussianization interfere with their own political, economic, and diplomatic aspirations.⁴¹⁸ The Boer Wars (1880-1902) between the British Empire and South African Dutch descendants only increased tension between Germany and Britain when Germany sent to the Boers new weapons such as the Mauser Model 1889 produced in the tens of thousands to the Boers. These rifles stemmed from the newest military technology and proved very effective against the British during the war. Germany continued to use and advance this rifle post-World War II.⁴¹⁹ Imperial

⁴¹⁶ David Ciarlo, "Globalizing German Colonialism," *German History* 26, no. 2 (2008): 285-298, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghn007>.

⁴¹⁷ A. Dirk Moses, *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2008), 296; Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 87.

⁴¹⁸ Holger H. Herwig, *"Luxury" Fleet: The Imperial German Navy 1888-1918* (London, England: The Ashfield Press, 1980), 35-42.

⁴¹⁹ Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), 302-338, 350; Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York, NY: Random House, 1979), 30.

Germany only continued to produce mass amounts of weapons on an advanced scale using its civic scientific advancements parallel to military technological superiority accumulation in a massive buildup of weapons and material.

The Imperial German military retained the same aspects that it harbored as a product of Prussian influence. The only difference being it now comprised many more soldiers from other German territories such as Bavaria, Saxony, and Wurttemberg. The size of the army in peace time consisted of 600,000 soldiers in 1900 to 800,000 by 1914. By the outbreak of World War I (1914-1918), the army increased from 800,000 men to 3.8 million men within a week of mobilization. By the end of World War I in 1918, over 13 million men served in the Imperial German Army.

Year	Overall size	Officers	Personnel	Noncommissioned Officers	Total size as a percentage of the population
1880	422,589	17,227	401,659	48,531	0.937
1881	449,257	18,128	427,274	51,586	0.989
1887	491,825	19,262	468,409 (2)	55,447	1.035
1891	511,657	20,400	486,983 (3)	58,448	1.028
1894	584,548	22,534	557,112 (4)	77,883	1.138
1900	600,516	23,850	571,692 (5)	80,556	1.065
1905	609,758	24,522	580,158 (6)	82,582	1.006
1910	622,483	25,718	589,672	85,226	0.959
1914	800,646	30,739	761,438	105,856	1.181

Figure 3. Size of the Army⁴²⁰

Secondly, the Imperial German Army under the Prussian leadership remained cautious of liberal socialists who might dilute the military and spread propaganda throughout the ranks

⁴²⁰ "Strength of the German Army (1890-1914)," German History in Documents and Images, accessed February 3, 2023, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=795.

especially the officer corps which existed as a cohesive entity amongst the entirety of the army. Even though liberals and conservatives both made up the army, its more conservative Prussian leaders retained a high degree of influence and kept it that way.

While the navy was the focus of increased popular attention after 1897, the army underwent slower growth. It registered increases in the number of officers and non-commissioned officers, but its overall size remained stable as a proportion of the population. One reason for this slow growth was that conservatives feared that rapid expansion would bring Socialist workers into the army and dilute the officer corps of aristocrats. In 1911, nationalist critics began to lament the neglect of the army. They claimed that the country was in mortal danger, as the growing strength of the Russian and French armies threatened to outstrip Germany's capacity to fight a two-front war.⁴²¹

Comparing the figures, the Imperial German Army remained largely a small percentage of the population, and these numbers increased rapidly during wartime. Daniel Hughes and Richard Dinardo authors of the book, *Imperial Germany and War, 1871-1918*, give an insight on the transitional period of the Imperial German Army during the years preceding the 1848 revolution and the unification period up to the creation of Imperial Germany. This book describes the processes that are involved with the successes and rapid growth of the Imperial German Army. The authors note back to how the army grew from the Napoleonic period and transformed into one of the largest and most technological militaries in continental Europe. The authors state that, "The imperial German military establishment inherited a rich intellectual tradition from its Prussian predecessor. The work of the reformers of the Napoleonic era and its aftermath, spearheaded by Herhard von Scharnhorst and especially Carl von Clausewitz, had provided the Prussian army with a comprehensive theory of war."⁴²² The evidence provides that the reformation period directly impacted the way the Prussian military influenced other German states now under the direct authority of the emperor.

⁴²¹ German History in Documents and Images, "Strength of the German Army."

⁴²² Daniel J. Hughes and Richard L. Dinardo, *Imperial Germany and War, 1871-1918* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2018): 131.

The Prussian state as it still existed within the context of Imperial Germany consistently stressed the importance of military reforms and upgrades in society and the army. The Prussian government believed that a military working society presented the ideal situation for the security of peace. Though the Prussian or Imperial German Army never amounted for much of the total population, the idea stemmed from rotating healthy men in and out of military training exercises for a certain number of months and years and then placing them back into their chosen fields of labor whether that be industry, manufacturing, agricultural, academic, or entrepreneurship. In time of war, this *Krumper system* developed by the reformers in 1807-1813 ensured that a large military force always existed in theory.⁴²³ Maintaining a large standing army stressed the treasury and financial modalities of the country hence a reason for Kaiser Wilhelm's dabbling in colonial ambitions to levy financial support for the army. Conscription played a major role in German history as each Prussian/German male citizen should always be readily available and have military training compared to nations such as France and Austria where their conscription efforts worked with raw recruits.⁴²⁴ This is not to suggest that Russia, Austria-Hungary, or France could not field an impressive force but that the Prussian mindset placed quality over quantity. This also suggests why Imperial Germany focused on industrialization so heavily and the fields of mathematics and science.

Conscription of the German populace became another leading factor in which military men of age were trained in a series of stages throughout a period of time to consolidate a large pool of recruits. Ewald Hecker in his journal article, "The Compulsory System in the German Empire," discusses the critical role in allowing the Imperial German military to swell to large sizes in a short period of time during war. Hecker states that,

⁴²³ Oliver Schmidt, *Prussian Regular Infantryman 1808-15* (Oxford, England: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 7-8.

⁴²⁴ John Keegan, *World Armies* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Press, 1979), 219-220.

One of the strongest bulwarks of a good military system is an unfailing reserve force of non-commissioned officers. To those to whom the military service was agreeable and who desired to continue in the army after absolving their two years' period, an opportunity was given to enable them to remain for longer periods. Their development and training there- upon was such as to give assurance that upon their return to private life, they would be equipped with an education which would be of value to them in their future civil career.⁴²⁵

The Imperial German Army stressed the great importance of education and having an army and populace able to be part time soldiers and laborers. German education and furthermore its culture became a staple for many European nations, and the German language before the outbreak of World War I became a part of many curriculums surpassing French. The Prussian manner also influenced nations such as the United States where many German academics were considered the epicenter of scientific and industrial enlightenment. Conscription within Germany never amounted to more than 1% percent of the male population in times of peace and war.

Interestingly enough, these figures demonstrate the quality of the Imperial German Army to not levy or depend on sheer weight of numbers during war time but to consider the variables and factors of advanced warfare solidified by modern military thought and weapons. Hecker provides a figure stating that,

In time of peace the standing army of modern Germany approximates only 1% of the total population. The figure varies but a small fraction of 1%. The Reichstag stipulates the number of troops required in times of peace and controls the appropriation of the necessary funds. The standing army has never exceeded, as a matter of fact, 1 ½ % of the total population, as, for instance, in the summer of 1914, the standing army amounted to 1.117%.⁴²⁶

Hecker goes on to note how every German citizen from the age of twenty to forty-five years of age appeared before a *Kommandant* in his local district to examine their knowledge on military

⁴²⁵ Ewald Hecker, "The Compulsory System in the German Empire," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York* 6, no. 4 (1916): 214-215, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1193293>.

⁴²⁶ Hecker, "The Compulsory System," 215.

matters and their mental and physical health.⁴²⁷ Citizens who were not conscripted into the regular army still retained a position within the militia or reserves. These reserve units were not of the high quality that the Imperial German Army sought, but nevertheless, the government insured that each be armed and ready for direct action if needed. The Imperial German Army became highly selective in what they looked for in recruits which consisted of height, weight, education, health, and characteristics of their physical features. The Prussian mindset believed in an ideology centered around elite Germanism only not as extreme as Germany's successors post-World War I i.e., the Waffen SS. Again, Prussians of Junker lineage directly associate with their Teutonic origins and the past wars with the Slavic people.⁴²⁸ This selectionism within the Imperial German Army became more predominate after the forging of a united Germany. For instance, Prussia inherited large quantities of Germans now able to serve for the Second Reich.

Lastly, the conscription amongst the population served as a unifying factor amongst all Germans not of Prussian lineage. This German society shared common characteristics of military service and training which worked as the Prussian leadership intended though outliers such as the Alsace-Lorraine region controlled by Germany after the Franco-Prussia War still resented the Prussianization of their populace, and they remained for a large part of their history pro-French.⁴²⁹ They considered the Prussian state and its military policies an infraction upon their liberties and freedoms. Saxony and Wurttemberg also retained some aspects of their general staff system and their ministry of war who worked with the Imperial German Army. "The Royal Saxon Army (*Königlich Sächsische Armee*) was the national army of the Kingdom of Saxony

⁴²⁷ Hecker, "The Compulsory System," 216-217.

⁴²⁸ Aleksander Pluskowski, *The Archaeology of the Prussian Crusade: Holy War and Colonisation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

⁴²⁹ Stephen Broadberry and Kevin H. O'Rourke, *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe Volume 2: 1870 to the Present* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Barry Cerf, *Alsace-Lorraine Since 1870* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1919).

(*Königreich Sachsen*), one of the four states of the German Reich to retain its own armed forces.”⁴³⁰ The German empire delegated great control over these larger states due to the fear of Austrian influence. Though Imperial Germany and the Austrian Hungarian empire remained in good relations, the Prussian conservatives did not take chances as they knew a combined coalition against them remained a real variable.

The command of the Imperial German Army rested solely with the kaiser. The emperor with the backing of the army was the supreme head of state with little opposition. The Bavarian contingent of various regiments though independent to a certain degree remained aligned to the Imperial German Army. The kaiser used the military cabinet created during the reform periods of 1807-1813 to conduct his military operations and assist in important matters of the state. The military cabinet exercised its authority through the Prussian ministry of war and the general staff.⁴³¹ The chief of the general staff along with the chancellor became critical components to the kaiser, and they worked with him personally. However, in the end, all decisions by this point derived from the German kaiser who asserted his power. The issue for Imperial Germany and the Prussian system retained that all decisions centered around high-ranking officials within the military, as an example Otto von Bismarck set out to instill peace with his neighbors and carefully conducted his diplomatic avenues towards maintaining decreased tension. Alfred von Schlieffen (1833-1913), a predominant military strategist famous for the Schlieffen Plan, in 1905 during the Morocco crisis called for an attack against France; however, it never occurred.⁴³²

Though the kaiser controlled the decisions of the army, these examples provide that the balance

⁴³⁰ Andrew Lucas and Jürgen Schmieschek, *Fighting the Kaiser's War: The Saxons in Flanders 1914/1918* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Military, 2015): 8.

⁴³¹ Matthew Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture 1806-1848* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴³² Viscount Grey, *Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), 49-52.

that existed with Bismarck began to lean more with the war party, and powerful generals such as Schlieffen and Helmuth von Moltke the Younger (1848-1916) secretly used their influence within the army and amongst the kaiser to conduct their own warlike ambitions.

Gordon Alexander Craig when discussing the decisions made in 1914 states that they "were made by the soldiers and that, in making them, they displayed an almost complete disregard for political considerations."⁴³³ Though Clausewitz argued that war was the continuation of politics, his writings were used differently by the various leaders of Germany especially Adolf Hitler's rise to power. Each regime change used and interpreted Clausewitz's work differently. Craig is arguing here that decisions were being made by career soldiers and not actual diplomatic entities outside of the military complex. The balance of power shifted greatly to the military and its leaders as a tool to continue political aspirations creating an uneasy situation within Europe. Some of these decisions as Bismarck noted increased the diplomatic fragility between Germany and her European neighbors. Nevertheless, the Imperial German Army remained highly efficient and organized under the chiefs of the German General Staff from 1888-1914. Alfred von Waldersee (1832-1904), Alfred von Schlieffen, and Moltke the Younger are considered the top German military minds during that period. All of these individuals participated in the unification of Germany and graduated from the top military institutions regarded by many as the best in the world. They were highly trained in the art of warfare under their predecessors such as Moltke the Elder who was chief of staff from 1857-1888.

The structure of the Imperial German Army used a highly sophisticated methodology for organization during peace time. As noted, Prussian generals such as Moltke the Elder set-in place

⁴³³ Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 294.

the foundational principles to maintain, equip, and mobilize such a large force.⁴³⁴ The Imperial German Army consisted of an *Armee-Inspektion* (Army inspection) which was not uncommon for large militaries of the time. Frederick II (1712-1786) during peace time constantly initiated rigorous inspections that required immaculate attention to procedure and drill which continued throughout the entirety of Prussia's history.⁴³⁵ The *Armeekorps* (Army Corps) were various divisions and regiments that all worked together simultaneously with regiments forming divisions, divisions forming corps, and corps forming an army. The Imperial German Army also continued the military doctrine of Moltke the Elder that called for multiple armies working as an army group. By the 1870s-1900, armies were too large to move as a single entity and very impractical from a communication and coordination standpoint. The Prussian's success against France in 1870-1871 stemmed from army groups which meant that one army engaged the enemy pinning it into position whilst the other army used an envelopment maneuver or flanking tactics.⁴³⁶ This is reminiscent to all military theory and history especially Frederick II's Oblique Order which used the same principles only on a smaller scale and finally perfected by Napoleon. The Oblique Order was a tactical maneuver on the battlefield and worked well for the Prussians in their past conflicts. With armies increase in size, the battlefield also began to stretch multiple miles. For the Imperial German Army, this required constant attention to military theory and doctrine and moreover inspections.

The Imperial German Army corps grew considerably over time as industrialization, competition, tension, and modern technology forced military build ups around Europe. The corps

⁴³⁴ Holger H. Herwig, "Through the Looking Glass: German Strategic Planning Before 1914," *The Historian* 77, no. 2 (2015): 290-314, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hisn.12066>.

⁴³⁵ Günter Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der Deutschen Heere 1815-1939: Die Höheren Kommandostellen 1815-1839* (Osnabrück, Germany: Biblio Verlag, 1990), 33-36.

⁴³⁶ W. Müller, *Field-Marshal Count Moltke 1800-1878* (London, England: W. Swan Sonnenschein, 1879), 14-15; Trevor Dupuy, *A Genius for War: The German Army and General Staff 1807-1945* (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1984).

consisted of two to three divisions depending on the scenario of peace or war. The corps also maintained the *Landwehr* who were the reserves and militia formations within a certain sector of Germany. Each corps also consisted of *Jager* battalions, heavy artillery battalions, communication battalions, engineer battalions, and a train battalion.⁴³⁷ The *Jager* battalions are historically Prussian used during the Frederick II era and eventually being expanded to work along with corps during the reformation period. After the battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806, key Prussian reformers noted the great usage of skirmishers and mixed tactics by Napoleon. The Prussians incorporated skirmishing units but did not use them effectively with the army. These units usually acted independently. *Jager* battalions combined with light artillery and cavalry acted as the eyes and ears of the main army. These units relayed valuable information back through command to determine the enemy's position and strength. By the mid and late 19th century, the German army effectively implemented this amongst their corps along with the paralleled civil advancements of the railroad.⁴³⁸

By 1914, the Imperial German Army consisted of twenty-five corps who could act independently if needed, upon mobilization the Corps grew to forty, and by the armistice sixty-six.⁴³⁹ The Prussian idea within the army retained that broad orders or objects were given by supreme commanders, and lower officers downwards achieved these goals without the constraint. This proved very effective as it allowed the army to remain highly flexible and consistent. During war time, the corps became a highly mobile tactical formation responsible for

⁴³⁷ "Deutsches Heer 1914-1918," The Prussian Machine, accessed February 6, 2023, http://prussianmachine.com/page_9.htm.

⁴³⁸ Geoffrey L Herrera, "Inventing the Railroad and Rifle Revolution: Information, Military Innovation and the Rise of Germany," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27, no. 2 (2004): 243-271, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0140239042000255913>; "Pionier-Bataillone des Kaiserreichs," The Prussian Machine, accessed February 6, 2023, <http://prussianmachine.com/army/rgtspionier.htm>.

⁴³⁹ "Struktur des Deutschen Armeekorps 1914-1918," The Prussian Machine, accessed February 6, 2023, http://prussianmachine.com/army/org_corps.htm.

military districts. Each of these corps relayed information directly back to the commander of the general staff who then notified the emperor of the situation. The Imperial German Army stressed the great importance of intelligence from a tactical, and strategic level where the main theater of operations occurred. As militaries grew in size, these broad areas became known as fronts stretching hundreds of miles. Moltke the Elder states that,

The days are gone by when, for dynastical ends, small armies of professional soldiers went to war to conquer a city, or a province, and then sought winter quarters or made peace. The wars of the present day call whole nations to arms...The entire financial resources of the State are appropriated to military purposes...⁴⁴⁰

The Prussian reserve system through the programs mentioned worked together with the military in war time as these units were called up to replace and replenish the army. By the ending phases of World War I, the Imperial German Army used these reserves to a great extent. However, they were not as qualified as veteran soldiers wounded or killed in action, but they filled in gaps.

The Prussian system...was based on service of only three years with the colors...and four years in the reserve. The Prussian standing army had become simply a training *cadre* for intakes of conscripts. The Prussian army's organization for peace and war was virtually the same. Prussia was divided into army-corps districts for the purposes both of administration and of recruitment. On the outbreak of war the command organization of the district became that of a corps in the field. 'Localization' of the army and of its recruitment gave the districts pride and interest in their 'own' corps.⁴⁴¹

When the British began to reform their army in the 1860s from disastrous defeats particularly in the Crimean War (1853-1856), they immediately set out to determine the best model to follow.

The British eventually settled on the Prussian model and began implementing the Prussian system, but this ultimately failed due to the British rejection of conscription.⁴⁴² For the Prussians,

⁴⁴⁰ Robert T. Foley, *German Strategy and the Path to Verdun: Erich von Falkenhayn and the Development of Attrition, 1870-1916* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18.

⁴⁴¹ Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970: A Military, Political and Social Survey* (New York, NY: W. Morrow, 1970), 295.

⁴⁴² Xavier Bara, "The Kishū Army and the Setting of the Prussian Model in Feudal Japan, 1860-1871," *War in History* 19, no. 2 (2012): 153-171, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26098427>.

this system worked wonders and kept them ahead of all militaries. The officer corps for the Imperial German Army remained as one of the most competitive military schools in Europe. Some historians believe that the officer corps only admitted the Junker elites to their ranks which is untrue. By the 1890s, a large majority of educated commoners became officers. The imperial army believed that competition amongst the classes produced the best Germany offered. Though the Imperial German Army existed as an elite force, it only achieved success based on the brilliance of its commander and overall leadership.

Alfred von Schlieffen (1833-1913), a German field marshal and top military strategist from Prussian stock who also served as chief of the German Imperial Army, began plans for the possibility of a two-front war. Schlieffen began his military service as the son of an old Prussian officer of noble birth. The military did not interest Schlieffen and only due to compulsive military service by Prussian law did he join the military in 1843. From his rapid ability to understand military concepts, he was chosen for officer school where he rose through the ranks completing 53 years of service.⁴⁴³ The General War School admitted Schlieffen at the age of 25 which most historians consider very young for the typical admittance statistics of that time. Many of Schlieffen's military professors quickly noticed his genius, and in 1861, he graduated with high honors. Prussian military schools as mentioned were exceptionally difficult to get into and to graduate with very few making it through. The Topographic Bureau of the General Staff selected him for assignment where Schlieffen mastered the art and skill to analyze geographical terrain and apply this to military theories. Schlieffen quickly noticed the geographical displacement of the Prussian territories and the enemy's surrounding her.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴³ V. J. Curtis, "Understanding Schlieffen," *The Army Doctrine and Training Bulletin* 6, no. 3 (2003): 56, <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/D12-9-6-3E.pdf>.

⁴⁴⁴ Dupuy, *A Genius for War*, 128.

The war games implemented by Moltke the Elder during this time allowed Schlieffen to implement the possibility of a two-front war which heightened the critical situation Prussia faced. Even though many Prussian generals scoffed at the idea, the possibility remained relevant. Some of these overconfident Prussians considered the Prussian-Imperial German Army impregnable. By 1865, the German General Staff inducted Schlieffen to learn from them even though his role was very minor. For Schlieffen to be the best, he surrounded himself with geniuses and theorists much like himself even though he had not seen military service. Old Prussians such as Moltke the Elder, Prince Friedrich Karl (1828-1885), Karl von Bittenfeld (1796-1884), and Alfred von Waldersee (1832-1904) all commanded ultimate respect for their presence alone. For the Prussian military, no matter one's genius in warfare they demanded satisfaction through battle as they did. Schlieffen saw action with the Prussian cavalry corps in 1866 at the Battle of Koniggratz during the Austro-Prussian War where the Prussian battle of encirclement proved decisive against the numerically superior Austrian and Saxon forces.⁴⁴⁵ His actions in the Franco-Prussian War pushed him to promotion, and after years of working with top Prussian military commanders, Schlieffen by 1893 became General of the Cavalry. Schlieffen devoted much of his life to military matters of geography and strategy. The Schlieffen Plan, considered as a critical military component used by the German's stratagem in the Franco-Prussian War and World War I, assessed the geographical components that pertained to Imperial Germany. Schlieffen states that, "The success of battle today depends more on conceptual coherence than on territorial proximity. Thus, one battle might be fought in order to secure victory on another battlefield."⁴⁴⁶ This strategy considered the possibility of a French attack from

⁴⁴⁵ Taylor, *Bismarck*, 3; "Alfred Graf von Schlieffen," *The Prussian Machine*; accessed February 6, 2023, <http://prussianmachine.com/prussia/schlieffen.htm>.

⁴⁴⁶ Foley, *German Strategy and the Path to Verdun*, 66.

the west and a Russian attack from the east and how the Imperial German Army responded. The Schlieffen Plan became the Imperial German Army's doctrine of defense whilst the plan called for an offensive strategy. For the German empire, the best defensive measures were offensive strategies to deliver quick and decisive blows to the enemy on each front which was part of the Schlieffen Plan regarding the French strategy.

In the event of a war with Germany, France will probably restrict itself to defensive measures, especially since it cannot count on effective support from Russia. France has been preparing a military line for this purpose for quite some time, one that is to a great extent permanently fortified and whose main bases include the fortresses of Belfort, Epinal, Toul, and Verdun. This line can be adequately manned by France's large army and will be extremely difficult to attack.⁴⁴⁷

The Imperial German Army under the pretext of war used the Schlieffen Plan as the basis for their military operations from a strategic level to the operational level with the regular army working closely with the *Landwehr*. Schlieffen also noticed major holes within a potential war with France. He notes that the smaller conscription rate within the Imperial German Army was 55% compared to the French conscription rate of 80% which placed the Germans at a numerical disadvantage.⁴⁴⁸ He believed that from a standpoint of qualitative advancements, this could not balance the quantitative statistics against them. Schlieffen called for universal conscription which meant almost the entirety of German males be trained and armed; however, this never happened in his lifetime due to conscription policies controlled by the Prussian Ministry of War. Schlieffen also considered the Franco-Russian Alliance in 1896 as another critical factor against Germany's war operations.⁴⁴⁹ The Prussian Ministry of War only enacted some of Schlieffen's proposals in 1911. Schlieffen calculated that the Imperial German Army needed 96 divisions hypothetically

⁴⁴⁷ "The Schlieffen Plan (1905)," German History in Documents and Images, accessed February 4, 2023, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=796.

⁴⁴⁸ Terence Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning 1871-1914* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 139; Foley, *German Strategy and the Path to Verdun*, 20-22.

⁴⁴⁹ Norman Rich, *Great Power Diplomacy Since 1914* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 216-262.

to use his plan to full effectiveness with an emphasis on besieging Paris, but by 1914, the Imperial German Army only consisted of 79 divisions which only 68 were deployed on the western front and the other divisions deployed on the eastern front.⁴⁵⁰ Schlieffen in his later years stated that,

These preparations can be made any way that you like: it will soon become clear that we will be too weak to continue the operation in this direction. We will have the same experience as that of all previous conquerors, that offensive warfare both requires and uses up very strong forces, that these forces continually become weaker even as those of the defender become stronger, and that this is especially true in a land that bristles with fortresses.⁴⁵¹

Schlieffen's predictions came into fruition during western offensive as the Imperial German Army became bogged down in trench warfare with most of its best divisions depleted of veterans killed or wounded on the western front. Secondly, this eventually forced Germany to implement mass conscription of raw inexperienced recruits with little training and no combat experience to refit and replenish its battered divisions. The Imperial German Army though highly effective also could not follow up its victories due to lack of numbers.⁴⁵² Also, military advancements such as the maximum machine gun changed the nature of warfare and placed Germany in a situation that previous military reformers warned against with this being war of attrition. Nevertheless, historians baffle themselves to the degree in which the Imperial German Army remained in the war with the numerous variables against them as their Austrian-Hungarian allies proved ineffective largely throughout the war. Few nations were able to mobilize to the extent of Imperial Germany whilst simultaneously engaging Great Britain, France, Russia, and eventually

⁴⁵⁰ Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan*, 139.

⁴⁵¹ Terence Zuber, *German War Planning 1891-1914: Sources and Interpretations* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2004), 195.

⁴⁵² Gregory Blaxland, *Amiens: 1918* (London, England: W. H. Allen, 1981), 84-86; J. E. Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1918 May-July: The German Diversion Offensives and the First Allied Counter-Offensive* (London, England: Macmillan, 1994), 306; Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914-1918* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2014), 407.

the United States on multiple fronts. Even though the Imperial German Army effectively capitulated by 1918, it is considered a great military feat by any standard especially considering the statistical odds against them. Moreover, even when the Imperial German Army faced numerous instances of disintegration, they still managed to coordinate effective counter attacks on a large scale and retained logistical support. George W. Steevens, a journalist for *The Daily Mail*, reported,

The German army is the most perfectly adapted, perfectly running machine. Never can there have been a more signal triumph of organization over complexity. The armies of other nations are not so completely organized. The German Army is the finest thing of its kind in the world; it is the finest thing in Germany of any kind. Briefly, the difference between the German and, for instance, the English armies is a simple one. The German Army is organized with a view to war, with the cold, hard, practical, business-like purpose of winning victories. And what should we ever do if 100,000 of this kind of army got loose in England?⁴⁵³

France also by the early 20th century began erecting and fortifying main areas of the French front lines. Secondly, the French Armed Forces after the disastrous defeats during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) began adopting new military measures of close quarter fighting.⁴⁵⁴ The French forces no longer bottled their armies around towns and fortresses and began a more aggressive approach to a potential invasion. The French army remained one of the largest forces in Europe numbering around 1.4 million soldiers during peace time, and by the end of World War I (1914-1918), the army grew to 8.1 million men under arms.⁴⁵⁵ Nevertheless, according to statistical data, the Imperial German Army maintained superior numbers with the help of eventual mass conscription and the *Landwehr*. More men served in the Imperial German

⁴⁵³ “The Daily Mail and the Conservative Party,” Spartacus Educational, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://spartacus-educational.com/Jmail.htm>.

⁴⁵⁴ Dallas D. Irvine, “The French and Prussian Staff Systems Before 1870,” *The Journal of the American Military Foundation* 2, no. 4 (1938): 192, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3038792>; Howard; *The Franco-Prussian War*, 23-24.

⁴⁵⁵ “Strengths and Losses of the French Army,” John Bracken, accessed February 6, 2023, <http://www.151ril.com/content/history/french-army/2>.

Army from 1914-1918 compared to the French forces. Also, many divisions within the Imperial German Army could not be concentrated on one singular front with this in large part being due to the threat from the eastern parts of the country from Russia. Around 10-20% of the Imperial German Army protected their eastern flank. This pushed the Imperial German military doctrine to strike first and defeat enemies separately if the opportunity presented itself. Gerhard Ritter in his book, *In Sword and the Sceptre; The Problem of Militarism in Germany* states that,

All that was left to Germany was the strategic defensive – a defensive, however, that would resemble that of Frederic the Great in the Seven Years War. It would have to be coupled with a tactical offensive of the greatest possible impact until the enemy was paralyzed and exhausted to the point where diplomacy would have a chance to bring about a satisfactory settlement.⁴⁵⁶

Though this is not to suggest that the French army did not face the same dilemma as around half a million men were responsible for guarding the Alpine regions against the Italian forces. The disadvantages of Imperial Germany by World War I were the differences in lengths from its two fronts hence the importance of railroads. For instance, the distance from Königsberg (East Prussia) to Verdun is 1,552 kilometers or 964 miles.⁴⁵⁷

Helmuth von Moltke the Younger (1848-1916), nephew to Moltke the Elder, became chief of the great German General Staff after the retirement of Schlieffen in 1906. Like many generals during this time, Moltke the Younger attended the War Academy in 1875-1878 and served in the 7th Grenadier regiment where he served as an adjunct to his uncle Moltke the Elder in the General Staff in 1882.⁴⁵⁸ In 1891, Moltke the Younger became aide-de-camp to Frederick

⁴⁵⁶ Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter*, 230.

⁴⁵⁷ Google Maps, accessed February 6, 2023,

<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Kaliningrad,+Kaliningrad+Oblast,+Russia/Verdun,+55100,+France/@51.5677852,3.9644003,5z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x46e33d8d4b7c21a9:0x5050960016126ed3!2m2!1d20.4522144!2d54.7104264!1m5!1m1!1s0x47eb1b941b25ebdd:0x40a5fb99a3acc40!2m2!1d5.3844231!2d49.1598764!3e0>.

⁴⁵⁸ Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Wilhelm II and became part of the emperor's main confidants. Wilhelm II surrounded himself with men that agreed with him consistently which in the long run crippled Germany's diplomatic measures amongst the great powers of the time. By 1904, Moltke the Younger became Quartermaster-General and eventually Deputy Chief of the General Staff. With the death of Alfred von Schlieffen in 1906, Moltke the Younger replaced him causing decent within the German high command as there were many better options. Hans von Beseler (1850-1921), Karl von Bulow (1846-1921), and Colmar von Goltz (1843-1916) were some of the top candidates more suited for the position, and many historians argue that Moltke the Younger only received this position based on connections with his uncle Moltke the Elder and his relationship with Wilhelm II. Moltke the Younger inherited a vast military force complete with the best officers in the world from prestigious military institutions, modern tactical advancements in weaponry, and a massive industrial base, and more importantly, Moltke the Younger obtained the ear of the emperor. From the very beginning, Moltke the Younger doubted the Schlieffen Plan even though he used it to a degree during the First World War particularly the Marne offensive in 1914.

For instance, in 1906, Moltke began planning for potential operations against France in a series of staff rides where he describes fragmented plans of operation. This is not to suggest that Moltke did not retain a high degree of military expertise, but rather, he deviated from the Schlieffen Plan by changing some aspects of it. By deviating, he changed the beginning operations against France in 1914. Schlieffen states that,

In western Europe ... the military machine with its thousands of wheels, costing millions to maintain, cannot stand still for long. One cannot fight a war for one or two years from position to position in 12-day-long battles until both combatants are completely exhausted and weakened and are forced to sue for peace. We must attempt to defeat our enemies quickly and decisively.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ Robert T. Foley, *Alfred von Schlieffen's Military Writings* (Portland, OR: Franc Cass Publishers, 2003), 12.

Aufmarsch I West, Aufmarsch II West, Aufmarsch I Ost, and Aufmarsch II Ost by Moltke created a series of confusing scenarios instead of solidifying a solid operational plan.⁴⁶⁰ Secondly, Germany did not consider the importance of diplomacy before 1914 and use their strength of diplomacy as Bismarck achieved during his time as chancellor. Only in the most extreme cases was the army mobilized for war from a position of reasonable political discourse and not the usage of a large force as a threat which only deepened the conflict. Rather, Imperial Germany forced precarious tensions of escalation without considering the diplomatic consequences. A strong military means nothing if a strong diplomatic plan does not exist. This solely rests with the emperor surrounding himself with Prussian generals with the mindset of invincibility and superiority of the army alone which is the exact situation the Prussians found themselves in during 1806. Kaiser Wilhelm II used the Imperial German Army as a threatening tool rather than an instrument of deterrence. His complacency within diplomatic situations placed Germany in a loose situation even with a powerful military behind him. Moltke the Elder and his military implementations never intended for the Imperial German Army to face the war that it did in 1914-1918. Even with Moltke the Younger being replaced in 1914 by Erich von Falkenhayn (1861-1922), the situation remained the same. Falkenhayn and his short time as Chief of the German General Staff even argued that the war could not be won by the methods the kaiser proposed but by diplomacy later in his career. Falkenhayn's view of the war drastically shifted as he observed this new form of warfare and the enormous casualties. This did not set well with the kaiser and his Hollenzollern legacy.⁴⁶¹ Wilhelm II believed that throwing numbers and precious resources at the situation would produce results. Unfortunately, it only depleted the Imperial

⁴⁶⁰ Terence Zuber, *The Real German War Plan 1904-14* (Gloucestershire, England: The History Press, 2011), 95-97, 116-133.

⁴⁶¹ Timothy T. Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine: The Changes in German Tactical Doctrine during the First World War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1981), 8.

German Army even further on the western front against a well-fortified enemy. During the Verdun offensive he states that,

Our precise problem is how to inflict heavy damage on the enemy at critical points at relatively small cost to ourselves. But we must not overlook the fact that previous experience of mass attacks in this war offers little inducement to imitate them. It would almost seem as if the questions of command and supply in these attacks were insoluble.⁴⁶²

Falkenhayn began the wars of attrition which only demonstrated the measure and resolve the Imperial German Army was willing to go to achieve victory. War of attrition is a war of absolute devastation to wear down an enemy force to exhaustion and collapse through scorched earth tactics or targeting civilian areas. Clausewitz coined it as the exhaustion of the adversary where all possible means were considered to not only destroy the enemy army but their ability to make war.⁴⁶³ Though Falkenhayn remained an important general during the remainder of the war, his reputation in later years suffered great criticism by radical Nazis. Wilhelm II did not grasp the entirety of the situation on the front and wanted a general that produced results by whatever means necessary even at the cost of millions.

Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934), son of a Prussian Junker, became the exact man Kaiser Wilhelm II wanted. His lineage and connection to the elite Junker aristocracy went perfectly with the convictions and arrogance of the kaiser. Wilhelm states that,

Remember that you are a chosen people. The spirit of the Lord has descended upon me because I am the Emperor of the Germans. I am the instrument of the Almighty, I am his sword, his agent. Woe and death to those who do not believe in my mission. ... Let them perish, all the enemies of the German people! God demands their destruction, God who, by my mouth, bids you to do His will.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² "Erich von Falkenhayn on the Battle of Verdun, 21 February 1916," Michael Duffy, accessed February 5, 2023, https://www.firstworldwar.com/source/verdun_falkenhayn.htm.

⁴⁶³ Von Clausewitz, *On War*.

⁴⁶⁴ W. W. Willoughby, "The Prussian Theory of Government," *The American Journal of International Law* 12, no. 2 (1918): 277, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2188143>.

Hindenburg represented not only a position but an ideology of Prussianism through strength and decisive action even though reckless in the context of World War I. Wilhelm II believed that the failure of the Imperial German Army rested in causations behavior and fragility of its leaders. Hindenburg completed his education as a cadet and saw combat in the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars serving in the 3rd regiment of foot guards eventually being omitted into the *Kriegsakademie* (Prussian Staff College) in 1873 and graduated in three years from the prestigious academy.⁴⁶⁵ He like others before him became part of the Army's General Staff Corps where he earned the rank of major and eventually became a member of the Great General Staff. Hindenburg during the peace period taught at the Prussian Staff College demonstrating his great command of military theory. By 1900, Hindenburg became a Lieutenant General and by 1905, General of the Infantry. Schlieffen upon retiring pushed for Hindenburg to succeed him as Chief of the Great General Staff, but Moltke the Younger ultimately gained that role. In 1911, Hindenburg retired from the military only being recalled in 1914 during the beginning stages of World War I.⁴⁶⁶ Hindenburg states that, "You cannot wage war with sentimentality. The more ruthlessly war is conducted, the more merciful is it in fact, for it finishes the war the sooner."⁴⁶⁷ This old Prussian mindset is exactly the convictions sought after by Wilhelm II, and ultimately, the ideology of Hindenburg catches the attention of the emperor. Also, Hindenburg's great success in leading the eastern German Imperial forces over the numerically superior Russians at the Battle of Tannenberg⁴⁶⁸ in 1914 placed him as a great hero of the Imperial German Army and in the good graces of Wilhelm II largely due to eventually freeing up massive German reserves

⁴⁶⁵ Marshal von Hindenburg, *Out of My Life* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1921), 65-92.

⁴⁶⁶ Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 348.

⁴⁶⁷ Coole, *Thus Spake Germany*, 74.

⁴⁶⁸ William J. Astore and Dennis E. Showalter, *Hindenburg: Icon of German Militarism* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 20.

for the western front, and it directly correlated with Wilhelm's ideology of the Russians.

Wilhelm II states in 1912 that,

Is it not unheard of ... that these Anglo-Saxons, linked to us by common origin, religion, and civilizing mission should wish to make themselves the tools of the Slavs. ... If this question – a vital one for us – cannot be settled by diplomacy, then the issue will be decided by force of arms. A solution can be deferred. But the question will come up again in 1 or 2 [years] ... The 'racial struggle could not be avoided', the Kaiser repeated. 'It will take place, perhaps not now, but probably in one or two years' time.'⁴⁶⁹

More importantly, the Battle of Tannenberg served as an ideological victory for the Prussians as this became revenge for the defeat of the Teutonic Order by the Polish-Lithuanian forces in 1410 linking Prussianism very closely to the Teuton mindset.⁴⁷⁰

By 1916 and his national hero status amongst the German populace, Wilhelm II appointed Hindenburg as Chief of the Great General Staff eventually turning Germany into a military dictatorship.⁴⁷¹ Before Hindenburg's rise to fame, he already commanded the respect and admiration of Kings of Prussia due to his Prussian lineage dating back to 1289 with the Teutonic Order. His father Robert Ludwig von Hindenburg (1816-1902), a Prussian soldier and Junker, pushed his son to military perfection and extremism due to the Prussian way.⁴⁷² Hindenburg states during the Austro-Prussian War that, "I rejoice in this bright-coloured future; for the soldier war is the normal state of things; and, moreover, I am in the hands of God. If I fall it is the most honorable and beautiful death."⁴⁷³ Hindenburg's family history and actions during Prussian wars destined him to become a great leader for Germany. Hindenburg also commanded an impressive presence at 6 feet 6 inches tall with bright blue eyes and a muscular frame. This

⁴⁶⁹ John C. G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Into the Abyss of War and Exile, 1900-1941* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 905-906.

⁴⁷⁰ Astore and Showalter, *Hindenburg*, 22.

⁴⁷¹ Martin Kitchen, *The Silent Dictatorship: The Politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916-1918* (London, England: Croom Helm, 1976), 142.

⁴⁷² Von Hindenburg, *Out of My Life*, 1-19.

⁴⁷³ Frank H. Simonds, *History of the World War* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1918), 394.

combined with his leadership on the battlefields of Koniggratz and the Battle of Sedan made him the elected representative of his regiments at Versailles in 1871.⁴⁷⁴ In 1885, Hindenburg studied under Schlieffen and learned the art of encirclement which Hindenburg became very familiar with. This battle of encirclement stressed the importance of maneuvers and Hindenburg began perfecting it in accordance with a deep understanding of topography and geographical validities. During the wargames in 1888, Hindenburg met the future Kaiser Wilhelm II where he used his vast understanding of East Prussia to perfect his art of war which impressed the kaiser. Hindenburg also wrote the field regulations on artillery and field engineering which were used during World War I. Before World War I, Hindenburg served in the army for 46 years and 14 years in the General Staff. Foreseen events predicted by Otto von Bismarck drew Hindenburg into Germany's great bane. Erich Ludendorff and Hindenburg became leading proponents within the Imperial German Army. Both men worked together to secure a decisive victory in the east against the Russian invasion, but the situation on the western front proved different. Nevertheless, Hindenburg and Ludendorff solidified themselves in German militarism rooted in Prussianism, and they became an effective military dictatorship pushing the Imperial German Army to great extremes beyond conception.

Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937), born in the Province of Posen Prussia, stemmed from the Prussian *Junker* class and attended the Cadet School which he entered passing the exam with distinction.⁴⁷⁵ This same officer cadet's school also produced future *Wehrmacht* general and mastermind behind the *Blitzkrieg*, Heinz Guderian (1888-1954) and many other notable German

⁴⁷⁴ "Who was Paul von Hindenburg?," Andrew Marshall, accessed February 5, 2023, <https://bootcampmilitaryfitnessinstitute.com/2021/09/22/who-was-paul-von-hindenburg/>.

⁴⁷⁵ William Brownell and Denise Drace-Brownell, *The First Nazi: Erich Ludendorff, The Man Who Made Hitler Possible* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2016), 5-14.

generals.⁴⁷⁶ Ludendorff continued his military education through 1882 where he learned mathematics, military tactics, and sciences that contributed to his knowledge on modern warfare. In 1885, he joined the 57th Infantry Regiment where he spent the next 8 years eventually being promoted to lieutenant. Ludendorff exceeded the expectations of his superiors in the 8th Grenadier Guards where they recommended him for the War Academy and where General Meckel appointed him to the General Staff in 1894. By 1904, Ludendorff became a senior staff officer of the V Corps where he proved his intellect to his superior officers. The Prussian War Academy was highly competitive and very few made it through to have a chance amongst the general staff. Eventually, Ludendorff joined the Great General Staff from 1904-1913 under Alfred von Schlieffen, father of the Schlieffen Plan.

In his book entitled "Cannae," Schlieffen studied the campaigns of Frederick the Great, Napoleon and Moltke with special reference to the question as to how far the strategy of these generals implied the idea of a battle of annihilation. After that, "Cannae" became the formula of the Prussian General Staff, the avowed aim of the theory embraced by the latter being the destruction of the hostile army by means of rapid advance and envelopment. Schlieffen himself lived to draw up the plan for a German war on two fronts.⁴⁷⁷

By 1911, Ludendorff became a full colonel and contributed greatly to the details of mass mobilization in accordance with the Schlieffen Plan. Ludendorff like so many Prussian officers understood the great importance of land surveying and topography which allowed him to grasp not only the geography of Germany but also the positions of key enemy fortresses at the time. Before World War I, Ludendorff studied many march routes for the army in eastern and western Germany in case of a two-front war.⁴⁷⁸ Ludendorff and the Imperial German Army of the time

⁴⁷⁶ Roger Parkinson, *Tormented Warrior: Ludendorff and the Supreme Command* (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), 13-14.

⁴⁷⁷ Karl Tschuppik, "Hindenburg," *Foreign Affairs* 10, no. 1 (1931): 55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030408>.

⁴⁷⁸ "Ludendorff Dies: World War Figure," *The New York Times*, December 20, 1937, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1937/12/20/issue.html>.

also celebrated the German federal elections of 1912 which funded the army greatly especially Germany's new siege cannons created by manufacture Krupp. Ludendorff noted that for the Schlieffen Plan to be successful the army needed six new corps which only three were granted to him.⁴⁷⁹

By the outbreak of World War I (1914-1918), Ludendorff became the appointed deputy Chief of Staff to the German Second Army under General Karl von Bulow (1846-1921). Ludendorff successfully fought at the Battle of Liege where he used the new siege artillery and his knowledge of key Belgian fortresses to take the city thus beginning his infamous military career. From this victory as in Prussian fashion, Ludendorff was awarded Germany's highest honor of the Pour le Merite presented to him by Kaiser Wilhelm II. With the outbreak of World War I, the Imperial Germany Army Staff began the implementation of the Schlieffen Plan as Ludendorff and others predicted the Imperial Army did not have the numbers they truly needed to defend the eastern front.

The Schlieffen Plan called for only one singular German army to defend against the numerically superior Russian forces. The German 8th Army under Maximilian Prittwitz (1848-1917) and George Waldersee (1860-1932) performed poorly, and Wilhelm II placed retired general Paul von Hindenburg in charge of the eastern front. Secondly, the Austrian-Hungarians by this time suffered greatly and did not merit any great successes against the Russian forces which only pressured the Imperial German Army to salvage the disastrous situation. Upon Hindenburg's return, the supreme OHL appointed Ludendorff as his new chief of staff eventually accumulating in a historical partnership for Germany.

⁴⁷⁹ Erich von Ludendorff, *Ludendorff's Own Story August 1914-November 1918: The Great War from the Siege of Liege to the Signing of the Armistice as viewed from the Grand headquarters of the German Army* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1919), 31.

It was on August 22, 1914, that Hindenburg received an urgent telegram from the Kaiser's main headquarters. Just a question: was he ready for immediate employment? His answer: "Am ready!" This telegram to Hindenburg had been preceded by another one, addressed to Brigadier-General Erich Ludendorff. In the latter Count Moltke, chief of the General Staff of the army, asked for Ludendorff's help: "I know of no one else in whom I have such explicit confidence as I have in you. Perhaps you may yet save the situation in the east. . . . With your energy you may preserve us from the worst."⁴⁸⁰

Ludendorff and Hindenburg's partnership led to the quasi-military dictatorship of Imperial Germany throughout the remainder of the war and the ideology of "*Ober Ost*" which means civilization to the east which grows into *Lebensraum* or living space by the 1930s-40s. The situation in East Prussia merited quick and decisive action from the Imperial German Army. The Russians gained momentum against Germany's Austrian-Hungarian allies smashing them in many battles.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff agreed to a new battle plan which called for the German 8th Army to destroy each Russian army separately before moving on to the next. General Major Max Hoffman (1869-1927), upon Ludendorff and Hindenburg's arrival, shifted a large part of the German 8th Army to the south by railroad in an amazing logistical maneuver. The German 8th Army consisted of 150,000 men against two Russian armies of 230,000 men.⁴⁸¹ For Ludendorff and Hindenburg, this proved a decisive factor accumulating in the surrounding of an entire Russian army and its destruction in the Battle of Tannenberg in 1914. The Battle of Tannenberg turned the tide on the eastern front and accounted for 94,000 Russian prisoners taken captive during the battle by a smaller German force.⁴⁸² The battle's symbolism proved an effective morale boost for the Imperial German Army and its war effort in that many Prussian

⁴⁸⁰ Tschuppik, "Hindenburg," 57.

⁴⁸¹ Max Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914: Europe Goes to War* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 281.

⁴⁸² Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Great War* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 76.

propagandists used this battle in correlation with the Teutonic defeat at Grunwald in 1410. In short, it became poetic justice.

From the Battle at Tannenberg, the German 8th Army then attacked the second Russian army at the Battle of the Masurian Lakes effectively defeating it. Ludendorff and Hindenburg moved into Russian occupied Poland where they almost encircled another Russian army. Both commanders agreed if they obtained more reinforcements, they could have achieved this goal; however, they were denied reinforcements by the OHL who by this point pushed more men and equipment to the western front. Nevertheless, Hindenburg and Ludendorff took what remained of the German 8th Army and attacked in a blizzard at the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes surrounding an entire Russian army through rapid decisive movements. Eventually, the OHL sent reinforcements by Erich Falkenhayn where the Germans used mass artillery breaking through the Russian lines between Gorlice and Tarnow relieving pressure from the demoralized Austrian and Hungarian armies.

By 1915-1916, the success of the Imperial German Army in the eastern theater granted them large territories in Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia where Ludendorff immediately called for the Germanization of these lands to usher in the migration and culture of the German people in Slavic territories.⁴⁸³ In the event of a Reich victory, Ludendorff believed that these conquered territories presented an ideal area for colonization for the German people and the expulsion of its Slavic inhabitants. He stated that these cultures were “incapable of producing real culture.”⁴⁸⁴ By 1916, the Russian army reorganized itself and attacked the entirety of the German line but failed

⁴⁸³ Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 102.

⁴⁸⁴ Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 138.

to push the German 8th Army back. Hindenburg now became the supreme commander of all forces in the east with Ludendorff at his side.

The western theater of the war looked much worse than the eastern with both sides deadlocked in trench warfare which the Imperial German military doctrine was not suited for. The German attack at Verdun proved ineffective and disastrous as they were beaten back with tens of thousands of casualties on both sides. The Allies also launched the Battle of the Somme which resulted in some 500,000 German casualties and around 600,000 for the Allies proving indecisive for both sides.⁴⁸⁵ The war on the western front for the Imperial German Army accumulated in no strategic results only a growing number of casualties which Germany now began noticeably shifting the numbers in the Allies' favor. For a large part of World War I, the Imperial German Army fought outnumbered, and by 1916-1918, they were calling up the last parts of their reserves from the *Landwehr* many of whom did not have the necessary training and were raw conscripts thus diluting the poise of the Imperial German Army.

The issue for Germany became a matter of time due to the impeding economic strains placed on its economy by the blockades. With the defeats at Verdun and the blame laying with Falkenhayn and the growing popularity of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, Kaiser Wilhelm II used his remaining powers to give absolute command of all forces to Hindenburg and Ludendorff with no resistance but from the kaiser himself. The goal for Hindenburg and Ludendorff centered around winning victories to bring the allies to the negotiation table.

Colonel Bauer and the younger officers of the Supreme Command saw "with utter horror," as Colonel Bauer himself admits, how incompetent Falkenhayn was. Hard as

⁴⁸⁵ Hermann Wendt, *Verdun 1916: Die Angriffe Falkenhayns im Maasgebiet mit Richtung auf Verdun als strategisches Problem* (Berlin, Germany: Mittler, 1931), 246; J. P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 271; William Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 2009), 602-603; Jack Sheldon, *The German Army on the Somme 1914-1916* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Military, 2005), 398; Gary Sheffield, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army* (London, England: Aurum Press, 2011), 194, 197.

they undoubtedly found it to transgress the rules of Prussian discipline, they decided to make Count von Plessen, the first adjutant of the Kaiser, see that a different man ought to be at the head of the army. Now the Kaiser no longer had a choice; he had to entrust Hindenburg with the direction of the army. Ludendorff remained Hindenburg's first adviser, with the explicit assurance of "full co-responsibility."⁴⁸⁶

With the eastern front stabilized and the Russians withdrawing from the war on the account of the total collapse of their government and a revolution, Hindenburg and Ludendorff now moved to the western front where they began preparations for the next offensives. They began gathering all forms of intelligence on past mistakes such as attacking strong fortified positions as Falkenhayn did at Verdun depleting precious manpower and materials.

The Hindenburg line allowed for the Germans to defend key areas with limited manpower that allowed divisions to be transported to other parts of the front for Hindenburg and Ludendorff's new strategy in the west. Ludendorff became the German army's brain in which he maintained rigorous contact with all German commands and demanded daily reports of enemy movement and locations.⁴⁸⁷ Not only did Ludendorff's power extend throughout the entirety of the Imperial German Army but also all aspects of society and the economy. He oversaw labor, food, war materials, transportation, and industrialization which became the Hindenburg program that set in place unrealistic expectations for war materials.⁴⁸⁸ Ludendorff effectively became the most powerful man in Germany running both the military and the economy which proved disastrous in the long run. Historian Frank Tipton states that Ludendorff was "unquestionably the most powerful man in Germany" in 1917-1918.⁴⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Hindenburg and Ludendorff began major preparations for the continued war on the western front, and with the Russians out

⁴⁸⁶ Tschuppik, "Hindenburg," 62.

⁴⁸⁷ Rudolf Binding, *A Fatalist at War* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), 179.

⁴⁸⁸ Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany 1914-1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 180.

⁴⁸⁹ Frank B. Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815* (New York NY: Continuum, 2003), 313.

of the war, the Imperial German Army began rapidly moving eastern divisions and corps by train to the western theater for the climatic conclusion of the war in one last gamble for a final German victory with an unmistakable Prussian identity.

The German spring offensive or *Kaiserschlacht* in 1917 became a series of military buildups of the Imperial German Army on the western front against the Anglo-American and French forces now arrayed against the German military. With Ludendorff and Hindenburg now effectively in full control of the war efforts, they secretly began moving massive amounts of men and equipment for one last strategic offensive to regain the initiative. The German army contained around 50 divisions many of whom saw combat on the eastern front giving them a slight numerical superiority. For Ludendorff and Hindenburg, they needed a new strategy to break the stalemate on the western front which wore down the German economy. Also, mass frontal assaults were not an option anymore as they were suicidal and gained very little in the overall strategy of the war. The war of attrition for Germany did not fit its doctrine of quick victories; and moreover, the economic strain on food, supplies, manpower, and equipment began rapidly deteriorating Germany. The Allies also developed a new weapon called the tank that began seeing more action on the front. The Germans attempted to recreate their own version, but due to the economic strains and poor designs, they never made a serious impact. Nevertheless, the Imperial German Army began its plans for a final knock-out. Politically, the Allied powers were not interested in negotiation nor was the Imperial German government as they refused to cede any territory they already gained throughout the early stages of the war. Another factor that pushed German supreme general staff to launch a major offensive centered around the influx of American troops to the western front; nevertheless, Ludendorff agreed to attack.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁹⁰ Blaxland, *Amiens*, 25.

Ludendorff and Hindenburg began a change in tactics in which the remaining best German units were grouped together in stormtrooper units that were designed as infiltration units. These infiltration tactics were designed to take key strategic areas and secure them until the remaining infantry divisions moved up. These stormtroopers were given the task to disrupt communication and supply depots to throw the Allied armies into confusion.⁴⁹¹ The issue for taking the best veterans for other divisions and placing them together in storm units meant that they would inevitably take much higher casualties, and it also depleted the regular divisions and corps of experienced soldiers and officers. The rapid advance of these stormtrooper units meant that the regular conscripts needed to keep up with the exhausted advance with the Imperial German Army making no preparations for motorized or cavalry support to take advantage and exploit gains by these elite German troops. Also, this forced the regular army to attack in large traditional waves amounting to mass casualties.⁴⁹²

Another tactic the Germans used derived from Lieutenant Colonel George Bruchmuller (1863-1948) which called for rolling barrage or *Feuerwalze* artillery fire. This meant that as the German troops advanced, the artillery would effectively walk its bombardment in a slow order to dislodge fixed enemy positions.⁴⁹³ In 1918 what the Germans lacked in manpower and other military equipment, they made up for with mass amounts of artillery and shells to initiate the beginning stages of the advance. First, the artillery targeted command posts and communications, then the enemy artillery and finally the front-line infantry positions were targeted. The reasoning for the creeping barrage also created less strain on the economy by not

⁴⁹¹ “WWI’s Massive German Spring Offensive of 1918,” Mike Phifer, accessed February 27, 2023, <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/wwis-massive-german-spring-offensive-of-1918/#:~:text=German%20stormtroopers%20trained%20in%20infiltration,remained%20in%20a%20perilous%20situation.>

⁴⁹² Phifer, “WWI’s Massive German Spring Offensive.”

⁴⁹³ “Organization of a Rolling Barrage in the German Army,” *The Field Artillery Journal* 8 (1918): 417-421, [https://books.google.com/books?id=0nEmAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA417#v=onepage&q&f=false.](https://books.google.com/books?id=0nEmAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA417#v=onepage&q&f=false)

wasting valuable ammunition bombarding impregnable enemy positions as done earlier in the war. Now, the Germans began targeting smaller positions to exploit gaps and weaknesses. For the Allies, they also began adopting new forms of measures called defense in depth which was three to four lines of trench systems that feed into one another effectively reducing casualties. The forward zone of first trench contained only fixed positions and smaller units whilst the second trench amassed the main battle zone units with the third trench supplying reserves to counterattack. The fourth trench contained the headquarters where commanders were given reports of the situation near the front. The Germans also created an effective trench system as well during the war in which each trench fed into the other creating a network of soldiers and command areas. Nonetheless, the Germans knew that many areas along the Allied western line were not defended as well which Ludendorff aimed to exploit.

In March 1918, the German offensive began with Operation Michael in which the Imperial German Army attacked unexpectedly against the British 3rd and 5th Army. The German's artillery bombardment became the largest attack of the war up to this point with millions of shells being fired. "The artillery bombardment began at 4.40 am on 21 March. The bombardment [hit] targets over an area of 150 square miles, the biggest barrage of the entire war. Over 1,100,000 shells were fired in five hours."⁴⁹⁴ The initial German attack shocked the Allies in its ferocity, and a great deal of confusion accumulated in elite stormtrooper units breaking through many positions along the British line. The Germans were not in position to take on prisoners of war due to the rapidity of the attack and the precision of their goals. Within two days, the British 5th Army began a full retreat leading many isolated pockets of troops to the mercy of the Germans.

⁴⁹⁴ "Second Battle of the Somme, 21 March- 4 April 1918," John Rickard, accessed February 27, 2023, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_sommell.html.

In the initial phases of the German spring offensive, the Imperial German Army with its new strategy saw great success of the battlefield with the stormtrooper doctrine working efficiently. Nevertheless, Ludendorff failed to continue this success by not taking areas that were of strategic importance. He began reverting to the old ways of mass frontal assaults against heavily defended areas causing great casualties. Operation Mars became this instance where German troops were beaten back by the British.⁴⁹⁵ The difference between Imperial Germany and the Allied armies were numbers and quality of troops. Four years of fighting depleted Germany of its best soldiers, and the Allies for a vast majority of the war fought outnumbered German troops. Ludendorff and Hindenburg knew very well that these German divisions were the last of their strategic reserves; so, this offensive became a desperate measure to save Germany hence its barbarity. Operation Michael, on the other hand, became a short-lived success. The stormtrooper units only carried enough supplies for a few days, and they moved too far from their logistical support such as rail lines and supply areas. The regular German units could not keep up with this rapid advance on foot, and Operation Michael began to falter and grind down to a series of defensive operations for the elite German units ahead of the main army.

The lack of logistical support or motorized weaponry allowed the Allies to rapidly move up reserves to counterattack these areas effectively slowing down the German offensive. Also, many of the areas the Germans advanced through were wastelands from previous battles that hindered any form of cohesive movement especially logistically.⁴⁹⁶ On April 5th with the impossibility to gather enough logistical support for the German army and its elite stormtrooper units, Ludendorff called off Operation Michael. From a historical perspective, the initial gains by the Imperial German Army were of little strategic value only amounting in tens of thousands of

⁴⁹⁵ Blaxland, *Amiens*, 84-86.

⁴⁹⁶ Ian Malcolm Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front 1914-1919* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 184.

casualties and the depletion of precious war materials. Moreover, the destruction of Germany's best troops could not be replaced as even by late 1917 the German government began mass conscription of military cadets to even the odds only to be annihilated. The Allies lost around 255,000 men, and the Germans suffered around 239,000 men with many of them being their best veterans and officers.⁴⁹⁷ The German spring offensive ultimately failed for many reasons with one not implementing a superior logistical support system for its elite stormtrooper units. Tanks and motorized infantry became a major obstacle in the Imperial German Army's failure which was something the next regime aimed to improve and perfect.

Operation Geneisenu, named after the Prussian general and reformers during the Napoleonic War, became the next major effort from Ludendorff to apply pressure on the British forces in the north. A series of attacks and counterattacks by the Germans and Allied powers proved indecisive. Nevertheless, the Germans, in many cases outnumbered, proved tactically effective against the odds arrayed against them; however, the issue again became the lack of logistical support and manpower. Operation Blucher-York was designed to draw Allied troops to the south to eventually link up the German armies in the salient. Hindenburg and Ludendorff continued to feed as many men as possible into these operations with the Allied armies successfully defending them.⁴⁹⁸ Secondly, the German air force remained largely nonexistent as precious fuel was diverted to the main operations of attack. By August 7th, all German advancements were halted, and Operation Hagen was cancelled. The Allied powers then launched a major offensive of their own called the Hundred Days Offensive which they used superior numbers and tanks to effectively end the war with Germany's Imperial Army withdrawing from all territory gained during the war with the losses of millions of men. Within

⁴⁹⁷ Martin Marix Evans, *1918: The Year of Victories* (London, England: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2002), 63.

⁴⁹⁸ Peter Hart, *1918: A Very British Victory* (London, England: Phoenix, 2008), 298.

six months, the German army fell from 5.1 million men to 4.2 million men which began the eventual collapse of the German army and the Imperial German government.⁴⁹⁹ The defeat of the Imperial German Army and collapse of Wilhelm's government began setting the stage for the re-birth of Germany through its third reform period.

⁴⁹⁹ James E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War: Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1918, May-July: The German Diversion Offensives and the First Allied Counter-Offensive* (London, England: Macmillan, 1939), 306.

Chapter 6

Prussia and the Wehrmacht 1933-1945

The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 ended the first world war with the capitulation of Imperial Germany to the Allied powers of Great Britain, France, and the United States. In the abdication of Wilhelm II, Imperial Germany became the Weimar Republic (1918-1933).⁵⁰⁰ Much like the situation at the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807, Germany faced ultimate humiliation of territorial exchanges, reparations, and a total disarmament of the Imperial German Army save only 100,000 soldiers for policing duty. The German delegation was not invited to the Paris Peace Conference in which the Entente powers determined the fate of Germany through harsh diplomacy and absolute unconditional surrender. The Allied powers put into place Article 231 which forced a massive disarmament of Germany's ability to make war. Millions of rounds of ammunition, machine guns, airplanes, and much more were seized by the Allied powers. Germany's reparations by 1921 accumulated to 136 billion gold marks which the Allies knew they could never pay back, but the goal for the Allied powers was to keep Germany weak and unable to rebuild back its military.⁵⁰¹ Even though historians note that Imperial Germany did not cause World War I (1914-1918) and were assisted by other Central Powers, the consequences and blame ultimately fell on them which became known as the War Guilt Clause in Article 231. Three dynasties were destroyed post-World War I of the Hapsburgs of Austria-Hungary, the Romanovs of Russia, and the Hohenzollerns of Germany. These harsh terms upon Imperial Germany by the Entente powers initiated another German military reawakening.

⁵⁰⁰ "Kaiser Wilhelm II," History.com, accessed February 20, 2023, <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/kaiser-wilhelm-ii>.

⁵⁰¹ "Treaty of Peace with Germany (Treaty of Versailles)," Census.gov, accessed February 20, 2023, https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/treaty_of_versailles-112018.pdf.

According to the final touches of the treaty by the Allied powers against Germany and their allies, there were territorial changes accumulating in the creation of new countries. For the large Austrian-Hungarian empire countries such as Hungary became separate from Austria reducing the original empire to a fraction of its former self. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Poland all declared independence. The Allied powers also forced Austria to pay a large war indemnity for their alliance with Imperial Germany.⁵⁰² Most of these areas that contained large German speaking populations were now under separate government and could not be protected by Austria or the former Imperial Germany. Russia's collapse and revolutionary period ushered in socialism by Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) which began to spread across Europe at a rapid pace especially in the weakened Weimar Republic controlled largely by the Allied powers. All of the non-German territory the Imperial German Army amassed on the Eastern Front amongst a collapsing Russian army was taken away and redistributed to nations such as Poland. Germany gained these territories by helping Ukrainian soldiers fight the Russians before Russia withdrew from the war in early 1918 by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.⁵⁰³ All of Imperial Germany's colonial possessions outside of Europe were transferred to France and Great Britain. In total, Germany lost around 25,000 square miles of territory and seven million people according to the terms of Versailles.⁵⁰⁴

The armistice of 1918 was non-negotiable as Germany did not have the economic stability or the military to repulse a potential Allied invasion across the Rhine River. Large portions of East Prussia were annexed by Poland which isolated East Prussia from the rest of the

⁵⁰² Census.gov, "Treaty of Peace with Germany."

⁵⁰³ Corona Brezina, *The Treaty of Versailles, 1919: A Primary Source Examination of the Treaty that Ended World War I* (New York, NY: Rosen Publishing Group, 2006), 34; John W. Wheeler-Bennett, "From Brest-Litovsk to Brest-Litovsk," *Foreign Affairs* 18, no. 2 (1940): 196-210, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20028991>.

⁵⁰⁴ Wesley B. Truitt, *Power and Policy: Lessons for Leaders in Government and Business* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 114.

Weimar Republic. These areas, especially for Prussia, were important to them agriculturally, economically, and more importantly historically. Parts of the Silesian regions were annexed by Czechoslovakia which contained a large minority of German speaking people. Germany also lost the regions of Schleswig-Holstein which they acquired during the Schleswig War of 1866. The largest loss for Germany was the Saarland coal mines to the French where the Germans were required to produce output to compensate for the destruction of French coal mines in World War I. The regions of Alsace-Lorraine were also lost as a result and given back to the French government. According to the Treaty of Versailles, the regions of Schleswig-Holstein were given back to the Danish government, and the Saar region also became an effective area administered by the French. These regions were acquired by Prussia during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1871. The Saar regions were never culturally German, and most of the population still spoke French and not German. Nevertheless, many Germans felt that the important industrial Saar regions were of consequences from the Franco-Prussian War and Napoleon III's (1808-1873) invasion of these regions to wage war against Prussia. "There is no German political group, from the extreme left to the extreme right, that would agree to the political separation of the Saar territory from Germany."⁵⁰⁵

Moreover, the Saar and Alsace-Lorraine territories stripped from Germany post-World War I were territories already in possession by Germany before the war, but France used this opportunity to gain revenge against Germany years before during 1870-1871. "The United States does not feel that it can deny to France, which has been invaded three times by Germany in 70 years, its claim to the Saar territory, whose economy has long been closely linked with

⁵⁰⁵ Helmut Hirsch, "Some Recent Material on the Saar," *The Journal of Modern History* 23, no. 4 (1951): 366, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1872815>.

France.”⁵⁰⁶ France used this moment to effectively punish Germany as a whole for their defeat at the hands of the Prussians and embarrass them to justify the loss they incurred under Napoleon III. For many Germans, the treaties did not solve any of the issues that still remained in Europe after World War I; but rather, it only weakened a strong nation such as Germany creating a power vacuum which Communist movements exploited. Adolf Hitler in a speech to the Reichstag states that,

It is not wise to deprive a people of the economic resources necessary for its existence without taking into consideration the fact that the population dependent on them are bound to the soil and will have to be fed. The idea that the economic extermination of a nation of sixty-five millions would be of service to other nations is absurd. Any people inclined to follow such a line of thought would, under the law of cause and effect, soon experience that the doom which they were preparing for another nation would swiftly overtake them. The very idea of reparations and the way in which they were enforced will become a classic example in the history of the nations of how seriously international welfare can be damaged by hasty and unconsidered action.⁵⁰⁷

In short, Germany was forced to recognize the sovereignty and independence of Poland, and Czechoslovakia and demilitarize its most important industrial centers such as the Ruhr regions part of the larger Rhineland.⁵⁰⁸

The military situation by 1918 did not allow Germany much room for negotiations amongst the Allied powers who also lost millions of soldiers and a destroyed country due to the war. Blockade of Germany began to take a critical effect amongst the German economy and its infrastructure. The German spring offensive in 1918 became the last chance for Imperial Germany to force a friendlier armistice at the negotiations table. The Russian withdrawal from the war allowed around 50 German divisions to be transferred to the Western Front giving the Imperial German Army a slight numerical superiority. The German offensives codenamed

⁵⁰⁶ Hirsch, “Some Recent Material on the Saar,” 367.

⁵⁰⁷ Norman Hepburn Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939* (New York, NY: Howard Fertig, 1969).

⁵⁰⁸ Census.gov, “Treaty of Peace with Germany.”

Michael, Georgette, Gneisenau, and Blucher-Yorck went into effect from March 21st to July 18th ultimately failing with around 688,341 German casualties sustained.⁵⁰⁹ The Germans pinned their hopes on a new form of warfare called “Hutier” or “infiltration” tactics which as mentioned before effectively removed the traditional way of linear warfare and rather grouped their best units called *Sturmtruppen* into elite squads and platoons designed to drive deep behind enemy lines. Oskar von Hutier (1857-1934), a Prussian military professional, effectively used the idea of infiltration by small flexible elite units. The Hutier men extended from a long military family in which Oskar attended the prestigious Prussian Military Academy and eventually joined the General Staff raising to general by World War I.⁵¹⁰ The Hutier tactics worked well in the beginning stages of the offensives but gradually ground to a halt because of logistical and technological issues. The Germans did not have the necessary technology of motorized vehicles and tanks for these tactics to work in unison with their *Sturmtruppen*, and once the German offensive stopped effectively leaving these indispensable units exposed, the Allies launched a major offensive themselves with numerical superiority decimating isolated units.

The spring offensive achieved very little in the long run, and the combined Allied counterattack pushed the exhausted Imperial German Army back to its original starting positions. By this point and the growing American numbers into the war, the Imperial German Army could not expect to launch any further offensive campaigns, nor could its economy sustain any longer. The Imperial German Army relied heavily on conscription with millions of soldiers being pulled from the *Landwehr* many of whom did not receive the proper training.⁵¹¹ Effectively, the Imperial German Army also failed to implement newer technology such as tanks as the Allies

⁵⁰⁹ Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 963.

⁵¹⁰ Ronald Pawly, *The Kaiser's Warlords: German Commanders of World War I* (Oxford, England: Osprey, 2012), 47.

⁵¹¹ Herwig, *The First World War*, 407.

did. The few tanks the Germans did create were not numerous or effective enough to change the outcome of the war. The British and French though did use their new battlefield technology to break the static trench warfare ushering in a new age of battlefield dynamics eventually perfected by the Germans in the 1930s.

The Black Day of the German army began on August 8th, 1918, after another defeat at the Battle of Amiens by British, Australian, and Canadian forces. General Erich Ludendorff informed Kaiser Wilhelm II to sue for peace and that the German army was on the brink of collapse.⁵¹² The Imperial German Army logistically could not sustain itself as most of its last resources of reserves and equipment were used during the 1918 spring offensive. Eventually towards the end of the war, German soldiers began mutiny, and another revolution began in Germany. Many notable German commanders wanted to continue the war and began to prepare for the defense of Germany properly, but the structural collapse of the economy and the breakdown of the military forced the Germans to accept conditional surrender. Conspiracies such as the “stab-in-the-back” myth began to take shape amongst the more radical members of the Imperial German Army blaming the capitulation of Germany from Jewish conspiracy which is unlikely considering the state of Germany by 1918 and its military.⁵¹³ Erich Ludendorff became one of the main components of the myth stating that,

His style of speech was turgid and verbose, and in an effort to crystallize the meaning into a single sentence, General Malcolm asked him: “Do you mean, General, that you were stabbed in the back?” Ludendorff’s eyes lit up and he leapt upon the phrase like a dog on a bone. “Stabbed in the back?” he repeated. “Yes, that’s it, exactly, we were stabbed in the back.” And thus was born a legend which has never entirely perished.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹² Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014), 551; Walter Gorlitz, *The Kaiser and His Court: The Diaries, Note Books and Letters of Admiral Georg Alexander Von Muller Chief of the Naval Cabinet* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 413.

⁵¹³ Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914-1949* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015), 118-119.

⁵¹⁴ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, “Ludendorff: The Soldier and the Politician,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 14, no. 2 (1938): 200, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26445449>.

Many German civilians due to the strain of war began to starve also increasing hostilities between the Hohenzollerns and its people. Since the beginning of the war and the blockade of Germany by the Allies, around 500-600 thousand Germans civilians died due to starvation and disease.⁵¹⁵ The stab-in-the-back myth occurred due to German workers, 1918-1919, protesting against the Wilhelm monarchy along with new social movements promising better treatment of workers. Secondly, the Germans were effectively starving to death and that combined with the failure of the Spring Offensive in 1918 and the successful Allied Offensive culminated in the German Revolution forcing German leadership to the negotiating table at the mercy of the Allied negotiators.

The Imperial German Army also did not have any more manpower to replenish the millions of killed and wounded since 1914. Lance Corporal Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) who fought and was wounded in World War I became increasingly hostile towards the capitulation of the army and the Imperial German Army regarding it as a great betrayal to his very nationalistic German ideologies.⁵¹⁶ Though Adolf Hitler did not have any Prussian lineage, he ultimately fixated himself with that variable of militarism and German honor. Nevertheless, the armistice began the ending phases of World War I and its great destruction of land and life setting in motion a much larger event and the third reform period of the German army. For the Imperial German Army, World War I caused around 1.8-2 million military deaths with around 4.2 million wounded and over 1.5 million taken as prisoners. This amounted around 3.4-4.3% of German

⁵¹⁵ Charles Paul Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915-1919* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985), 141.

⁵¹⁶ Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 140.

population and amazingly 54.6% of the 14 million soldiers in Germany mobilized for the war hence the capitulation.⁵¹⁷

The Prussian state that dominated Germany's path towards unification and World War I ceased to exist once Wilhelm II abdicated from the throne. With the creation of the Weimar Republic or the German Republic by the constituent assembly Germany fell into a state of disarray. Democracy from the west, Socialism from the east, and conservatives clinging on to Prussian idealism began a series of political turmoil. Obviously, the Allied powers did not intend for the old Hohenzollerns to reestablish themselves again as they saw the Prussian state as a militaristic catalyst and cause for World War I. Secondly, these Allied powers also did not want socialism to root itself in Germany as this went directly against capitalistic notions. Germany now a democratic republic traded in its Imperial German flag for that of the *Bundesdienstflagge und Dienstflagge der Landstreitkräfte der Bundeswehr* (Federal Republic) waved by liberal revolutionaries 101 years ago during the Wartburg Festival in 1817.⁵¹⁸ Between political extremism, hyper-inflation, revolutionary movements, coups, and assassination attempts within the government, the Weimar Republic suffered greatly in the beginning only achieving stability in 1924 before the Great Depression in 1929.⁵¹⁹ National socialist groups led by disgruntled military leaders began challenging the direction of the Weimar Republic claiming that capitalism enslaved the German people to the will of Marxist. Eventually, the puppet government of the Weimar Republic found themselves between two extremist ideologies of national socialism and

⁵¹⁷ The War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920* (London, England: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922), 355; John Ellis and Michael Cox, *The World War I Databook: The Essential Facts and Figures for all the Combatants* (London, England: Aurum, 2001), 269.

⁵¹⁸ "The Constitution of the German Reich," DocumentArchiv, accessed February 20, 2023, <http://www.documentarchiv.de/wr/wrv.html>.

⁵¹⁹ Isabel Schnabel, "The German Twin Crisis of 1931," *The Journal of Economic History* 64, no. 3 (2004): 822-871, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3874821>; Henry Vincent Hodson, *Slump and Recovery, 1929-1937: A Survey of World Economic Affairs* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1938), 64-76.

communism each with their own goals and aspirations. President Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1933) led the Weimar Republic to a degree of stability but ultimately gave in to the new and rising nationalist socialist party which he secretly supported. His military career and Prussian background aligned with the party's disdain for the allied powers and the enveloping communist movements throughout Germany.⁵²⁰

The National Socialist German Workers' of "Nazi" Party rallied behind the old traditions of Prussianism and the belief that Germany needed to liberate itself once more. Nevertheless, the Nazi Party under its main leader Adolf Hitler faced many challenges in the beginning for lack of popular support and only grew during the Great Depression period as millions of starving and unemployed Germans flocked to his rally for support and guidance. Adolf Hitler did not fully embrace the past regime of Wilhelm II as he believed that these same individuals betrayed the *Volk* (people) of Germany and moreover the military, but he also knew that to gain power he needed their support for a time. The motto "*Deutschland erwache!*" (Germany Awake) became the official slogan used by the national socialist to reunite Germany under one goal, mindset, ideology, and leader.⁵²¹ Hitler used his growing influence and popularity to target old military soldiers and the youth which he saw as the new tool in which to unite Germany again as a powerful military entity with a strong industrial and economical base.

Martin Bormann (1900-1945) and Hermann Göring (1893-1946) are some of the original party members that helped Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party rise to power in its early stages.⁵²²

Each of these men are connected through their Prussian military service and their hatred towards

⁵²⁰ Larry Eugene Jones, *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2014), 42.

⁵²¹ Wilfrid Bade, *Deutschland erwacht: Werden, Kampf und Sieg der NSDAP* (Altona-Bahrenfeld, Germany: Cigaretten-Bilderdienst, 1933), 30-31.

⁵²² Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 323.

Marxism. Göring served in the Imperial German Air Force becoming an ace and served with the 112th Prince Wilhelm Regiment of the Prussian army in 1912.⁵²³ Bormann served in the extremist paramilitary group *Freikorps* which are irregular and regular volunteer military organizations. The *Freikorps* gain their notorious reputation in this period from their battles with communist movements. Many German soldiers returning from World War I joined these groups along with others to conduct their own operations separate from the Weimar Republic or army.⁵²⁴ These *Freikorps* units eventually became the *Einsatzgruppen* tasked with the annihilation of undesirables. These units were separate from the Wehrmacht and are considered more aligned to the Nazi ideology rather than an actual military component. Paul Lerner states that these groups were composed of older veterans from previous wars and ordinary men from various groups in eastern Europe who worked behind the front lines.⁵²⁵

With the rise of the Nazi party officially during the Great Depression and the global economic collapse of the world, Germany began shifting away from the Weimar Republic as they could not support Germany due to their own economic shortcomings. This allowed Adolf Hitler and the party to gather larger support and the eventual promise of the DAP (German workers party) to rebuild Germany through social programs and rehabilitate the economy. The DAP opposed all non-nationalistic parties such as the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and the KPD (Communist Party of Germany). Through his energetic speeches and large rallies, Hitler began to slowly gain more popular support drawing concerns from the other political parties in Germany especially the republicans. The failure of the Beer Hall Putsch in

⁵²³ “Hermann Wilhelm Goering (1 of 4),” Tripod.com, accessed February 20, 2023, <https://gooring.tripod.com/goo47.html>.

⁵²⁴ Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir* (New York, NY: Picador, 2000), 30-31, 33; William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 55; Konrad Heiden, *Der Fuehrer: Hitler's Rise to Power* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944), 88-89.

⁵²⁵ Paul Lerner, “Psychiatry and Casualties of War in Germany, 1914-18,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 1 (2000): 13-28, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/261178>.

1923 only made Hitler more popular amongst his growing supports, and by 1925 when released from prison, he set out to increase the party's size and influence through campaigns and political measures.⁵²⁶ East Prussia post-World War I became largely democratic and endured more stability than most parts of Germany. In 1918 a manifesto, "To the Prussian People!" stated that the goal was to transform "the old, fundamentally reactionary Prussia ... into a fully democratic component of the unified People's Republic."⁵²⁷

East Prussia particularly suffered the greatest from the war as most of Imperial Germany's elite manpower were drawn from these regions. For most Prussians, they saw a democratic government as a possible solution to stabilize the state. Even after World War I, many individuals such as Hugo Preuss (1860-1925), a German liberal, lawyer, and author of the draft version of the Weimar Constitution, wanted to break Prussia up into smaller states as to decrease its chances of becoming a military epicenter.⁵²⁸ Otto Landsberg (1869-1957) stated that, "Prussia occupied its position with the sword and that sword is broken. If Germany is to live, Prussia in its present form must die."⁵²⁹ Many democratic liberals from the history of Prussia during its wars of unification and the aftereffects of World War I saw it as a burden amongst other German states within the greater Reich due to its deep military roots and its ingrained ideologies. In March 1920, the republicans in Prussia were overthrown by the landed elite a conservative rightist group during the Kapp Putsch. Historically, these individuals stemmed from the *Junker* class and retained a great deal of influence in historical Prussian areas. These

⁵²⁶ Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003), 193-194.

⁵²⁷ Christopher Clark, *Preußen. Aufstieg und Niedergang 1600-1947* (Munich, Germany: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2007), 706.

⁵²⁸ Peter Stirk, "Hugo Preuss, German Political Thought and the Weimar Constitution," *History of Political Thought* 23, no. 3 (2002): 510-514, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26219879>.

⁵²⁹ Wilhelm Ribhegge, *Preußen im Westen. Kampf um den Parlamentarismus in Rheinland und Westfalen 1789-1947* (Münster, Germany: Aschendorff, 2008), 305.

rebellions only fractured Prussia and caused its continual decline with the democrats eventually regaining control and repressing the Putsch.

The Versailles Treaty and the annexation of Prussian land by the Allied powers also contributed to negative economic and financial situation within the state with thousands of civil servants affected.⁵³⁰ From this, the Prussian populace deteriorated and declined, and more people were moving into Prussia from foreign nations throwing off the demographics. For instance, the Free State of Saxony had 333 people per square kilometer compared to 60.9 for Prussia.⁵³¹ Secondly, by contrast, 60% of Germany's population lived in The Free State of Prussia within the Weimar Republic but only had limited votes in the Reichsrat with many conservative Prussians feeling as though they were not being represented accordingly by the Weimar Republic.⁵³² By March 1933 during the Reichstag elections, the Nazi Party (NSDAP) obtained 56% support from areas such as East Prussia and Schleswig-Holstein though Prussia still remained socially democratic under Otto Braun (1872-1955) holding major cities such as Berlin. Overtime though and the continual rise of the Nazi party, more support came from the Prussian populace.

Many conservatives within Prussia saw Marxism and capitalism as a threat to their traditional historic ideals rooted in absolutism. Prussia again remained divided between the right and the left and which one served the population better with the SPD (Social Democratic party of Germany) and the DNVP (German National People's Party) remaining as the two leading political parties only being ousted in 1933 by the NSDAP. Another factor contributing to the

⁵³⁰ Jurgen Kocka and Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Die Protokolle des Preussischen Staatsministeriums, 1817-1934/38* (Berlin, Germany: Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999), 8.

⁵³¹ Dietmar Petzina, Gerd Hohorst, Werner Abelshäuser, Jürgen Kocka, Anselm Faust, and Gerhard Albrecht Ritter, *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch: Materialien zur Statistik des Deutschen Reiches 1914-1945* (München, Germany: C.H. Beck, 1975), 15-21, 42.

⁵³² Kocka and Neugebauer, *Die Protokolle*, 6.

Nazi's party seizure of power within Prussia occurred in the internal fighting between extreme leftists in the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) against the social democrats during Blood May 1929.⁵³³ Many German parties especially those of the communist left and nationalistic right saw Prussia as a strategic variable to gain control. Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) future Reich Propaganda Minister to Adolf Hitler states in 1930 that, "The key to power in Germany lies in Prussia. Whoever has Prussia also has the Reich."⁵³⁴ By 1932, the NSDAP defeated the coalition parties gaining 36.7% of the Prussian vote placing the SPD in second. Franz von Papen (1879-1969) a Prussian nobleman and general staff officer became Reich Commissioner for Prussia and supporter of the Nazi party. With the success of the NSDAP, many left leaning officials were eradicated from office and replaced with right wing conservatives. Goebbels states that, "The Reds have been eliminated. Their organizations offer no resistance. ... The Reds have had their great hour. They will never come again."⁵³⁵ From this moment in Prussian history and the short-lived democratic republic, conservative extremists began consolidating their control and power over the Prussian state within the Third Reich with the main goal of rearmament.

The *Gleichschaltung* laws of March 31st and April 7th, 1933 and the appointment of Göring as Prussian Minister President of the new Reich effectively absorbed Prussia into one government with power being transferred to the Reich.⁵³⁶ This effectively consolidated all power to the components of the Third Reich and Adolf Hitler to centralize the government under one singular authority eventually becoming a military dictatorship with Prussian tradition and

⁵³³ Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?: The German Communists and Political Violence 1929-1933* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁵³⁴ Ribhegge, *Preußen im Westen*, 488.

⁵³⁵ Heinrich August Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933. Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie* (Munich, Germany: H.C. Beck, 1993), 500.

⁵³⁶ Wolfgang Benz, *A Concise History of the Third Reich* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 28-30; "Only a Phase': How Diplomats Misjudged Hitler's Rise," Von Christoph Strupp, accessed February 20, 2023, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/marking-eighty-years-since-hitler-took-power-in-germany-a-880565.html>.

discipline leading the reform of the military.⁵³⁷ For Hitler and the Nazi party, the only obstacle that remained were the arranged meetings with Paul von Hindenburg who above all hated the social democrats and the communist party. Hindenburg held strongly to his Prussian traditions by blaming the Communist party for the capitulation in 1918. From Hindenburg's position, the rise of the NSDAP meant that he could now exercise his true intentions of rebuilding Germany back into the conservative tradition with a strong military component at the core. This is not to say that Hindenburg liked Hitler but that he liked his *Volksgemeinschaft* which translates as one unified German people.⁵³⁸ Hitler in 1922 states that,

There are only two possibilities in Germany; do not imagine that the people will forever go with the middle party, the party of compromises; one day it will turn to those who have most consistently foretold the coming ruin and have sought to dissociate themselves from it. And that party is either the Left: and then God help us! for it will lead us to complete destruction – to Bolshevism, or else it is a party of the Right which at the last, when the people is in utter despair, when it has lost all its spirit and has no longer any faith in anything, is determined for its part ruthlessly to seize the reins of power – that is the beginning of resistance of which I spoke a few minutes ago.⁵³⁹

With the opening of the new Reichstag and the meeting between Hitler and Hindenburg, Hitler promised that, after he rebuilt Germany, the monarchy would be restored.⁵⁴⁰ Hitler had no intentions of doing this, but he hoped to gain the trust of Hindenburg. Hitler and Hindenburg then ceremonially, almost in a cult like fashion, visited the grave of Frederick II in the Garrison Church in Potsdam whom so many Germans rallied around and worshiped his aura. Hitler himself admired Frederick II and his military prowess even towards the end of his days in the Fuhr bunker in 1945 where a portrait of the great king hung in his chamber. Hitler saw

⁵³⁷ Gerhard Hirschfeld, *The Policies of Genocide: Jew and Soviet Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 101, 164.

⁵³⁸ Jones, *The German Right*, 42.

⁵³⁹ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *A Holocaust Reader* (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc., 1976), 31.

⁵⁴⁰ Heinrich August Winkler, "German Society, Hitler and the Illusion of Restoration 1930-33," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4 (1976): 1-16, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/260189>.

Frederick's struggles during the Seven Years War and the miraculous victory as reminiscent of his own time. For Hitler, the German struggle became literally and figuratively very real. For example, the figurative struggle remained an internal struggle of the German people against political capitalistic bolshevism whilst the literal struggle centered around the advancing Allied armies surrounding Germany in the last years of World War II.

Hitler used a great deal of propaganda both from Frederick II's time and the struggle of the Prussian state during its collapse during the Napoleonic period. The symbolism for these events in Hitler's mind became one of a rebirth and final victory for the German people against all odds. After the Nazi Party gained power, it immediately set out to enforce these cultural parades and movements to gather the illusion of a superior *Volk* and the great struggle. Hitler himself even writes a book titled *Mein Kampf* which translates to my struggle. Throughout this book, Hitler reconnects the German people with the ideologies and conquest of the Teutonic Order and the symbolism of their own struggles against the Slavic peoples. He states that,

And so we National Socialists consciously draw a line beneath the foreign policy tendency of our pre-War period. We take up where we broke off six hundred years ago. We stop the endless German movement to the south and west and turn our gaze toward the land in the east. At long last we break off the colonial and commercial policy of the pre-War period and shift to the soil policy of the future. If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states.⁵⁴¹

Interestingly enough, Prussians directly link their heritage and their culture to the Teutonic Order and the campaigns in the East against the Pagans and Slavs. Geographically, the Prussians are indeed from the Teutonic Crusades in the 12th century. Their struggle for them never truly ended but only remained dominant until newer and more radical leadership took control especially in the 20th century. Hitler himself was not Prussian by any standard nor of Teutonic lineage; yet, he used this history to unite the "German" people to great effect. For example, Saxons, Bavarians,

⁵⁴¹ Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1974), 216.

Hanoverians, Westphalians, and Alsace-Lorrainians did not consider their culture Teutonic by any means. The Nazi Party in the early years of ascension to total power began a masterful plan to unite the German people with Prussianism culturally, historically, militarily, and spiritually. Hitler understood the strengths within that history and the necessary measures to use it to militarize the state of Germany under those conservative principles he so greatly advocated for. The connection between Prussia's history, whether it exists with the Teutons, Frederick II, Wars of Liberation (1813-1815), or even the unification of Germany by the Prussian state in 1871, became a key element in the cultural parades and propaganda the Nazi Party used to solidify their aims and goals.

Before the German Wehrmacht invaded Poland in 1939, there existed an atmospheric cultural boom within Germany for much of the world to witness. This existed in cultural heritage parades, film, speeches, rallies, and imagery. "Reflecting this propaganda goal, the official parade programme explained: 'Our walk today is a glowing tribute to the historical achievements of our Volk, a military journey of the national community, a parade into the great future of the eternal Germany.'"⁵⁴² This is not to suggest that the Nazi Party during their German Art celebrations or *Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung* only admired Prussian culturalism, but from a historical perspective, the military aspect remained a much stronger component as the true intentions of the Nazi Party began to emerge over the next years.

While the exhibitions focused more narrowly on culture as expressed through painting and sculpture, the parades embedded these arts in a broader narrative of cultural achievements, political triumphs and militant nationalism. In addition, while the art exhibitions occupied fixed points and seemed more of an elite affair, the parades offered a more participatory, populist format that projected the regime's message on to Munich's public spaces.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² Joshua Hagen, "Parades, Public Space, and Propaganda: The Nazi Culture Parades in Munich," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 90, no. 4 (2008): 356, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40205064>.

⁵⁴³ Hagen, "Parades, Public Space, and Propaganda," 349.

The cultural parades in Munich organized by the Nazi propagandists cleverly sought to ensure the balance and mix between Prussian history and German history.

For example, in Bavaria, the parade contained elements of Greek culture which aligned more with Bavarians whilst implementing Nordic heritage through Scandinavian warriors to effectively unite north and south Germans. There are numerous pictures and primary evidence that describe the combination between ancient Greece and Norseman. North German history undoubtedly connected with a more military Prussian aspect of Germanism and elements of the warrior class. These parades also contained a great deal of Gothic history with many Germans dressing in Teutonic knight armor along with knights of the ancient Holy Roman Empire. Though these elements are separate in history, they again culminated in a unified militaristic movement amongst the German people always careful not to incite past conflicts between the Prussian state and the German states. Again, other German states did not regard themselves as Prussian nor did the Prussians regard themselves as Germans as used in the modern sense.

A strong component within the parade consisted of the Frederick the Great era and a large regiment of soldiers dressed in the typical uniforms of the time. The 1933 parade purposely left a great deal of German history out especially the reformation era and even the Bismarck era but only did so as not to draw too much attention to Prussian militarism as the Nazi Party very carefully masked their intentions. Nevertheless, the 1933 parade remained very much centered around the military and Nazism.

Although presented as a parade of German culture, warriors and political leaders rather than artists were the pivotal figures. As the exiled Social Democratic Party sarcastically reported: ‘The parade was more of a military rather than a cultural spectacle. Two thirds of all participants were warriors. From the fighters of the Germanic Age armed with spears to the military and party formations marching at the end of the parade, one could follow the exceptional development of the German warrior.’⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁴ Hagen, “Parades, Public Space, and Propaganda,” 364.

Posters of Hitler dressed in the Teutonic knight's armor and even posters of Frederick II, Bismarck, and Hitler together signified the unification or reform for the German speaking people to unite as one cohesive entity. The militaristic nature of Prussia did not need to exert itself too profoundly as the Nazis themselves were simply already doing this even during the 1937 rally where Hitler truly unveiled a very militaristic event with strong epitomes of Prussian discipline, honor, prestige, glory, and tradition. Hitler saw these cultural and military parades to unify the German people as one group with Prussianism at its center comparable to the very nature of the reform period in Prussia from 1807-1813 and the Wars of Liberation in 1813-1815 against the French invaders where Frederick William III not only addresses his Prussian subjects but all Germans accordingly for a united German movement. Frederick William III states that, "Whatever sacrifices may be required of us as individuals, they will be outweighed by the sacred rights for which we make them, and for which we must fight to a victorious end unless we are willing to cease to be Prussians or Germans."⁵⁴⁵ Hitler did very much the same thing during this period where he addressed the masses to unify a common struggle. Germany from 1871-1945, in theory, is nothing more than a larger unified Prussian state with a profound military doctrine at its core.

German cinema during the Weimar era (1918-1933) and Third Reich (1933-1945) created a series of Prussian films depicting the glorious reign of Frederick II and his military achievements. A total of forty-four films were produced from 1918-1945 with the most popular film *Fridericus-Rex* in 1922 gaining large popular support of the film. Otto Gebühr (1877-1954) portrayed Frederick the Great and his life during Prussia's most difficult moments in history

⁵⁴⁵ "Frederick William III's Call for National Mobilization, "To My People" (March 17, 1813)," German History in Documents and Images, accessed March 12, 2023, https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=3810.

where Frederick II saved the country from ruin during the Seven Years War. The films though historical in nature were rooted in glorifying the accomplishments of Frederick and the sacrifice of his soldiers during times of war and hardship.⁵⁴⁶ German propaganda machines continued to produce these films to symbolize the greatness of the Prussian state; moreover, the struggle it incurred against foreign invaders both internally and externally. Though many Germans not of Prussian descent did not wholly agree to that notion of Prussianism, they nevertheless encouraged the film and its message of Germanism.

By 1942, Hitler's propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) and Veit Harlan (1899-1964), a film director, created *The Great King* or *Der große König* as a means to boost morale amongst the German troops on all fronts.⁵⁴⁷ The film achieved great success during its showing and ultimately portrayed how the Prussian king overcame all odds and defeated the Austrians and Russians. Interestingly enough, Goebbels picked this period due to the situation on the Eastern Front and the setbacks the German Wehrmacht incurred at the hands of the massive Red Army. This propaganda film directly ties the ideology of Prussianism with that of the German struggle and by which accumulated in the notion of *Totaler Krieg* or Total War. For Frederick II in the years 1758-60 and similarly for the Wehrmacht in 1943-45, the situation remained dire as Frederick II also found himself surrounded on all fronts and outnumbered entirely and in many cases considering the usage of children to replenish his ranks which he did not. Similarly, the film emphasizes the collaborative effort of all Prussians both young and old to mobilize in one great movement.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Klaus Kreimeier, *The UFA Story: A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company 1918-1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 93-94.

⁵⁴⁷ Hal Erickson, "New York Times: The Great King," *The New York Times*, January 3, 2013, <https://archive.ph/20130104044418/http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/13299/Der-Grosse-K-246-nig/overview>.

⁵⁴⁸ Pierre Aycoberry, *The Nazi Question: An Essay on the Interpretations of National Socialism (1922-1975)* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1981).

In 1943, Goebbels gives his famous *Totaler Krieg* speech by which he states, “If the Wehrmacht was not in a position to counter the danger from the Eastern front, the German Reich would fall to Bolshevism and the rest of Europe shortly afterwards.”⁵⁴⁹ The Nazis during their last days in fact mobilized the young and old for this final victory with tens of thousands of elderly and child soldiers fighting for the Fatherland. Nevertheless, the connection of Nazi films between the Prussians and Frederick remains a cohesive important factor in the symbolism between the two. Eerily enough, the military situation in 1758 and 1945 are very similar in the manner in which they unfolded; hence, the reason Goebbels used that specific time period. It is strictly noted even though the Nazis used Prussian history to gather support through propaganda means, Frederick II did not share Nazi ideologies of genocide by any means as not to be confused. The Prussian films as they are called were effectively banned by the Allies after the war as they represented ultra-German nationalism.

The Enabling Act of 1933 effectively gave the Nazi government full power even if it went against the constitution. The Third Reich effectively passed laws that did not need involvement from the Reichstag or President thus ending the republic and banning all political parties except the NSDAP.⁵⁵⁰ With Hitler becoming chancellor, only President Hindenburg could legally remove him. Hitler also knew that Hindenburg, a very popular war hero, was an important figure to align with both politically and symbolically. Hindenburg’s symbolism of old Prussian military aligned directly with Hitler’s vision for the German military in the coming years though secretly Hitler despised the old monarchies princes. Hitler gained massive support

⁵⁴⁹ Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-1945: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany* (London, England: Routledge, 1979), 322.

⁵⁵⁰ Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 332-333.

from the military by promising to rearm and rebuild them into an effective fighting force once more.

By 1934, Paul von Hindenburg died effectively leading the Nazi party to supremacy and the establishment of a full military dictatorship within Germany. Hitler became the head of the state and government with every intention of carefully ridding Germany of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 and solidifying the new order.⁵⁵¹ Hitler's first years in office saw Germany recover from the crippling events of the Great Depression. He immediately set out to create programs to put the Germans back to work especially with the building of the autobahn. For Hitler, these large interstates did two things. First, they created job opportunities for the masses, and secondly, they became the new means of transferring equipment and armies throughout Germany in a rapid manner. Hitler knew like his past predecessors in Prussian and German history that any reforming period must conduct itself on a broad scale including economical, social, political, and militarily to grow the Reich together in Hitler's conception of *Volksgemeinschaft* and eventually *Lebensraum* or living space.⁵⁵² This conception follows a horde mentality of expansionism through the military and resettlement much like the Huns and Mongols of past histories. Hitler also did not immediately set off to cause tension amongst the Allied powers after he consolidated full power but slowly and secretly began to implement policies outside the terms of 1919. The rearmament programs in Germany immediately set out to reform the military with the adoption of a new form of mechanized warfare. German generals

⁵⁵¹ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*; Richard Overly, *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004).

⁵⁵² Diemut Majer, "Non-Germans" under the Third Reich: *The Nazi Judicial and Administrative System in Germany and Occupied Eastern Europe, with Special Regard to Occupied Poland, 1939-1945* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 39; Woodruff D. Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 84.

especially Hitler who served in World War I (1914-1918) understood the past mistakes of trench warfare and the prolonged challenges upon the German economy from wars of attrition.

The German *Aufrüstung* (rearmament) programs began immediately following the Nazi party's rise to power. The Germans were careful to mask their intentions of rearmament through front operations such as glider clubs for training pilots and Nazi SA militia groups teaching military tactics to young men.⁵⁵³ The Germans also began placing orders with Germany's large companies such as Krupp and Rheinmetall to produce new and innovative weapons *en masse*. Similarly like the Prussians during their reform period of 1807-1813, much of the new training and rearmament used lessons learned from previous wars whilst also perfecting and adopting newer military tactics in combination with military innovations. As mentioned before, the Hutier tactics that became the new doctrine by the late stages of World War I by the Imperial German Army were not abolished but built upon by new Wehrmacht generals. Again, the Hutier tactics needed mechanized armor and motorized groups to ensure its effectiveness. These new motorized groups became the core of the Wehrmacht military doctrine. By 1933, the *Reichswehr* along with the army staff began increasing the active size of the *Reichswehr* from 100,000 men to 300,000 creating 21 new divisions, and by 1934, 60,000 new recruits entered service.⁵⁵⁴ The German *Reichswehr* of the Weimar Republic eventually transitioned to the *Wehrmacht* during the Third Reich with the Wehrmacht remaining as the supreme military force in Germany.

Hitler also began recalling officers that were forced to resign in 1919 to begin necessary training for military personal. Individuals such as Hans von Seeckt (1866-1936) were the

⁵⁵³ Gordon H. Mueller, "Rapallo Reexamined: A New Look at Germany's Secret Military Collaboration with Russia in 1922," *Military Affairs* 40, no. 3 (1976): 109, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1986524>; John Wheeler-Bennett, *The Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics, 1918-1945* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 130.

⁵⁵⁴ Robert J. O'Neill, *The German Army and the Nazi Party, 1933-1939* (New York, NY: J. H. Heineman, 1967), 91-92.

responsible creators for the successes and rebuilding of the eventual *Wehrmacht* into an effective fighting force.⁵⁵⁵ Seeckt stemmed from an old Pomeranian family with close ties to the Prussian military and received Prussia's highest honor the *Pour le Merite*.⁵⁵⁶ Seeckt like his father General Richard von Seeckt pursued a military career, and by 1897, he became part of the Prussian general staff. Hans von Seeckt also proved to be a brilliant military commander during World War I where he proved himself on multiple occasions on the battlefield. Eventually in post-war Europe, Seeckt went to China to help fight against the Chinese revolutionaries implementing the battle of "encirclement" which proved effective against Mao Zedong (1893-1976).⁵⁵⁷ Unknown to Seeckt before his death in 1936, his theory on war became a highly successful tool used by the *Wehrmacht* in their many battles and campaigns. John Wheeler-Bennett quotes Seeckt,

Germany must pursue a policy of action. Every State must do that. The moment it stops pursuing a forward policy it ceases to be a State. An active policy must have a goal and a driving force. For carrying it out it is essential to assess one's own strength correctly and at the same time understand the methods and aims of the other powers.⁵⁵⁸

During Seeckt's training of the *Reichswehr* before its transition to the *Wehrmacht*, he made it one of the most effective fighting elements in Europe by setting the highest standards and implementation of military theories. He ultimately reset the foundation for the German military in the Prussian manner of extreme perfection and high standards of a military education. He trained the small force in accordance with the Versailles Treaty to have knowledge on the practices of anti-air and anti-tank tactics by usage of wooden weapons.⁵⁵⁹ Seeckt stated, "We must

⁵⁵⁵ James S. Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 34, 79.

⁵⁵⁶ Kenneth Campbell, "Colonel General Hans von Seeckt," *American Intelligence Journal* 22 (2004): 56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44327026>.

⁵⁵⁷ Chunhou Zhang and C. Edwin Vaughan, *Mao Zedong as Poet and Revolutionary Leader: Social and Historical Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 65.

⁵⁵⁸ Wheeler-Bennett, *The Nemesis of Power*, 133-134.

⁵⁵⁹ Robert T. Elson, *World War II: Prelude to War* (New York, NY: Time-Life Books, 1976).

become powerful, and as soon as we have power, we will naturally take back everything we have lost.”⁵⁶⁰

Seeckt also created 57 different committees to study the previous war, and a majority of the officers in the early stages of the Wehrmacht were trained by Seeckt composing of many middle-class men. Seeckt states that, “It is absolutely necessary to put the experience of the war in a broad light and collect this experience while the impressions won on the battlefield are still fresh and a major portion of the experienced officers are still in leading positions.”⁵⁶¹ In his book, *Leadership and Battle with Combined Arms*, Seeckt outlines the importance of combined arms tactics with highly mobile operation art which became the usage of armor (tanks), airplanes, artillery, troop transports, and infantry all working together to destroy the enemy at critical points through overwhelming firepower and speed.⁵⁶² Historians note that through Seeckt’s military methodology that the *Wehrmacht* did use these to great effect during World War II. Instead of attacking on a broad front with equipment and men spread out, he believed that attacking critical decisive points achieved greater success without the losses of precious men and materials.⁵⁶³ Upon Seeckt’s death, the *Wehrmacht* continued to improve through other military geniuses in the German military constantly building upon more effective measures to win quick and decisive wars ultimately evolving into the *Blitzkrieg* or lightning warfare. Seeckt also trained officers for the eventual rise of the German air force or *Luftwaffe* that became a leading component to Germany’s new way of war through its third and final reform period. The Treaty of Versailles prohibited Germany from having an air force.

⁵⁶⁰ Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 146.

⁵⁶¹ Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2000), 22.

⁵⁶² Gregory Liedtke, *Enduring the Whirlwind: The German Army and the Russo-German War 1941-1943* (West Midlands, England: 2016).

⁵⁶³ Hans J. van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China 1925-1945* (New York, NY: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 153.

By 1935, the German government reintroduced conscription which also went against the terms at Versailles. Nevertheless, this provided an increase of manpower to the new *Wehrmacht*. The loyalty from the *Wehrmacht* to Hitler grew considerably as he revived the fighting spirit Germany once held before 1914, and against the wishes of Hitler, the army took a personal oath to him stating that, "I swear by God this sacred oath that to the Leader of the German empire and people, Adolf Hitler, supreme commander of the armed forces, I shall render unconditional obedience and that as a brave soldier I shall at all times be prepared to give my life for this oath."⁵⁶⁴ The new conscription laws worked like the *Krumper* system in Prussia during the French occupation from 1807-1813 where recruits were secretly trained for a period of time and recirculated back into society; so by the time the Nazi regime unveiled their true military force, they were able to amass a large trained fighting force with a modern air force and tanks.⁵⁶⁵

Ludwig Beck (1880-1944) a traditional Prussian and Chief of Staff of the German Army added 48 tank battalions to the proposed rearmament. Hitler's timeline for rearmament went from ten years to four in large part due to the remilitarization of the Rhineland and the *Anschluss* regions in Germany's industrial heartland. Ludwig Beck was shot in 1944 for his involvement in a plot to kill Hitler.⁵⁶⁶ Recruitment for the *Wehrmacht* consisted of voluntary enlistment and conscription raising the numbers in 1935-1939 from 1.3 million being drafted and 2.4 million volunteering with the *Wehrmacht* reaching 18.2 million total men served from 1935-1945.⁵⁶⁷ The *Wehrmacht's* rapid increase in size in a short period eventually led the army to accept citizens of

⁵⁶⁴ Martin Broszat, Hans Buchheim, Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, and Helmut Krausnick, *Anatomie des SS-Staates* (München, Germany: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), 18.

⁵⁶⁵ Klaus P. Fischer, *Nazi Germany: A New History* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1995), 408.

⁵⁶⁶ Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2006), 208; Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Hitler's Wehrmacht 1935-1945* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 12-13.

⁵⁶⁷ U.S. War Department, *Handbook on German Military Forces* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 1-57; Rüdiger Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (München, Germany: Oldenbourg, 2000), 215; Müller, *Hitler's Wehrmacht*, 16; Wette, *The Wehrmacht*, 77.

the lower order with little education and war experience going against the Prussian tradition. However, the military remedied this by mixing units together with Prussian officers and veterans to lead the new recruits by example. Many of the great German generals of World War II were of Prussian lineage all stemming from conservative military backgrounds with the rare exception of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel (1891-1944) whom was a military genius by his own design. The effectiveness of officer training schools contributed greatly to the early success of the *Wehrmacht* specially to continue the war against all odds by 1945.⁵⁶⁸ The early *Wehrmacht* in its creation strove to maintain a pure ethnic German force, but as history notes towards the critical stages of the war (1941-1945), the German military began implementing other ethnicities such as the Czechs, Hungarians, and Italians alongside the *Wehrmacht* working in unison. Secondly, many young recruits were sent to the front during the final stages of the war driven by propaganda and fanaticism to fight to the death which many did.⁵⁶⁹

Notable German generals and leaders close to Hitler were majorly of Prussian lineage solidifying the connection between Prussianism and the Third Reich especially the military aspect of them. However, this is not to link these two elements with Nazi ideologies of genocide or extermination as that remains a separate issue and topic. Military historian and Prussian General Friedrich von Bernhardi (1849-1930) in his book, *Deutschland und der Nächste Krieg (Germany and the Next War)* described war as a “divine business” which meant that Germany should always conduct an aggressive approach to treaties.⁵⁷⁰ Gotthard Heinrici (1886-1971) from East Prussia served as a German general during World War II (1939-1945) with most

⁵⁶⁸ Charles A. Miller, “Destructivity: A Political Economy of Military Effectiveness in Conventional Combat” (PhD diss., Duke University, Durham, 2013), 292-293, DukeSpace Scholarship by Duke Authors; Ola Kjoerstad, “German Officer Education in the Interwar Years” (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 2010), 6, Enlighten Theses.

⁵⁶⁹ U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Germany Military Forces*, 1-3.

⁵⁷⁰ *The Modern World Encyclopaedia: Illustrated* (New York, NY: Home Entertainment Library, 1935).

of his service on the eastern front against the Soviet Army. His reputation in World War I (1914-1918) and actions on the eastern front granted him the Prussian Knight's Cross of the Royal House Order of Hohenzollern.⁵⁷¹ General Heinrici became an expert in defensive tactics during both World Wars and led the final defense against the Soviets in the defensive of Berlin. Heinrici fought in every major campaign conducted by the Germans during World War II receiving multiple Knight's Crosses for his actions and command of the 4th Army during its retreat. He inflicted massive casualties amongst the advancing "Red Army" by using his defensive tactics and fighting a brilliant rearguard action.⁵⁷² Heinrici kept the *Wehrmacht* from disintegrating during the retreats from Russia in 1943-45 and mounted a desperate defense against overwhelming odds that eventually culminated in the end of the Third Reich.

Gerd von Rundstedt (1875-1953) born in Prussian Saxony and son of Gerd von Rundstedt, a Prussian cavalry officer in the Franco-Prussian War, grew up in a military family. The Rundstedts were of the old *Junker* nobility tracing its history directly back to the Teutonic Order in the 12th century and to Frederick II where the Rundstedt family served loyally.⁵⁷³ Rundstedt men were all army officers and regarded as Prussian nobility even though they never acquired great wealth. After World War I and the rise of the Nazi party in 1933, senior generals such as Rundstedt were called to order. Rundstedt served in all major operations on the eastern and western front during World War II serving 52 years by the end of his military career. Rundstedt never believed in the Nazi party, but he remained loyal as it signified the Prussian way. Wilhelm Keitel (1882-1946) another decorated Prussian general asked Hitler, "Do you

⁵⁷¹ Peter Stockert, *Die Eichenlaubträger 1939-1945* (Bad Friedrichshall, Germany: Friedrichshaller Rundblick, 1998), 152.

⁵⁷² "The Inferno of Highway Battles in Russia," Berthold Seewald, accessed February 20, 2023, <https://www.welt.de/geschichte/zweiter-weltkrieg/article121525870/Das-Inferno-der-Autobahnschlachten-in-Russland.html>.

⁵⁷³ Charles Messenger, *The Last Prussian: A Biography of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword, 2011), 3.

realize that Rundstedt called you a Bohemian corporal?”” and Hitler replied ““Yes, but he's the best field marshal I have.””⁵⁷⁴

Fedor von Bock (1880-1945) born into a Prussian military family served as a general field marshal during the Third Reich and achieved a great deal of success on the battlefield earning him the Iron Cross. His mother was the sister of Erich von Falkenhayn (1861-1922) chief of the German general staff during World War I.⁵⁷⁵ Paul von Kleist (1881-1954) a descendant of an old Prussian Pomeranian family served in World War I and eventually as a field marshal in World War II. Kleist proved an effective military commander throughout the war until his capture and imprisonment by Soviet forces where he died in prison for war crimes committed on the eastern front. Kleist's body eventually found its way back to his birthplace years later. Kleist like many German generals during the Third Reich extended from a long tradition of military service. Gunther von Kluge (1882-1944) was born in Posen, Prussia to an aristocratic family. His father Max von Kluge was a decorated commander serving as a lieutenant general in World War I.⁵⁷⁶ Kluge obtained the rank of general field marshal fighting in all theaters of the war against the impossible demands of Hitler eventually leading to his death in 1944 during the assassination plot. The perception that all Prussian descents of military backgrounds were radical party extremists or military warmongers is not always the case as many excellent German generals' abilities were hindered by Hitler not allowing them to use their full military skills in situations. Kluge in his final testimony states that, “the German people have undergone such untold suffering that it is time to put an end to this frightfulness.”⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁴ Peter Margaritis, *Countdown to D-Day: The German Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2019), xv.

⁵⁷⁵ Holger Afflerback, *Falkenhayn: Politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich* (Munich, Germany: Oldenbourg, 1996), 9.

⁵⁷⁶ Correlli Barnett, *Hitler's Generals* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1989), 395-396.

⁵⁷⁷ Max Hastings, *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1984), 302-303.

Hasso von Manteuffel (1897-1978) a Prussian baron became a general during World War II becoming general of the famous 5th Panzer Army. Manteuffel saw combat during the First World War and joined the *Freikorps* and the eventual *Reichswehr* where he rose through the ranks. Manteuffel became a large proponent of the rearmament program during the rise of the Nazi party. Manteuffel went on to lead post-war Germany. Hermann Hoth (1885-1971) born in Prussia joined the military at a young age accordance to his family's long history of military service. Hoth entered the Royal Prussian Military Academy and rose through the ranks within the Imperial German Army. After his service in World War I, Hoth a supporter of the Third Reich began the modernization of the *Wehrmacht* and implementing motorized warfare which allowed infantry corps to keep up with the fast-moving panzer divisions.⁵⁷⁸ During World War II, he rose to the rank of general where he participated in all major operations on each front and multiple battles. Hoth's military command and actions on the eastern front against civilians and prisoners of war is highly controversial in his war of annihilation. Even in Hoth's later years in life, he maintained a strong supporter of a heroic version of the *Wehrmacht* and made attempts to preserve Germany's military history.⁵⁷⁹ These are some of the more notable generals with the German army from 1935-1945 with a large majority of them being of Prussian descent though not all. Many historians consider the German generals of World War II as the greatest assembly of military minds in human history.

Amongst the crop of German generals, three stand out as the best military minds to have existed during that time including Erich von Manstein (1887-1973), Erwin Rommel (1891-1944), and the mastermind behind the *Wehrmacht's* Panzer divisions, Heinz Guderian (1888-

⁵⁷⁸ Johannes Hürter, *Hitlers Heerführer: Die Deutschen Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941/42* (Munich, Germany: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2007), 129.

⁵⁷⁹ Linden Lyons, *Panzer Operations: Germany's Panzer Group 3 during the Invasion of Russia, 1941* (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2015), 169.

1954).⁵⁸⁰ Heinz Guderian born in west Prussia descended from a long lineage of Prussian officers with his father and grandfather both serving in the army. Guderian entered officer's cadet school and entered service with a Hanoverian regiment under the command of his father seeing combat at the Battle of Verdun (1916) and eventually rising to captain. Guderian joined the General Staff Corps, and by the end of the war and signing of the Treaty of Versailles, he became one of only four thousand officers allowed to lead the new *Reichswehr*.⁵⁸¹ Guderian during the post-war period saw the defense of the eastern front against Polish and Russians during the Russian Civil War. He also joined the Iron Division and became its second general staff officer.⁵⁸² The Iron Division is associated with the *Freikorps* who fought against the growing communist movements. Guderian began studying armored warfare tactics under Ernst Volckheim (1898-1962) where he learned of the value of armored warfare and the usage of them by the allied powers during World War I.⁵⁸³ The French and British effectively used these new battlefield machines to great effect against the German entrenched positions accumulated in victories.

The Germans attempted to build their own form of tanks, but ultimately, they never saw any great success. Many historians such as James Corum give credit to Volckheim as the original father of the blitzkrieg in 20th century armored warfare. Nevertheless, Guderian wrote *Achtung Panzer* in 1937 describing the usage of Panzers in a new form of mechanized warfare where like in previous Prussian and German doctrines this new form of battle centered around quick and

⁵⁸⁰ Russell A. Hart, *Guderian: Panzer Pioneer or Myth Maker?* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006), 27-28.

⁵⁸¹ Pier Paolo Battistelli, *Heinz Guderian: Leadership, Strategy, Conflict* (Oxford, England: Osprey Publishing Ltd, 2011), 6.

⁵⁸² Hart, *Guderian*, 16-17.

⁵⁸³ Ian Ona Johnson, "Ernst Volckheim, Heinz Guderian, and the Origins of German Armored Doctrine," *Journal of Military History* 87, no. 1 (2023): 145-168, <https://web.s.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=0ae6e369-5efb-4a3d-9f70-c636381c34a5%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWVhc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=30h&AN=160919526>.

decisive action at critical points in the enemy lines. The Germans continued to build upon this motorized doctrine by not distributing their panzer tanks throughout the various army corps but by combining them into multiple panzer groups, corps and eventual armies where they were used together.

This concentration of tanks proved very effective for the *Wehrmacht* and its blitzkrieg or lightening warfare. Guderian's *Achtung Panzer* and his desire to use tanks more effectively became the main driving component within the *Wehrmacht* and moreover the German doctrine of warfare.⁵⁸⁴ Though the Russians, British, and French were ahead of the Germans in the early stages of Panzer technology, these countries did not use them as effective spearhead components. These *Panzergruppen* or Panzer Groups were highly effective against the Polish in 1939 where the Panzer groups used their speed and firepower to envelop and surround Polish corps. The Germans also combined the usage of precision bombing by the *Luftwaffe* with their *Junker-87* airplanes.⁵⁸⁵ The mechanized infantry units supported the panzers along with artillery and excellent communication. Communication within the panzers to coordinate attacks was implemented and perfected by Guderian. The Germans' new *Blitzkrieg* emphasized exploiting small weak points within a front, and instead of attacking broadly, they used speed to surround and destroy enemy armies which is known as a pincer movement. The term *Blitzkrieg* was a western propaganda term and never used by the *Wehrmacht*.

German companies such as Rheinmetall and Daimler-Benz began designing and constructing tanks for the German army with the secret help of the Soviets who also began tank production on a large scale. The *Panzerkampfwagen IV* or the Panzer IV became the leading design of early German tanks. The Panzer IV saw service on all fronts of the war from 1939-

⁵⁸⁴ Roger Edwards, *Panzer: A Revolution in Warfare, 1939-1945* (London, England: Arms and Armour, 1989), 24.

⁵⁸⁵ Heinz Guderian, *Achtung-Panzer!: The Development of Tank Warfare* (London, England: Cassell, 1992).

1945 with around 8,553 being built making it one of the most numerous tanks produced by the German government.⁵⁸⁶ Heinz Guderian is the general accepted father of blitzkrieg tactics; though, many others were heavily involved in persuading Hitler and the German military the importance of tanks in modern warfare.⁵⁸⁷ The reason many other German innovators of the new panzer corps did not receive the credit like Guderian happened in 1938 when Hitler purged the military of those not sympathetic to the Nazi regime's ideologies thus making Guderian one of Hitler's main principal leaders in panzer doctrine creation.⁵⁸⁸

The annexation of Austria in 1938 became the first time the panzers were used though no conflict ensued. Rather, the Germans absorbed Austria into the Reich. From this, the Germans learned many valuable lessons including the tanks ran out of fuel quickly and broke down demonstrating a critical flaw in the new type of warfare. For the *Panzergruppen* or Panzer Groups to remain effective, they needed logistical support ranging from fuel, extra parts, and recovery vehicles. Nonetheless, the concept remained, and the panzers grew in numbers and strength eventually becoming corps in 1941. Secondly, the new tank doctrines did not attack heavily fortified positions directly but rather went around them as not to repeat the same mistakes as the previous war and become bogged down. This was the Hutier tactics developed years earlier in 1917-1918 now perfected. The Germans also continued to use the old Imperial German Army doctrine element of surprise and quick envelopment movements as used on the eastern front in World War I. No longer did the German army doctrine attack heavily fortified or entrenched positions but rather went around them and encircled them. Only after the encirclement did the German Wehrmacht use its infantry, artillery, and Luftwaffe to effectively

⁵⁸⁶ Thomas L. Jentz and Hilary Louis Doyle, *Panzer Tracts No. 23: Panzer Production from 1933 to 1945* (Boyd's, MD: Panzer Tracts, 2011), 50-59.

⁵⁸⁷ Battistelli, *Heinz Guderian*, 14.

⁵⁸⁸ Hart, *Guderian*, 30.

annihilate these areas or pockets of troops. By 1945, the Germans created around 25-26 panzer corps all consisting of a motorized corps that served as a tactical command element and support.⁵⁸⁹ By 1939, the German army contained five different kinds of divisions such as infantry, motorized infantry, armored, mountain, and light. These divisions were grouped into corps, and corps were grouped into armies, and armies grouped into army groups by 1940. During Operation Barbarossa in 1941, the Germans created three army groups (North, Center, and South) amassing 3.8 million men and around 4,000 tanks.⁵⁹⁰ During their invasion into France in 1940, they created Army Group A, B, and C which overwhelmed the French forces through speed. The Germans used the term *Vernichtungsschlacht* or battle of annihilation.⁵⁹¹

The German armored divisions in 1939 contained 12,000 men and 328 tanks.⁵⁹² These divisions also composed of artillery, anti-tank, mortars, anti-aircraft, and heavy and light machine guns. They also were able to call in close air support from the *Luftwaffe* if needed to maximize the effectiveness of their attack. For the Blitzkrieg to succeed, every component of this doctrine needed to work together through communication and intelligence. It also relied heavily on logistics which made roads very important for the movement of armies especially panzer divisions. The German tactic *Bewegungskrieg* or maneuver warfare that traditional Germans used from the Prussian doctrine benefited greatly from the adoption of panzers within the army

⁵⁸⁹ “Die Panzerkorps,” Lexikon der Wehrmacht, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de/Gliederungen/KorpsPz/PzKprps.htm>; “Die Armeekorps der Waffen-SS,” Lexikon der Wehrmacht, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de/Gliederungen/KorpsSS/Gliederung.htm>; “Die Fallschirm-Panzer-Korps,” Lexikon der Wehrmacht, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://www.lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de/Gliederungen/KorpsSonstige/FallPzKorpsGliederung.htm>.

⁵⁹⁰ Lloyd Clark, *Kursk: The Greatest Battle Eastern Front 1943* (London, England: Headline Review, 2011), 73; Liedtke, *Enduring the Whirlwind*, 220.

⁵⁹¹ William J. Fanning, Jr., “The Origin of the Term “Blitzkrieg”: Another View,” *The Journal of Military History* 61, no. 2 (1997): 283-287, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/origin-term-blitzkrieg-another-view/docview/195641425/se-2?accountid=12085>.

⁵⁹² “The Organization of Armies,” Columbia University, accessed February 21, 2023, https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/services/dropoff/schilling/mil_org/milorgan_99.html.

to focus on penetrating deep into the enemy country and bypassing strong fortified areas which served little purpose by World War II.⁵⁹³ The German's warfare of maneuver failed in World War I largely due to lack of technology such as tanks making it very difficult for them to achieve strategic goals during industrialized warfare. The Germans also used psychological warfare or terror elements against their opponents such as *Jericho Trompete* which used deafening sounds on dive bombers such as the *Junker Ju 87*.⁵⁹⁴

The Germans did not underestimate their enemies and also did not want to be in a long-drawn-out war like World War I. Their new form of warfare consisted of precise attacks to deliver critical blows in decisive battles. Moreover, the *Blitzkrieg* required large amounts of logistical support that followed behind the panzers; so, if the panzers ran out of fuel or logistics, so did the *Blitzkrieg*. Len Deighton in his book, *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk*, states that,

The established German Army no longer had the physical power to overcome the uniformed private armies of Left and Right. This weakness was not due to a lack of rifles, machine guns, or artillery, or even to a lack of men, but to a shortage of trucks. The vital role of the truck had already been recognized by some military experts. In England Captain B. H. Liddell Hart greeted the six-wheel truck as a landmark in military evolution.⁵⁹⁵

In 1938, the Wehrmacht land forces consisted of 28 divisions, and by 1939, these numbers rose to 75-100 divisions increasing the size of the army.

⁵⁹³ "The German Doctrine of Bewegungskrieg (Blitzkrieg)," Christian Ankerstjerne, accessed February 21, 2023, <https://panzerworld.com/blitzkrieg>.

⁵⁹⁴ Laurenz Demps and Carl-Ludwig Paeschke, *Flughafen Tempelhof: Die Geschichte einer Legende* (Berlin, Germany: Ullstein, 1998), 49; Walter J. Boyne, *Clash of Wings: World War II in the Air* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 30; Roman Toeppel, *Kursk 1943: The Greatest Battle of the Second World War* (Warwick, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2018), 208.

⁵⁹⁵ Len Deighton, *Blitzkrieg: From the Rise of Hitler to the Fall of Dunkirk* (London, England: Jonathan Cape, 1979), 40.

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
<i>Heer</i>	3,737,000	4,550,000	5,000,000	5,800,000	6,550,000	6,510,000	5,300,000
<i>Luftwaffe</i>	400,000	1,200,000	1,680,000	1,700,000	1,700,000	1,500,000	1,000,000
<i>Kriegsmarine</i>	50,000	250,000	404,000	580,000	780,000	810,000	700,000
<i>Waffen-SS</i>	35,000	50,000	150,000	230,000	450,000	600,000	830,000
Total	4,220,000	6,050,000	7,234,000	8,310,000	9,480,000	9,420,000	7,830,000

Figure 4. Personnel and Recruitment⁵⁹⁶

The difference between the *Wehrmacht* and other armies at the time became qualitative measures over quantitative and using their panzers in divisions with the specific goal to spearhead attacks. This large increase in numbers is largely due to the mandatory military draft and eager volunteers. The implementation of the panzers within the *Wehrmacht* instilled a great morale boost to many soldiers in that their military changed drastically from simple uniformed soldiers to mechanized warfare and a new technologically advanced *Luftwaffe*.

The German military now consisted of many new armored vehicles that created an aura of excitement and determination. A large chunk of these new recruits stemmed from the *Hitlerjugend* who from an early age were surrounded by honor, duty, courage, and militarism.

Hitler states that,

These boys and girls enter our organizations with their ten years of age, and often for the first time get a little fresh air; after four years of the Young Folk they go on to the Hitler Youth, where we have them for another four years...And even if they are still not complete National Socialists, they go to Labor Service and are smoothed out there for another six, seven months...And whatever class consciousness or social status might still be left...the Wehrmacht will take care of that.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ Müller, *Hitler's Wehrmacht*, 36.

⁵⁹⁷ Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 98-99.

The *Wehrmacht* became an actual symbol of Germany where the youth believed they were fighting a war of preservation of the fatherland against external forces. One of the most important factors regarding the connections between the reforms of 1807-1813 to the *Wehrmacht* became the combination of the old and the youth working together within the military and the symbolism within that relationship. The reform periods of 1807-1813 saw many older officers work together with younger military theorists to combine their knowledge to create an effective modern military force. During the reform period under Roon in the 1850s, Prussia again combined the notions of older military Prussianism with that of new technological advancements such as modern artillery, rifles, transportation, communication, and operational planning. By the creation of the *Wehrmacht*, the German ideology did not concern itself with rebuilding the entire military force from the ground up but to continue off of the solid foundations their predecessors or more importantly their ancestors created thus combining the two and creating one cohesive unit. Again, this relates back to Hitler's notion of *Volksgemeinschaft* or German unity.⁵⁹⁸ The Prussians during the Napoleonic period used these same unifying factors of *Ein Volk, Ein Reich* to not only create a sense of united Germanism but to bolster the numbers within the military force with the only difference being new leadership. The institution of Prussianism never disappeared from Germany even after World War I. It was simply revived to create something else in accordance with the time period and the factors delegating that situation. Coincidentally, a large majority of the *Wehrmacht's* top generals were of esteemed Prussian military backgrounds as mentioned before.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1991), 44; Fritzsche, *Life and Death*, 39.

⁵⁹⁹ Fritzsche, *Life and Death*, 44.

In 1939, the German army invaded Poland along with Russia in the first series of the infamous German *Blitzkrieg*.⁶⁰⁰ Before the invasion, many of Hitler's top generals called for more time to prepare and grow the *Wehrmacht* to a greater size, but Hitler disagreed and the plans for the invasion of Poland began. The German forces invaded Poland from three directions split into army group north and south with support from the revigorated *Luftwaffe*. Hitler used the invasion as an excuse to "liberate" the German minority living in Polish territories which did have a positive effect amongst his supporters as these areas are considered old Prussian territories especially the free city of Danzig.⁶⁰¹ The city of Danzig effectively connected the rest of Germany to Eastern Prussia, and the city remained a long-disputed possession amongst the Prussians and Poles dating back centuries before. Out of the seven main generals that led the *Wehrmacht* into Poland, six were of Prussian lineage with many stemming from the old Junker nobility like George von Kuchler (1881-1968). Hitler's main contention for the invasion rested in his ideology of living space or *lebensraum* for the German people. He stated that,

The object of the war is ... physically to destroy the enemy. That is why I have prepared, for the moment only in the East, my 'Death's Head' formations with orders to kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish descent or language. Only in this way can we obtain the living space we need.⁶⁰²

Hitler's generals agreed to this due to the historical importance of these areas as Prussians and Poles consistently fought over these areas many times before. Frederick II annexed large portions of Poland during the end of his reign as mentioned before so did Frederick William III after the defeat of Napoleon. These areas meant more to the Prussian population than the average German living elsewhere in Germany. For the Prussians especially, German generals from Prussian

⁶⁰⁰ "German-Soviet Pact," Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed March 12, 2023, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-soviet-pact>.

⁶⁰¹ Louis L. Snyder, *The New Nationalism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 88.

⁶⁰² Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998), 115.

backgrounds the conflict remained personal as these were the natural historical birthrights of their ancestors dating back to the Teutonic era.

Secondly, Russia also played a large part in dismantling Polish territories over the years and committing genocidal acts against its populace. Nevertheless, after failed negotiations with Poland, France, and Great Britain, the Germans invaded Poland in an overwhelming attack using its new doctrine of warfare. The *Wehrmacht* army consisted of around 2,100 tanks placed in seven Panzer divisions and around 1.3 million men in 60 divisions.⁶⁰³ The new operational doctrine called for the panzer elements to punch holes within the Polish line and surround isolated troops to encircle and destroy them which they achieved in rapid fashion, thus solidifying the third reform period with the usage of tactical and technological innovations to its military doctrine whilst keeping traditional Prussian army doctrines implemented by past military reformers previously mentioned. The *Panzergranadiers* which is directly tied to the *Sturmtruppen* units created in 1918 worked closely along the panzer divisions providing support and communications. These *Panzergranadiers* were elite units that worked in front of the main army with the fast-moving panzer divisions. Without their presence, the German panzers were vulnerable. The *Wehrmacht* army doctrine incorporated dive bombing tactics which worked in unison with the panzers destroying key bridges and fortified areas along with cities to enforce terror tactics. Many historians consider the German *Luftwaffe* as the most modern and experienced air force in the world by this time.⁶⁰⁴

Walther von Brauchitsch (1881-1948) of Prussian military nobility directed the invasion into Poland from his position in the German General Staff (OKH) formally the Prussian General

⁶⁰³ Thomas L. Jentz, *Panzertruppen: The Complete Guide to the Creation & Combat Employment of Germany's Tank Force 1933-1942* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1996), 90-91.

⁶⁰⁴ Stanley S. Seidner, *Marshal Edward Śmigły-Rydz: Rydz and the Defence of Poland* (New York, NY: St. John's University, 1982), 162.

Staff. His plan called for three assaults that were to simultaneously diverge against Warsaw and ensure a quick victory before France or Great Britain got involved in the war. The Polish army valiantly put up a great defense against the superior *Wehrmacht* forces, but to little avail, they could not stop the rapid advance of the fast-moving panzer divisions and German infantry who consistently out maneuvered and outflanked the Polish defenders. This new way of warfare shocked the world along with the atrocities committed as well. John Gunther (1901-1970) an American journalist and writer in 1939 stated that, “The German campaign was a masterpiece. Nothing quite like it has been seen in military history.”⁶⁰⁵ The invasion and conquering of Poland lasted only 26-35 days with around 65,000 Polish killed in action and around 420,000 taken prisoner.⁶⁰⁶ The *Wehrmacht* lost around 16,000 and 40,000 wounded a relatively low figure as many believed the war would last months if not a year.⁶⁰⁷

This new German way of war developed from 1918-1939 respectively used the notions of *Vernichtungsgedanke* meaning war of annihilation which was first developed by Frederick the Great and revisited by key Prussian reformer Carl von Clausewitz in his book *On War*. The reform of the Prussian and German doctrines derived from the ability to combine old military doctrines with newer innovations over time. Historian Matthew Cooper suggested that the great success of the *Blitzkrieg* derived from previous military doctrines in German and Prussian history.

Throughout the Polish Campaign, the employment of the mechanized units revealed the idea that they were intended solely to ease the advance and to support the activities of the infantry.... Thus, any strategic exploitation of the armoured idea was still-born. The paralysis of command and the breakdown of morale were not made the ultimate aim of

⁶⁰⁵ John Gunther, *Inside Europe* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1940), xvi-xvii.

⁶⁰⁶ Mieczysław Ciepłewicz and Eugeniusz J. Kozłowski, *Wojna Obronna Polski, 1939: Wybór Źródeł* (Warsaw, Poland: Wydawn. Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1968), 851.

⁶⁰⁷ “Polish War, German Losses,” *The Canberra Times*, October 13, 1939, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2513833>.

the ... German ground and air forces, and were only incidental by-products of the traditional manoeuvres of rapid encirclement and of the supporting activities of the flying artillery of the *Luftwaffe*, both of which had as their purpose the physical destruction of the enemy troops. Such was the *Vernichtungsgedanke* of the Polish campaign.⁶⁰⁸

From the viewpoint of the Nazi leadership, they were impressed on how well this new form of warfare achieved victory in such a short timeframe thus its continual usage throughout the remainder of World War II.

The plans for the invasion of France in 1940 centered around the same methodology of combined arms tactics with the panzer divisions as the spearheads by passing strong enemy strong points. The *Wehrmacht* did not see any interest in attacking strong enemy formations but rather sought to bypass them and envelop them through the “pincer movement” which called for two bodies of troops enveloping, surrounding, and finally annihilating isolated areas. This new form of warfare as seen in the invasion of France made forts and the Maginot Line useless to a degree as they were static, and the new German doctrine of warfare centered around decisive movement and broad flanking attacks to effectively surround entire armies without causing mass casualties to their own army. This is not to suggest that the Poles, French, British, or even the Russians did not have excellent military equipment and troops; rather, they underestimated how advanced these German panzer divisions were and more importantly how they were used to great effect. Again, the Germans concentrated their panzers together unlike other armies of the time who divided up their tanks throughout the army sparingly.

Eventually as World War II developed, the Allied powers did begin to copy the German manner of tanks in divisions and corps. As the French prepared for the eventual German invasion, they believed that the war would follow the same pattern of trench warfare like World

⁶⁰⁸ Matthew Cooper, *The German Army 1933-1945: Its Political and Military Failure* (Lanham, MD: Scarborough House, 1978), 176.

War I. Unknown to them, the *Wehrmacht* did not have any intentions of participating in a long drawn-out war and made every possible analytical attempt to avoid that by studying the previous conflict. The invasion into France consisted of three German army groups, A, B, and C, comprising around 141 divisions and 3.4 million soldiers along with thousands of tanks, aircraft, artillery, and logistical support.⁶⁰⁹ The French and its Allied British contingents also placed a large force of men, tanks, artillery, and equipment to face the German invasion. The German invasion began with a rapid movement through the Ardennes Forest in modern day Belgium surprising the Allied armies who believed the Germans would attack the Maginot Line.

Unknown to the Allied armies, the Germans did not intend to attack strong fortified areas as this went against their reformed doctrine of warfare. Similar to the Polish campaign, the French and British could not stop the fast-moving panzer divisions and were effectively cut off. General Rommel and Guderian moved the Panzer divisions so rapidly that the German infantry and fuel support could not keep up. Nevertheless, their decision to assess the situation and capitalize from the Allied confusion accumulated in tens of thousands of French and British forces being surrounded and eventually surrendering. These were the same principles that Moltke the Elder incorporated into the Prussian army during the German unification period.

The *Wehrmacht* wanted its officers and generals to be able to think for themselves and achieve victory. Because of this being exemplified by Guderian and Rommel, they were able to destroy and capture large quantities of troops whilst not sustaining massive casualties of their own. The *Blitzkrieg* and its success moved so rapidly through France that even Hitler became worried stating that, "Führer is terribly nervous. Frightened by his own success, he is afraid to take any chance and so would pull the reins on us ... [he] keeps worrying about the south flank.

⁶⁰⁹ Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 35-37.

He rages and screams that we are on the way to ruin the whole campaign.”⁶¹⁰ Within six weeks, the German Wehrmacht conquered France effectively knocking a major Ally out of the war from Britain who would continue to fight alone until 1941-45.

Winston Churchill (1874-1965) upon seeing the chaotic situation in Paris asked French General Gamelin what happened. Gamelin responded that, “inferiority of numbers, inferiority of equipment, inferiority of methods.”⁶¹¹ For the French and British, the entire conception of war changed for them in that this was not the same situation in the previous world war and that the German *Blitzkrieg* seemed unstoppable in their methodology. Close to 2 million Allied soldiers surrendered compared to around 50,000 Germans dead and 100,000 wounded. The victory for the *Wehrmacht* placed them above all else in Europe and their victory total by any military standards.⁶¹²

If an increase in feeling for Adolf Hitler was still possible, it has become reality with the day of the return to Berlin", commented one report from the provinces. "In the face of such greatness," ran another, "all pettiness and grumbling are silenced." Even opponents to the regime found it hard to resist the victory mood. Workers in the armaments factories pressed to be allowed to join the army. People thought final victory was around the corner. Only Britain stood in the way. For perhaps the only time during the Third Reich there was genuine war-fever among the population.⁶¹³

This victory created a wave of euphoria in Germany increasing the war-fever of the German population to support the Nazi Party's conquest of Europe in the coming months with campaigns in the Baltic nations, Balkans, and the major invasion of the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa in 1941. The third reform period (1918-1945) for the Prussian army in the form of

⁶¹⁰ John Strawson, *Hitler as Military Commander* (Barnsley, England: Pen & Sword Military Classics, 2003), 108.

⁶¹¹ Winston S. Churchill, *Their Finest Hour* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 42-49.

⁶¹² Paul-Marie de La Gorce, *L'aventure Coloniale de la France: L'Empire Écartelé 1936-1946* (Paris, France: Denoël, 1988), 496; Alan Shepperd, *France 1940: Blitzkrieg in the West* (Oxford, England: Osprey, 1990), 88.

⁶¹³ Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldaten – On Fighting, Killing and Dying: The Secret Second World War Tapes of German POWs* (London, England: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 193, 216; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945* (Munich, Germany: Pantheon, 2002), 407.

the *Wehrmacht* and its *Blitzkrieg* now unleashed itself upon Europe in an apocalyptic fashion effecting and changing the course of all human history.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The twin battles of Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 began a series of military reform movements within Prussia that transformed both Prussia's military and state structure which directly impacted the historical events in Germany throughout the mid-19th and 20th centuries. How did the reform period from 1807-1813 directly relate to the creation of the *Wehrmacht*, and are there any correlations between these movements and the eventual unification of Germany in 1871 by Prussians? Yes, the reform movement upon the evidence gathered directly relates to the military implications that historians recognize within Germany. Secondly, these reform movements combined liberalism and conservatism to create a modern state that still retained a large portion of its Prussianism. The very word Prussianism translates as one dominate catalyst state that effectively unified the German speaking peoples into one entity with a strong military doctrine at the core. The word Germany signifies the collaborative unification of many German states and its *volk*, but Prussian military influence and political dominance remained as the driving force as the state within a state. From the ending period of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the reign of Frederick II (1712-1786), the Prussian state remained as one of the strongest "German" states outside the Holy Roman Empire (800-1806) second only to the Austrian empire. However, this small state became the main factor in unifying the German speaking peoples as they were truly never a unified nation in their history except for a hand full of times. The Prussians did not unify Germany through diplomatic measures or by constitutional reforms but by their military prowess that characterized them and their history.

Prussia did not retain any connection to other German principalities or states during its history nor did these other states see themselves as Prussian; nevertheless, the state of Prussia

achieved what Austria could not. Prussia in its early form stemming from the Reformation period (1517-1600) immediately set out to retain an elite and highly disciplined standing army. Over the various reigns of their monarchs over time leading up to the crowning of Frederick II, the military became the epicenter of all political and social life. Frederick II used this military he inherited from his father Frederick William I of Prussia (1713-1740) to expand the empire's borders bringing the state of Prussia into many decades of war from 1740-1763 almost collapsing the state entirely by the ending of the Seven Years War period. Frederick II won many notable battles against all odds but also lost important ones as well.

Miraculously, the state of Prussia survived and continued to represent the highest military achievements providing an example to many European powers and monarchies at the time until 1806. Nations such as Great Britain, Austria, France, Russia, and many others viewed the Prussian military as the finest example within Europe even sending military advisors to learn and adopt their principles to implement in their own military doctrines. How did the Prussians view themselves, and where did they recognize their military heritage? As mentioned before, the state of Prussia descended from the Teutonic Order beginning in the 12th century. Prussians held their Teutonic lineage to an almost fanatical degree in that many symbols such as the iron cross were used up until 1945. Many monarchs of Prussia, Imperial Germany, and eventually the military dictatorship of the Third Reich reference the achievements of the Teutons and the Prussians constantly preaching about the great struggle incurred by them to create an aura of honor and strength and most importantly militarism. This especially gained momentum during the early parts of the 20th century where Teuton legacy became a driving factor in the east against the Slavic peoples.

Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941) of the infamous Prussian House of Hohenzollern states that, “The coming war is the last battle between Teutons (Germans) and Slavs.”⁶¹⁴ This ideology eventually did come into fruition with the expansion of the *Wehrmacht* into the east during 1941-45 with the National Socialist Party (Nazis) using the Teutonic Order for propaganda purposes. In 1933 regarding the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) Hitler states that,

My program for educating youth is hard. Weakness must be hammered away. In my castles of the Teutonic Order a youth will grow up before which the world will tremble. I want a brutal, domineering, fearless, cruel youth. Youth must be all that. It must bear pain. There must be nothing weak and gentle about it. The free, splendid beast of prey must once again flash from its eyes...That is how I will eradicate thousands of years of human domestication...That is how I will create the New Order.⁶¹⁵

The symbolism within the Teutonic imagery developed over time amongst the Prussian state, Imperial Germany, and the Third Reich with only specific parts of the order’s history being used. In each instance, the ideology became more extreme and brutal climaxing with the rise and fall of Nazi Germany (1933-1945). Though interesting, the main protagonist regarding Prussian and German military history lies within an event that propelled them to greater heights.

By 1806 and the disastrous defeats of the outdated yet proud Prussian army at the hands of Napoleon during the battles of Jena and Auerstadt, some historians see this as the true beginnings of a modern Prussian state and military. The defeats at these battles and the submission to a foreign power set in motion the key elements that eventually led to German nationalism and the eventual unification of Germany by Prussia in 1871 through the military. The defeats taught the Prussians many valuable lessons in the nature of dynamic state building and modern military reforms built off those of Napoleon. The Prussians never moved away from

⁶¹⁴ Keith Wilson, *Decisions for War, 1914* (London, England: University College London Press, 1995), 41.

⁶¹⁵ “Hitler Youth,” The History Place, accessed March 20, 2023, <https://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/hitleryouth/index.html>.

the military glories of their past predecessors but combined that Prussian mindset amongst a more modern liberal state with conservative elites remaining at the helm.

The Stein and Hardenberg reforms as mentioned previously began a broad movement away from the outdated serfdom system and towards a modern system that ignited more economic modalities for the peasant and middle class thus creating the rise of the bourgeoisie. Education, trade, taxes, industrialization, and private ownership of property and business all began to transform Prussia into a modern state protected by law. The aristocratic class as before did not retain all of the power, and the gap between the poor and the wealthy began to close slightly over the course of the reforms. This is not to suggest that the reforms did not have issues, but it became the necessary measures to transform Prussia into a modern state with modern structures of administration. Nevertheless, the gap between the poor and the aristocratic class began to close creating a more harmonical relation between the two initiating more trust from the people for its rulers.

The reforms were especially targeted at the military as its performance against Napoleon's modern military force proved embarrassing especially in the wake of Frederick the Great's achievements in the past. Though the military carried the spirit of Frederick's triumphs and achievements, its leadership and structure were irrelevant for the time period. Key military reformers such as Gneisenau, Scharnhorst, and Clausewitz are credited along with others in transforming the outdated military into one of the most effective military forces in Europe in a short period of time modeled off the Napoleonic system. First, the reformers dismissed old generals who were past their prime with only a few retaining their positions with one being Blucher. The reforms first incorporated the middle class into the Officer Corps. As mentioned before, the officer class was designated strictly for the aristocracy many of whom were not fit for

those positions. Allowing for the middle class to become officers increased the recruitment pool amongst the Prussian populace to establish the best officers for the job based on their talent and leadership in battles. The idea stemmed from creating a bond between the military and the civilian population by creating a citizen's patriotic movement. Again, this decreased the gap between the poor and wealthy class and created a more unified and cohesive military.

The Prussian military reforms also introduced the corps system which allowed for more flexible and modern tactics during campaigns and battles. Linear tactics used during the 1806 campaign were static and outdated against modern formations. The brilliance of these reformers was that they created a modern military under French occupation by usage of the Krumper System. The Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 limited the Prussian army to only 42,000 men, but Scharnhorst began training soldiers in rotation.⁶¹⁶ By training soldiers in rotation, it achieved two things. First, it trained large parts of the male population in modern military tactics; secondly, in time of war the Prussian military could produce a standing army in rapid time without the usage of raw conscripts. The reformers did all of these things while abiding the Treaty of Tilsit set against them. In total from 1807-1813, the Krumper System trained around 150,000-200,000 men in the new form of modern warfare.⁶¹⁷ New and improved officers' schools were also reformed to train and educate applicants from all Prussian society. One of these schools became infamous called the Prussian Staff College founded by Gerhard von Scharnhorst in 1810 which trained and developed general staff officers. Many notable Prussian and German generals up to World War II were trained in this institution producing some of the top military minds of the 19th and 20th centuries.

⁶¹⁶ Eduard Lange, *Geschichte der Preußischen Landwehr seit Entstehung Derselben bis zum Jahre 1856: Historisch Dargestellt* (Berlin, Germany: Allg. Dt. Verlag-Anst., 1857), 12.

⁶¹⁷ Michael Busch, Michael Epkenhans, Stephan Huck, Karl-Volker Neugebauer, and Matthias Rogg, *Grundkurs Deutsche Militärgeschichte Band 1: Die Zeit bis 1914* (München, Germany: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009), 142.

Lastly, the reformers created the *Landwehr* militia which proved to be an effective fighting force alongside the regular army. The *Landwehr* not only increased the size of how many men the Prussians could mobilize, but it also created a representation of Prussian nationalism which the regular army and the militia worked together to defeat Napoleon I. The reforms began the nationalization of the Prussian state where the aristocracy, middle class, and poor were more unified than they were in previous decades. By 1813-1815 with the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, it demonstrated the great success of the reformers and importance of what Jena and Auerstadt did for the Prussian and German people. Many historians agree that the arrival of the Prussians by Blucher at Waterloo on Napoleon's right flank became symbolic to Prussia's reemergence to totally route Napoleon's army indefinitely as he did to them in the disastrous year of 1806.

After the Congress of Vienna in 1814 and the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Europe began moving in a new and more dangerous direction. For Prussia, this is the era where they are faced with the notions of Liberal German Nationalism and Prussian Conservatism within the state. Liberalism and conservatism began to take a new form within Germany especially Prussia where liberals want the continued effects of the reforms through a constitutional document. Prussian conservatives began to drift back to the ways of the old monarchy, and many liberals began organizing against these attacks against their liberties and rights. Prussia along with other German states faced a crisis in which direction to unite Germany even though the Prussian monarchy retained no interest in doing so. Liberals wanted Prussia to unite Germany in a democratic sense, but Prussian conservatives wanted to unite Germany in their conservative ways eventually accumulating in the revolutions of 1848. These revolutions were not a defeat for conservatives or liberals but rather a victory theoretically for both entities as it forced the

Prussian monarchy to draft a constitution and to continue civil and economic reforms for the good of its populace whilst maintaining strong conservatives within the government and monarchy. This also began the second reform period of the Prussian military under the direction of Roon.

The reforms from 1807-1813 did not necessarily stop by the mid-19th century but rather slowed down only to be rekindled again under new leadership. Under the direction of Roon, Bismarck, and Moltke the Elder, the Prussian army grew dramatically in size, and new and more modern tactics were developed which were even greater than Napoleon's. This new reform period for Prussia in the 1850s adopted many new methodologies in how warfare and politics worked together which characterized a new form of war emphasized by the writings of Clausewitz. Roon adapted the same ideas and principles from Clausewitz and Scharnhorst building off of their achievements whilst implementing modern weaponry and technological military advancements. Historian P. M. Baldwin states that,

Never, as in these war years, has all history so clearly recognized its duty: the mobilization of the past in the interests of the preservation of the present and the future In accordance with this fundamental conviction, Clausewitz is here treated in a manner which does not, of course, satisfy the historical thirst for knowledge and the requirement of completeness, but in one which may nevertheless demonstrate the continuing importance and relevance of this truly great German.⁶¹⁸

These men faced a great deal of opposition from the Prussian populace and liberals within the *Lantag* to a certain degree, but these reforms were necessary in reestablishing Prussia as the leading military power in Europe under new military doctrine symbolic to Prussian militarism. Roon, Moltke, and Bismarck continued the reforms from their past predecessors who were the

⁶¹⁸ P. M. Baldwin, "Clausewitz in Nazi Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 1 (1981): 5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/260614>.

original reformers because they knew the importance of keeping Prussia as a strong conservative state with a powerful military at its disposal.

The wars between Denmark in 1864, Austria in 1866, and France in 1870-1871 proved a critical turning point for the conservatives within Prussia as they effectively defeated and humiliated both Austria and France in record time with their new military reforms thus establishing a unified Germany and the Imperial German army which was Prussian dominated. This did not mean that Prussia reverted back to its old conservative ways; rather, it still continued liberal reforms across the industrial, social, civic, and administrative sectors whilst maintaining a conservative stronghold over the military with Prussian ideologies. The victories achieved by the Prussians against its enemies solidified the national patriotism of Bismarck, Roon, and Moltke the Elder as great heroes amongst Prussians and Germans. From these events, other great Prussian generals emerged from the Prussian Staff College such as Schlieffen, Ludendorff, and Hindenburg to name a few. All these men used and built upon the works of past Prussian military leaders and reformers eventually leading to the Imperial German Army and its defeat in World War I. Again, the Prussian reforms never stopped but only continued under new regime change which proved disastrous during World War I and World War II. Though from a historical military perspective, the Prussian/German Imperial Army achieved a great deal of success solidifying it as one of the greatest fighting forces in human history accounting for the statistical discrepancies against it. Modern military colleges continue to study these events in great detail and the manner in which Prussian military minds transformed warfare. After the collapse of the Imperial German Army in World War I, the Germans rebounded in an unprecedented way with the eventual creation of the infamous *Wehrmacht* led by a Prussian

majority when analyzing the statistics of German generals during the Third Reich. How does Clausewitz and his reforms in 1807-1813 lead to the creation of the *Wehrmacht*?

The German *Wehrmacht* accumulated from a majority of disgruntled Prussian conservatives after World War I who applied new methodologies of warfare such as Heinz Guderian's panzer corps. Before the *Wehrmacht* was created, these military thinkers reverted to previous campaigns and wars and learned from their mistakes whilst keeping the foundational principles of honor, discipline, and courage. The *Wehrmacht* was not a product of Hitler but by a collaborative group of Prussian and German military innovators and thinkers. Hitler simply paved the way to remilitarize Germany against the Treaty of Versailles. The genius of the *Wehrmacht* lay within its Prussian character combined with modern technology and new adaptations to warfare as done in previous times during the unification period. These military minds again used the foundational reforms from 1807-1813 to remodel the German army in the 20th century. Baldwin goes on to state that,

Another, more sophisticated approach does not stop at an assertion of the continuity of the Prussian military tradition, but singles out various Clausewitzian doctrines for attack. particular opprobrium is reserved for the idea that war, by definition, involves a maximum exertion of effort, force and therefore violence. This idea, so runs the argument, laid the foundation of the so-called *Vernichtungsgedanke*, which regards as the only legitimate goal of war the complete decimation of enemy forces, ideally in one, all-decisive battle, the *Vernichtungsschlach*.⁶¹⁹

The triumphs of the *Wehrmacht* in Poland in 1939 and France in 1940 stimulated from the continual indoctrination of Prussian militarism amongst Germans. During Operation Barbarossa in 1941 with the invasion of the Soviet Union, the *Wehrmacht* achieved astounding success capturing millions of Russian POWs and inflicting massive defeats upon the Red Army almost collapsing the entirety of the country and changing history. Even as the *Blitzkrieg* began

⁶¹⁹ Baldwin, "Clausewitz in Nazi Germany," 6.

to slow down due to logistical factors and the very nature of the doctrine, the *Wehrmacht* proved an effective fighting force against unimaginable odds. There is much debate about this, but the *Blitzkrieg* failed because it was not designed for long drawn out wars but rather quick and decisive actions as seen in Poland and France. Secondly, Hitler reverted back to old tactics which doomed the German Imperial Army in World War I issuing impossible orders and wasting precious resources and men. This combined with fighting both Russia, Great Britain, and the United States by 1944 finally concluded the end of the Prussian reforms within the German military at this point. Nevertheless, the *Wehrmacht* holds its own place in history whether that be viewed positively or negatively from modern 21st century military leaders.

Many historians and generals today revere the campaigns of the *Wehrmacht* studying them in great detail due to the military achievements not war crimes they achieved from a strictly military perspective. Throughout the last years of the German *Wehrmacht* and in many instances on the eastern front facing impossible odds sometimes a ratio of 6:1, they seemed to achieve impossible brilliant maneuvers inflicting heavy casualties upon the Soviets. On the western front, they again surprised the Allied commanders during the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944.

However else they may have made use of him, the National Socialists regarded Clausewitz as a good Prussian, a valiant German, a dedicated soldier and therefore, it was assumed, an example that every Nazi might be proud to emulate. The National Socialists thought of themselves as fighting for Germany and her survival much as Clausewitz and others had done during the wars of national liberation. 'Who liberated Germany? 1813', Hitler scribbled in his notes for a speech already in the twenties. 'Not the host of the meek, but the hardheads. Not the Simons - Wirts - Erzbergers - Rathenaus, etc., but the Bluchers, Scharnhorsts, Yorcks and Gneisenaus. The spirit that Clausewitz expressed in a pamphlet: Clausewitz's Bekenntnis.⁶²⁰

From the military achievements of Frederick II to the defeats at Jena and Auerstadt in 1806 to the reform period (1807-1813) to the unification of Germany (1871) to Imperial Germany and

⁶²⁰ Baldwin, "Clausewitz in Nazi Germany," 10.

the final defeat of the Third Reich in 1945, the underlying theme and connection remains within Prussianism and the manner in which it influenced the political, military, diplomatic, and historical events from 1806-1945 in Central Europe. The achievements of Frederick II set the foundation for the events during the Napoleonic period at the battles of Jena and Auerstadt. From this defeat, it ignited a series of reforms both economically and militarily that laid the ground work for the eventual rise of the *Wehrmacht*. Consistently in Prussian and German history from 1807 to 1945, the words Prussian and military occur over again with direct ties to the reform period after Jena and Auerstadt. Prussia is the only state from that period that does not exist today and was effectively erased by the Allied powers in 1947 by Law No. 47 Article I. In conclusion, the state of Prussia preserved itself in history whether it be viewed as good or bad. The entirety of a people and their elaborate culture cannot be judged from the actions of a few for in the end we are all God's creatures. Ephesians 1:7 states that, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." This is in memory and respect to all those who have perished in war and despair.

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