German Foreign Policy & Diplomacy 1890-1906

Lee Button
Western Kentucky University

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Button,
Lee Thomas
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GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMACY 1890-1906

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GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMACY 1890-1906

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Director of Thesis:

Richard S. Wegel

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Elmer Gray
Dean of the Graduate College
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From 1871 to 1914, Germany experienced its first taste of world power and the failure of controlling and retaining that power. German power after 1871 had sought only a dominance of continental politics and a maintenance of a status quo in Europe favorable to Germany. Following 1890, however, the German course deviated to include a vision of world power. German foreign policy until 1890 was based on two things: hegemonic control of the heart of Europe and the force of will of one man, Otto von Bismarck. Yet despite relative control of the European situation and a cautious and able statesman at the helm, Germany was quickly intoxicated by its new power as much as reacting against the almost oppressive control of Bismarck. By all measures, the German appetite for power was growing faster than ordinary diplomatic conquests could satisfy it. The need for instant gratification caused a recklessness in foreign policy and diplomacy best characterized by Krisepolitik, or crisis diplomacy. This dilemma not only resulted from a growing appetite for power, but also from a lack of understanding of international politics. The European reaction to the new German aggressiveness and to the lack of direction in German
policy was one of suspicion. With the cancellation of the Reinsurance Treaty with Russian in 1890, every German move was viewed by increasingly hostile eyes. Axes of power began to form which much threatened the growing world power of Germany, a Germany which saw the need to contest the powers on as many points as possible, while avoiding war, to retain its power in the 1890s and the first years of the twentieth century.
Chapter I

Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Under Bismarck

By its size, population, and economy, Germany in 1871 was still not a world power. Germany, in fact, was on the verge of dominating Europe. With such a tense atmosphere, the future depended on Germany. The question Germany and the rest of Europe faced was how the new German power would be used. The Reich enjoyed a position of relative hegemony, not open or absolute. The unification of Germany in one state could mean German domination in Europe, provoking massive resistance from the other great European powers. The conflict abroad which would come of such a situation would also reactivate internal conflicts which might well defeat Germany before the unification process was completed. Only in this way can Bismarck’s formula be understood.

Germany was satiated after 1871. On the one hand, he wanted to appease suspicious neighbors, and on the other, he warned against German expansionists who threatened his achievements with their ambitions. Yet in his time as Chancellor he never tried to educate the German public so that at least the ruling circles would have some understanding of his insight or of the dangers of nationalism.¹

The new situation in Europe in 1871 left still unanswered questions for Germany. Bismarck could have chose to seek

¹Immanuel Geiss, German Foreign Policy, 1871-1914 (Boston, 1976), 12-13.
repetitions of the victories of 1866 and 1870 or extend power in the East, with success in the latter depending on avoidance of a two front war by alliance with France. This was not a likely possibility. Germany might even have joined in alliance with Russia and France against British colonialism, though such a course could be to the detriment of German expansion in the future and a great provocation for war. However, Bismarck chose to preserve his gains, and his diplomatic role reversed after 1871. He went from a diplomatic revolutionary to a diplomatic conservative. Seen from the German standpoint, however, his objectives were always conservative. They reflected the interests of his own class while still fulfilling the dream of unification. But despite the change in objective, the problems remained the same. Bismarck had to isolate Austria and France while placating Russia and Britain. Isolating Austria-Hungary was an easy task in her weakened state, mainly due to her diplomatic blunderings in the 1850s and 1860s. Isolating France was more difficult. While Bismarck sought to preserve the status quo of 1871, France sought to undo it. Furthermore, France had to make Bismarck appear the aggressor, while Bismarck played the role of peace-loving statesman. In regards to France, German foreign policy toward Russia and Britain was clear. Bismarck had to avoid alienating either by threatening their interests or the balance of power in Europe. He accomplished this by
respecting British interests in the Low Countries, the Near East, the colonial world, and the naval issues; with Russia, he paid special attention to Russian interests in Poland, the Balkans, and the Near East. Meanwhile, the Chancellor persuaded both Russia and Britain that Germany had all it wanted and would decline to threaten the balance of power. As L.L. Farrar, Jr. notes in Arrogance and Anxiety: the Ambivalence of German Power, 1848-1914, "Bismarck, in order to retain what he had, renounced more."²

Overall, Bismarck was successful in office, but the task was not easy. Making Austria-Hungary and Russia accept the status quo was difficult enough, but Austria-Hungary also had to be preserved, which meant reconciliation with Russia. Manipulation achieved this, and a general acceptance of the status quo in the Balkans by the two powers was the sign of success. If either Austria-Hungary or Russia had changed their policies toward or sought change in the Balkans, or if internal strife in the region changed the status quo to the detriment of either, then reconciliation would have been difficult. But not only would the two powers have to be reconciled and accept a Balkan status quo for success, Germany would also have to show restraint while also appearing to restrain Austria-Hungary in the region to avoid Russian antipathy. Bismarck’s policy hinged on Austro-—

Russian reconciliation, German restraint of Austria and Russia, and Germany's own interests as well.

While the Balkans complicated Bismarck's task, imperialism served to simplify it. Distracted from Europe, the other European powers gave too much attention to international imperial difficulties to make much progress toward an anti-German coalition. Bismarck generally encouraged these rivalries, but discouraged a German imperialism which would drive the other powers together against Germany. Likewise, the involvement of the other powers outside Europe depended on European security, and Germany's refusal to upset the balance of power was both to encourage imperialism and exclude a general European struggle which would dissolve the still young Germany. Again, German restraint, this time internally, was a necessity for success.3 This German restraint depended on Bismarck's ability to resist pressures in Germany which sought a more aggressive policy. Consequently, his domestic policy became analogous to his foreign policy, one of isolation and balance. He encouraged the monarchy, lesser royalty, and aristocracy to remain conservative by preserving their dominant position in the new Germany. Bismarck attempted to bring the old liberals in line with the new Germany. To do this he had to satisfy their thirst for a national state. For the bourgeoisie, he offered the

3 Ibid., 13-14.
prospect of great wealth. Preserving aristocratic power and rural society satisfied the German people from seeking greater political power with the prospects of peace and prosperity. His success in this domestic policy depended on his control of foreign policy and the combining of the two policies. He maintained this control by insuring that foreign policy remained the prerogative of the monarch, i.e. the Chancellor, who Bismarck was able to control for a generation. The Chancellor was able to restrain German power because his previous successes had reinforced the conservative system and his control over policy.

Unlike diplomatic policy, military strategy remained conservative. Unlike 1866 and 1870, where offense of victory was sought to change the status quo in central Europe, the military strategy of 1871 and after became quite defensive to avoid upsetting the new state of Europe. Also, it was realized that after 1871, Germany might have to fight a coalition; German victory would upset the balance of power, and Germany would have to make domestic concessions to get the amount of manpower needed. Germany after 1871 was seen as a threat to the traditional European system, possibly bringing the other powers together against Germany. War threatened the domestic political structure of Germany even if Germany won. Diplomatic, military and political
considerations reinforced one another in making German strategy conservative. 4

Generally, the Foreign Ministry and Diplomatic Service of Germany were the equal if not superior to any in Europe during Bismarck's tenure as Chancellor. The heart of the Foreign Ministry was the Political Division, usually referred to in documents and memoirs as 'A', meaning 'das Amt' (the office). The people of this division had distinguished themselves from colleagues in other divisions, usually within the Diplomatic Service. The most important members of this division in the 1880s were Lothan Bucher, Fritz von Holstein, Arthur von Brauer, and Graf Kuno von Rantzau. 5 The Diplomatic Service was not inferior to the Foreign Ministry, though many of its best people later went to the Political Division. By 1872, Bismarck had eliminated the disorder of the Prussian service and made his corps of envoys effective enough to rival and in some cases even surpass their counterparts in the rest of Europe. However, both the Diplomatic Service and the Foreign Ministry had several weaknesses. The responsibility for this lay with Bismarck himself. He always chose his aides with care for intelligence and technical skill, constantly protecting their positions and improving the material conditions of

4 ibid., 14-15.
their work. They were the principle instruments of foreign policy; but only instruments, for it was always Bismarck’s foreign policy, and the Chancellor’s emphasis on this stunted initiative and judgement in the Foreign Ministry. 6

There are several reasons for Bismarck’s astounding success in diplomacy: he had a clear perception of his ultimate goals; a well chosen series of alternate paths to achieve those aims; a keen insight into the objectives of opponents and a willingness to defer to them as long as they did not stand in his way; and moderation, which was his greatest strength. He was never caught up in the intoxication of victory, never demanding more than was necessary for his immediate objective. 7 Yet despite repeated success, the structure of German diplomacy was flawed because it depended far too much on one man. The fault may have lain with the importance Bismarck attached to discipline. He had had to cope with envoys who, on a regular basis, had replaced foreign policies made in Berlin with their own. This was most clearly shown in the Chancellor’s dealings with Harry Arnim, ambassador to


7 Sidney B. Fay, "Germany under Bismarck and his Successors," Current History, 28 (1955), 212.
France, in 1873.\textsuperscript{8} This event put a total end to insubordination. Efficiency in the execution of policy increased, but at a price. The members of the Foreign Ministry were terrified of Bismarck, and initiative in the Diplomatic Service became a thing of the past. By keeping his envoys in the dark over his intentions, making it dangerous for them to initiate possible routes of negotiation, Bismarck created a diplomatic corps that could not appreciate or judge the larger issues of diplomacy outside their own limited areas. At the moment of crisis--the debate over renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia in 1890--Bismarck's way of handling the Foreign Service only served to ruin the basis of his diplomatic system.\textsuperscript{9}

But it may be doubted whether any German leader, no matter how talented, would have been able to hold back the expansive force of German society. Two essential factors made Germany's collision with Europe and the rest of the world hard to avoid. On the one hand was the increasing industrialization and population of Germany, and on the

\textsuperscript{8}Arnim argued in 1872 that Germany's object should be to restore the French monarchy, an argument to which the Kaiser was sympathetic, but totally against Bismarck's policy. He warned the ambassador against further tampering with the policy of the Foreign Ministry, but Arnim paid no heed. Bismarck then persuaded the Kaiser to agree to replacement and went as far as to hound Arnim out of the Diplomatic Service and bring criminal charges against him for misuse of state information.

\textsuperscript{9}Cecil, \textit{German Diplomatic Service}, 55-58.
other was the reality of a German Empire that was a forced national state. The German Empire stood for a concentration of power in the traditional and new ruling classes of Germany, the aristocracy and the middle class. The Reich was built on the solidarity of these classes and their eventual formation of one class through marriage and economic interests. But this combination produced a paralysis inside and outside of Germany. In domestic policy the two main classes balanced each other through their domestic economic interests. However, in foreign policy, divergent ideological interests and economic interests hindered the articulation of a clear foreign policy supported by all. Consequently, the paralysis outside Germany upset the harmony of the classes in domestic policy, thus creating inner paralysis. Divergent economic interests and ideological traditions clashed in foreign policy. The dilemma produced a foreign policy that satisfied short-term (domestic) economic interests but clashed with ideologies. Most important, this paralysis prevented a clear choice between Britain and Russia. The high grain tariffs after the passage of the Tariff Law of 1879 and the later closing of the German financial market to Russian loans in 1887

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10 Eckhardt Kehr, "Englandhass und Weltpolitik. Eine Studie ueber die innenpolitischen und sozialen Grunlagen der deutschen Aussenpolitik um die Jahrhundertwende" in Primat der Innenpolitik, 44-51, 65, 149-51, where Kehr first showed this fundamental mechanism in 1928, though it did not come to general attention until 1965.
drove Russia away from its traditional friend, the Junker. Similarly, as German industry grew stronger, it pressed for protective tariffs to keep out cheap British goods. Anti-British economic interests became an anti-British foreign policy, culminating in Weltpolitik and the building of a German battle fleet. The two most powerful classes worked at cross purposes, and German statecraft failed to coordinate these divergent forces. This paralysis was inconsistent with Bismarck's use of power. The chasm grew worse with each year up to Bismarck's dismissal. In 1871, diplomatic, domestic, and military powers coincided with German power. By placating and restraining both Russia and Britain, Bismarck had effectively isolated France and kept her from undoing the settlements of 1871. Thus, German policies were consistent with German power and Bismarck lived within his means of power. However, the increase in power after 1871 rendered Bismarck's fears and his policy seemingly anachronistic. 11 Having gained more power than it had ever known before by 1890, Germany and Germans justified a need for less restraint.

Despite the fact that Bismarckian policy was fatally flawed due to a lack of understanding of domestic stresses, a ruthlessly subordinated diplomatic corps, and a failure to educate the ruling class as to his aims and intentions,

11 Farrar, Arrogance and Anxiety, 15.
Bismarck was still the most indelible diplomatist of his day. His success was due largely to his playing on the fear of European monarchies which felt threatened by revolutionary forces. From 1870 to 1890, Bismarck’s reliance on this trend was one of the most effective tools in his European diplomacy, though opportunism caused varied uses of it, usually in the interests of German nationalism. Throughout his career he sought to play on the interests of European monarchists. He was often successful in using old ideas of the virtue of monarchism to work to his advantage. But when support of such monarchial values did not agree with his aims, he would abandon the principle altogether, only to return to it later.12 This was true of many of his policies.

During the Franco-Prussian war Bismarck negotiated with both republican and monarchist factions. He showed an ideological indifference as to the nature of the French government. Yet the revengeful maneuvers of the French monarchists ruled out the possibility of German support of the monarchist faction. Also, Bismarck feared revenge on the part of a restored clerical monarchy in France. Thus, it was logical to conclude peace or some kind of rapprochement with the republic in power rather than seek monarchial restoration. Furthermore, it was Bismarck’s

belief that a French republic would be shunned by other monarchies, a belief shared by everyone. The alliance of France, Austria, and Russia on a religious basis—which Bismarck particularly feared—became an unlikely possibility.

While tacitly supporting the Third French Republic against monarchial factions, and eyeing the desired territory of Alsace-Lorraine as an industrial basin and military buffer, Germany and Bismarck set about building an alliance system to isolate the potential enemy, France, seen as the only continental power standing full-square in the way of Germany dominating Europe. An effective approach linked with the concerns of the contracting states was the need to consolidate and protect the monarchial principle in light of the radical movements in Europe. The first of this type of Bismarck's alliances, the League of the Three Emperors in 1873, showed comparatively little formal appeal to monarchial principles as such, suggesting that it was an understood, if not expressed, part of the negotiations and ultimate treaty.

Yet after the Congress of Berlin completed the rupture between Russia and her former allies, Bismarck gave great attention to monarchial considerations in establishing the Austro-German alliance of 1879 and also in bringing Russia back to tripartite neutrality in the Alliance of the Three

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13 ibid., 45.
Emperors in 1881. Bismarck expressed these views concerning Russian inclusion in a monarchial alliance to William I:

The tsar apparently believes he strengthens his internal position by a warlike bearing towards foreign countries and perhaps does not notice his domestic enemies also seek war. I have many personal friends in Russia, and the conservatives among them are all of the opinion that Nicolai Miliutin, directly or indirectly, is at the head of the agitation in Russia, namely of the Nihilists. Whether he carries on his agitation, for which he finds the tsar the most powerful tool, in the interests of a constitutional Russia under the Grand Duke Constantine, or whether, which is more likely, a republic is more desirable, is a matter of no importance as regards to our interests. But, one may take it for granted, the revolutionary party sees in the League of the Three Emperors and in the bond between Tsar Alexander and your majesty a strong hinderance to its plans, and these would have better prospects in world turmoil than in peace.

In the same letter Bismarck told William that only monarchial bonds remained between the two countries, and that any answer to the Russians concerning the alliance would have to be conciliatory. Any future reluctance, according to Bismarck, would have to stress monarchial bonds and a "sacred legacy, which our fathers, hallowed in memory, have left to us intact and the use of which God will someday demand account and which constitutes in the interest of all European monarchies one of the last and greatest benefits of the peace of the monarchial order, which Europe still enjoys.

to this day."\textsuperscript{15} This was a form meant to favorably impress Tsar Alexander II.

Still, Bismarck had to make elaborate appeals to William I to achieve a reluctant acceptance of the Austro-German alliance, a defensive pact aimed primarily at Russia. He told William that both Andrassy and Francis Joseph viewed the possibility of a republican France and Imperial Russia, undermined by Pan-Slavism, joining each other in an alliance as likely.\textsuperscript{16} He further argued that an alliance between Austria and Germany would be in the interests of the Russian dynasty in regards to the Balkans and the upholding of the monarchial system.\textsuperscript{17} William acquiesced only after the entire council of state threatened to resign.\textsuperscript{18} By 1880, a rapprochement between the three empires had begun.

Bismarck, taking advantage of this development, initiated a program emphasizing the dangers offered to European peace by radical movements. He had to convince Russia and Austria of the need to stand together in the face of common dangers; the way to this end was the stressing of the monarchial

\textsuperscript{15}ibid., Bismarck to William I, Aug. 28, 1879; iii, 22.
\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Grosse Politik}, Bismarck to William I, Sept. 5, 1879; iii, 58.
\textsuperscript{18}ibid., Bismarck to William, Oct. 5, 1879; iii, 116.
principle substantiated further by economic and military interests. 19

These appeals about the need for monarchial solidarity against revolution and socialism were indeed very effective in bringing the three empires back together. Another area that this was effective in was the formation of the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy in 1882. 20 In the immediate background of this treaty a great deal of attention was given to the monarchial principle, appropriately reflected in the preamble:

Their majesties, animated by a secret desire to increase the guarantees of the general peace, to fortify the monarchial principle and to insure thereby the maintenance intact of the social and political order in the respective states, have agreed to conclude a treaty which by its essentially conservative and defensive nature, has for its only goal to protect them against the dangers which are able to menace the security of their states and the repose of Europe. 21

This was essentially a revival of the Metternichian system, and it continued to play an important role in holding the emperors together in the 1880s. But while monarchial principle became more important proportionately towards German relations with Austria, Russia, and Italy, Bismarck


21 Grosse Politik, iii, 245.
found his policy of supporting French republicanism embarassing as pressure was brought on him not to oppose the restoration of the French monarchy.\textsuperscript{22}

During the 1880s, while Bismarck was still using the wedge of divergent ideologies to keep Russia and France apart, the French were slowly becoming acceptable to the tsar and Russian government as both countries turned ever more suspicious eyes on German motives. And after Bismarck's statement to the French ambassador to Berlin, to the effect that Germany would support only one republic in Europe, and that would an be Italian republic, it became increasingly clear to the French government the diplomatic use Bismarck had made of French republicanism in preventing alliances hostile to Germany. Supplementing the increasing appeal of France to Russia was the shortcoming of the course after Bismarck was dropped in 1890, and the failure to renew the Reinsurance Treaty was a crucial turning point. After the establishment of the Franco-Russian alliance there were appeals to the monarchial principle, such as Bjoerkoe in 1905, but never again was it an effective tool in diplomacy as from 1870 to 1890.\textsuperscript{23} More important was the fact that Germany was no longer the broker of such solidarity.

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.}, iii; Reuss to Bismarck, Jan. 21, 1884, 313; Hatzfeldt to Schweinitz, Jan. 26, 1884, 315.

The degree to which nationalism remained an issue and the responsiveness of the German public to patriotic appeals were of great value to Bismarck in his manipulation of the European balance of power and domestic forces inside Germany. It would be a mistake to attribute more than convenience of analysis to any separation between Bismarck’s foreign and domestic policies. At the very least, domestic and foreign policy exerted reciprocal influence. Both were usually conceived together as essential elements of one scheme, designed to maintain the Prussian monarchy, the hegemony of a Prussian controlled Germany in Europe, and the German control over European alignments, with Bismarck at the head of it all. His titles of imperial chancellor, prime minister, and minister of Prussia symbolized the interconnection of his interests. 24 This interconnection found an expression from the start of the Reich. Bismarck was sincere when he described Germany as a satiated nation, and he was determined to follow a cautious course in foreign policy to preserve the status quo favorable to Germany, both outwardly and inwardly. 25

To this end, Bismarck turned to the Prussian aristocracy, i.e. the Army. The Bismarckian Empire and the


Prussian army formed an indissoluble entity. Bismarck believed his greatest achievement was winning over the king of Prussia and the Prussian army to the ideal of a nationally unified Germany. Bismarck thought the failure of the 1848 revolutions lay in the fact that the middle classes sought to establish the empire with their own strength, regardless of the German dynasties or the historic role of Prussia. Bismarck took to a different course. He united the military aristocracy of Prussia with the German middle class, placed the Hohenzollerns at the head of it all, and gave the Reich its new rulers. The agrarian and military, the dynastic and bureaucratic, and even clerical elements still made up the bulwark of German strength. And behind the middle class lay the urban proletariat, ready to fight along side the middle class against the aristocracy, and yet a very conservative class. Under these circumstances Bismarck believed it possible to reconcile the middle class with the old ruling class. His means to this end were the achievement of national unity through class cooperation.


27 Bismarck’s sociological conception is expressed in Gedanken und Errinnerungen, ii (Berlin, 1922), 59: "The greater caution of the more intelligent classes may likely arise from the materialistic basis of property preservation .... but for the security and advancement of the state, it is more useful to have a majority of those who represent property." For Bismarck’s views on the necessary cooperation between agriculture, industry, and trade, see his speech of July 9, 1893, in Friederichsruh.
while at the same time raising a strong bulwark against socialism. But for the Reich of Bismarck to fail, neither
the opposition of the working class nor of the middle class was necessary. The new Reich was mortally ill from birth.
Military victories and prosperity barely concealed the fact that Bismarck was unable to mold the differing elements of
the German people into one organic whole, nor did he ever attempt to do so. He was successful in building at least an
alliance between the political aristocracy and the industrial middle class. But only the superimposed strength
of the Reich in this form held together the classes and forces at war within Germany. Up to 1890, Bismarck’s power
and imperial authority were one in the same. It is often said that Bismarck’s successors ruined his creation; that is true only in so far as the Bismarckian Empire could not exist without Bismarck. Only he understood its exact meaning and the true purposes behind its institutions and composition. Later statesmen misunderstood completely the nature of the system.

The German Empire was not doomed to fail because it arose from a compromise between the middle class and the
Prussian aristocracy, but because it embodied that compromise in the form of almost complete autocracy. To avoid having to hand over his authority to the imperial chancellor, the King of Prussia was by necessity an

28 ibid., 59-60.
autocrat. That Bismarck bound up the political life of the German nation with his own person, indeed with his own personal relationship to William I and the constitution he created, was an incalculable historical mistake. Yet at the time of the establishment of the Reich, the liberal middle class was the intellectual, commercial, and the industrial leader of German society. The vast masses of manual laborers and lower middle classes, the great majority of the factory workers, even a considerable part of the peasantry and a few of the nobility, adopted the nationalist and liberal ideals of the middle class and did service to its mottos. In opposition to this powerful force stood the Prussian army, the Kaiser, the corps of officers, the hierarchy of the Prussian bureaucracy, the territorial landlords east of the Elbe, a group of liberal nobles, and the agrarian population dependent upon their landlords. How could a compromise be achieved between these forces?

What was Bismarck attempting to accomplish with his policies? Did he view the divergent social and foreign policy interests as compatible in some way, or was he simply holding together a miscarriage? Social and domestic, foreign and commercial, as well as military interests and policies were all wrapped up in Bismarck's scheme of reconstruction, based on conservative and monarchial principles. Here was the Europe in which Bismarck

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29 Ibid., 63-65.
envisioned Germany could survive. Germany could not, in his view, survive between monarchist, republican, and socialist forces. His alliance system sought to build monarchial blocks which were much more able to dealing with other monarchial nations rather than the radical movements spreading through Europe. Bismarck’s Germany worked only because it was constituted of a conservative ruling class with monarchial and imperial aspirations. By sympathies, it was prone to dealing with monarchies. By 1878 Bismarck envisioned his Germany, the new monarchial power in central Europe, leading the bloc of other conservative monarchs against a socialist tide. Just as Metternich led the monarchies of Europe, and just as his alliances failed in the end to preserve his power over Europe, so too did Bismarck’s. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the Chancellor’s dealings with France and Russia.

Barely had the Triple Alliance been concluded when international colonialism spread to Africa. Germany, now awash with a new sense of power, answered the call to imperialism enthusiastically. Bismarck had motives for allowing this. Despite his opposition, he had to conform eventually to dominant trends in German society and
More important was the state of German society in the 1880s. Economic, political, and nationalistic forces were not only strong enough to render colonial expansion feasible, but even necessary in the eyes of the ruling classes. Industrial expansion demanded raw materials and new markets. The founding of the Reich had created a nationalistic pride and self-confidence. Furthermore, the need was felt by the aristocracy and industrialists to divert the emerging working class's attention from domestic affairs with colonial ventures. All these factors were justification for 'Weltpolitik' in 1896. The importance of this short spell of colonial expansion cannot be judged by the small territorial acquisitions made, but by its function as a dress rehearsal for the actual 'Weltpolitik' a decade or so later. Thus, when searching for Bismarck's motives for a colonial policy, several explanations can be offered: a favorable position in foreign policy; likewise in domestic policy; and a socio-economic structure connected to emerging imperialism. Knowing Bismarck's flexibility, it may be presumed that all three factors influenced the Chancellor. However, the interpretation that he had

always wanted and actively sought colonies is definitely wrong.

In July 1879, Bismarck for the first time took interest in colonialism through sponsorship of the Samoa Bill. Bismarck called for the takeover of plantations and settlements from the bankrupt Hamburg company in Samoa, saving the interests of the firm with Reich funds to preserve German trade. Despite his efforts, the Reichstag rejected the Samoa Bill in 1880. Those opposing it were mainly the Liberals. But during this struggle a colonial movement in Germany began to emerge. Not until 1885 would the Reichstag accept the notion of support for colonial ventures using Reich funds, after the long-term effect of the depression following 1873 reduced its confidence in free trade.  

By 1880, the "scramble for Africa" spread to international dimensions. France advanced along the Niger, took Tunisia, and began expansion to central Africa by 1882. In the same year Britain occupied Egypt. Germany's ruling classes decided that precedents abroad were strong enough to allow their sharing in the colonial pie. The model based on the Samoa Bill was applied wherever possible. Private claims were placed under the protection of the German Empire. Between April 1884 and May 1885, Germany took over

33 H. Boehme, Deutschlands Weg zur Grossmacht (Cologne, 1966), 474-604.
its most important colonial posessions. In April 1884, Luederitz Bay fell under the German sphere. In July, Togo and the Cameroons became colonial acquisitions. In February, 1885, German East Africa, or Tanzinia, was acquired. Finally, in May 1885, the Reich took over the north of New Guinea. This sudden spurt of colonialism was only possible due to favorable positions in domestic and foreign policy.34

The material effects of the German colonies remained marginal throughout the life of the Reich. Investments were slight since colonies were expected to pay their own way. Most of what Germany invested was for military installations and railways. German colonial methods mixed paternalism, inexperience, arrogance, exploitation, and racism, all of which naturally led to large scale revolts. Besides the troubles of governing the colonies, however, was the fact that they did not supply sufficient amounts of raw materials to even justify their existence. The real material significance of these colonies for German foreign policy was that the Weltpolitik of 1896 received a material basis through colonial possessions. And being less dangerous than continental aspirations, they represented a challenge of further colonial unification. And if colonial acquisition did not create special problems in foreign policy, the colonial question could always be used later as a diplomatic

34 ibid., 503.
lever against Britain or France. France could be diverted from Alsace-Lorraine and the British could be neutralized over Egypt or the Anglo-German division of Portuguese colonies in Africa.35

After the initial enthusiasm over German colonial expansion had subsided and it became clear that the colonies were not destined to become economically prosperous, Germany realized that the colonies represented the ruins of the more grandiose scheme of a more permanent challenge to fulfill an African colonial bloc, or Mittelafrika. The colonies also served as an additional pretext for the building of a strong fleet and naval bases all over the world following Bismarck’s rule. Bismarck, knowing the danger of openly challenging Britain, would not have approved.36 Yet Bismarck’s colonial machinations were not enough to stem the change occurring in Europe.

Bismarck’s last five years as Chancellor have traditionally been regarded as the climax of his European statesmanship. By 1887, his consolidation of Germany as a latent hegemonial power was completed. The Reinsurance Treaty with Russia and the Mediterranean Entente were witness to this. In reality, however, the Chancellor was juggling new treaties with every step, hoping to postpone


36Grosse Politik, Herbert Bismarck to Buelow, Apr. 17, 1909; x, 297.
the breakdown of the whole of his conception as the threat of alliance between Russia and France became an ever nearer possibility.

The Franco-Russian alliance had been foreseen in 1871 as a logical consequence of defeat and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. France and Russia did not clash in interests or national borders. The half-industrialized France had capital badly needed in a Russia just beginning the industrial revolution, especially considering the banning of German loans to Russia in 1887. Ideological considerations were secondary to economic and political aims. This elementary change in the European diplomatic map came about because the price of prevention, moderation and drastic revision of foreign policy, was unthinkable to the new ruling class. The isolation of France failed because of weak successors and the structure of the Reich itself. Foreign policy from 1885 to 1890 was nothing but an attempt to ward off the inevitable.

German power remained as dominant as ever after the conclusion of colonial expansion in May 1885. The Alliance of the Three Emperors was renewed in November 1884, showing consolidation among the conservative monarchies of Central and Eastern Europe. The Salisbury government in England seemed to offer new hope for improved Anglo-German

37A. Hillgruber, Bismarcks Aussenpolitik (Freiburg, 1972), 179-81.
relations. But two months after the British change of government, Bismarck’s system suffered heavy blows from the East and West. 38

Important stipulations of the Congress of Berlin concerning the Balkans came to naught with the agreements between Bulgaria and East Rumelia. The resulting Serbo-Bulgarian conflict drew Russia to the support of Bulgaria and Austria to the aid of Serbia. This confrontation finally destroyed any monarchial solidarity remaining. The renewing of any pact between the three emperors was out of the question. Russia was now free for other alignments. Short-term agreements, such as the Reinsurance Treaty, were Bismarck’s only recourse. The argument that Germany could restrain the Austrians or Russians in a crisis continued to work.

The continuing Bulgarian crisis brought Germany to the undesirable position of having to choose between Russia and Austria. By his own system, Bismarck’s choice was already made. To support Austria would upset the balance of his system. Vienna and London demanded a pledge from Berlin to oppose Russian advances toward the Straits. The situation was awkward for Germany. To oppose Russia would provoke a Franco-Russian coalition, and Bismarck did not want to become Britain’s agent of Russian opposition on the continent. Instead, the Chancellor wanted Britain to do the

38 ibid., 185-87.
blocking so that Germany would not risk a war with a Franco-
Russian coalition. This complicated situation gave rise to
the completion of Bismarck's alliance system in the
Reinsurance Treaty and the Mediterranean Entente. But these
were only desperate measures.\(^{39}\) With the cancelling of
Russian loans in November 1887, coupled with the raising of
agrarian tariffs in March 1887, blocking effective Russian
military action in the Balkans, Russia was driven into the
French camp. From 1888 onwards, Russia would look to Paris
to satisfy her financial demands.\(^{40}\) This financial
partnership was the beginning of the political alliance
between Russia and France.

It is ironic that Bismarck's rescue of the Prussian
monarchy resulted in his own fall. The conflict between
Bismarck and the Kaiser was due largely to their
irreconcilable temperaments and totally different outlooks.
Bismarck still clung to the old ways, having grown old and
stubborn; William, young, shrewd, but impulsive and
unstable, looked to the future where he was master of the

\(^{39}\)Langer, *Deutschlands Weg zur Grossmacht*, 387-392.

\(^{40}\)Grosse Politik, doc. 1137-43. For a discussion of
the economic and political mechanisms within the context of
German foreign policy toward Russia in that period, see H
Boehme, "Politik und Oekonomie in der Reichsgrundungszeit
und spaten Bismarck-Zeit" in M. Stuermer, ed., *Das
Kaiserliche Deutschland*, 26, 40-8.
state. Germany was now divided -- those who held to Bismarck and those who chose to flatter the new master.\textsuperscript{41} The Kaiser controlled the army and promotions, was completely autocratic in Prussia, and had the complete allegiance of the military command. Bismarck still held a great deal of civilian power and a parliamentary majority, though the Junkers supported the Kaiser, but in a time when constitutional means and parliamentary decisions were becoming of less and less concern to the entire nation. Bismarck had easily controlled William I. On William's death in 1888, his son Friederich assumed the throne though striken with cancer of the larnyx. He ruled only 93 days. Friederich's son, William II, was determined to rule. More than any other constitutional ruler of modern times, he was convinced of his divine right to rule, and was quite intolerant of anyone who stood in his way. His aim was not dismissal of Bismarck, but a gradual takeover of the aging Chancellor's powers. Sudden dismissal would bring about adverse public opinion harmful to the new reign.

But Bismarck was not about to give up his power easily. He tightened his grip on the ministries and the Reichstag to stop any monarchial interference. Had the game remained so, with each side countering the other, a stalemate of years might have resulted and been tolerated. But Bismarck sought

\textsuperscript{41} Fay, "Germany under Bismarck and his Successors," \textit{Current History}, 28, 214.
measures to permanently hamper the Kaiser, and here William "dropped the pilot."

Bismarck's final failure at the end of his career was a lack of appreciation for William's desire to be the actual pilot of the state ship. The role Bismarck had always played for the Kaiser the Kaiser wanted back. Clumsily, Bismarck tried to stop the Kaiser, first by attempting to disrupt William's plans for an international labor conference and then by reimposing the old Cabinet Order of 1852, which forbade the ministers to address the Kaiser without the permission and presence of the prime minister.

The Kaiser perceived such acts as indiscretions against his own person and believed he could use them to control Bismarck. In a conversation with the Chancellor on 15 March 1890, William reproached him for keeping his Kaiser in the dark in placing barriers between him and his ministers, demanded the full recall of the 1852 order, and attacked Bismarck for discussions with the Centre Party leadership without William's knowledge or consent. William also expressed concern over his lack of information on Russo-German relations, which were steadily decaying.

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Truthfully, he had never liked the Reinsurance Treaty nor cared considerably for the state of Russian relations. Also, the fact that Friederich von Holstein had long been associated with Bismarck does not dismiss the fact that he contributed greatly to the Chancellor’s fall. Holstein did not take Bismarck’s side on the major issues at hand and even warned the Kaiser of the danger of Bismarck’s policy.

After this incident, Bismarck realized that any plans to solve the domestic and foreign crises could only be abandoned and that his position as Chancellor could no longer continue. Hoping to out-bluff William as he had his grandfather, Bismarck tendered his resignation four days later, but William accepted, and so the ‘Iron and Blood Chancellor’ left the Wilhelmstrasse.44 He retired to his estates at Friederichsrüh, tired, bitter, blaming William for all, and even subject to radical movements himself. His memoirs are even more embittered and show how he alone accomplished Germany’s creation.

44 ibid., 616-21.
Chapter II

New Leaders, Old Policies, and Pressure Groups

Frederich William Victor Albert was his christened name; officially he reigned as William II. As his mother often attested, the young William was never at peace unless occupied in some manner with something. Such behavior, exhibited all his life, led to fateful errors for his realm. Though he possessed an above average intelligence for a European monarch, William squandered this asset with lack of discipline, self-indulgence, and too much time spent overcompensating for physical deficiency. And despite being a constitutional monarch, William perceived of himself as a divine right ruler. His intention concerning Bismarck was not immediate usurption of his power, but instead a gradual reduction of the aging Chancellor’s duties. However, Bismarck’s continual struggle against William over matters of policy led to his resignation as Chancellor. The loss of such a stabilizing force as Bismarck was a hallmark of William and his age.

Physically deformed from birth and having suffered a

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45 Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945*, 224-225.

46 Rohl, *Germany without Bismarck*, 27.

47 The left side of William’s body was not truly deformed, but withered and weaker than his right side. This was not uncommon among royalty at the time due to the close inbreeding among the houses of Europe. Whatever the cause, this deficiency had a profound effect on William. He felt
severe Calvinist upbringing, he was most certainly insecure. Yet his public utterances stressed, disturbingly often, his own importance. He intervened whenever and wherever he wanted, harbored strong racialist tendencies, linked more to popular trends than anything else, and exhibited a taste for things obscene. The other side of this personality was a man who could be exceedingly charming. Many men of state, including Bismarck and Caprivi, were not opposed to him before actually having to deal with him. His disarming charm kept enemies off balance. However, many persons in the Foreign Office and government who did not have direct contact with the Kaiser idealized him. Those on more intimate terms with the Kaiser, such as Philipp Eulenberg, whom he trusted fully because they agreed with him on everything, came to influence him to a great extent.48

These influences became even more critical as his reign progressed, for they determined his thinking as much as he did. He never applied himself to study, nor did he learn the basic domestic and international facts of political life. Unable to apply himself to work as work instead of as he must always hide weakness. He developed a forceful personality to counter his feelings of inferiority and fancied himself a military leader, always dressing military-style and surrounding himself with military figures, as part of his masquerade. He led his own calvary regiment and rode with them in exercise to impress the crowds. The deficiency also led to his grandiose imagination concerning Germany’s mission in the world, which rubbed off on the German people.

an outlet for his own self-assurance, he was constantly travelling, hunting, or cruising the North Sea. 49

A disproportionate amount of his working time was devoted to military matters. The predominance of the military in his councils was extraordinary, finally culminating in a unification of the maison militaire with a Commandant of Headquarters who accompanied William on trips. This marked the further disintegration of actual military unity and the introduction of another influential power into the crumbling and chaotic structure of the government. Previously, the military had worked within its own professional circle. Strategy was supported by the Kaiser but not subject to him. Though politicized for some time, the Army now had to deal increasingly in politics. Not only did this complicate domestic affairs for the ministers even more, but greatly disrupted foreign policy, a field in which William was convinced he had a special talent and a God-given mission. 50 The Kaiser's illusion on this had been greatly increased by Holstein, who advised the Kaiser in order to further his own policies.

49 Craig, Germany 1866-1945, 225.

As early as December 1889 Tsar Alexander III, hoping to insure German neutrality in the Balkans, approved renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty. Negotiations were planned to resume for April, but the Bismarck crisis convinced Ambassador Count Paul Shuvalov to take the matter up earlier. On his own initiative, he raised the subject with Bismarck on 10 February. The Chancellor agreed to immediate negotiations and suggested the indefinite continuation of the treaty. William was informed and gave his consent, but the fact of the matter was that William did not trust the Russians and did not care whether the treaty was renewed or not.

Shuvalov left for St. Petersburg on 27 February, returning to Berlin on 17 March, the day before Bismarck handed in his resignation. Alexander had empowered Shuvalov to renew the treaty for six years, but the loss of Bismarck in the diplomatic arena caused Shuvalov to suspend negotiations until a successor was chosen. The Kaiser interpreted this as meaning the Russians would only deal with a Bismarck and, if one was not the Chancellor, then Russia would be forced to denounce the agreement. Obviously, there was some maneuvering on the part of Herbert Bismarck to insure the chancellorship to himself or his father. Otherwise the inference was that the Kaiser would

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52 ibid., no.1366-1367.
have to bear the burden of the break with Russia. But William did not take the hint. He spoke with Shuvalov over breakfast, maintaining that even without Bismarck he was intent on the same course and ready to renew the treaty. After the resignation of Herbert Bismarck, William instructed Caprivi to continue negotiations. The public statements of the Kaiser indicated the continuance of the policy. 53

Caprivi called a meeting for a select group of the Foreign Ministry personnel for 23 March before coming to a decision on the treaty. Those attending, besides Caprivi, were Ludwig von Raschdau, Freidrich von Holstein, and Count von Berchem. The unanimous opinion was against renewal of the treaty. Berchem summarized the reasoning in a memorandum on 24 March, stating that support of Russia’s Balkan aspirations only encouraged war there, was contrary to the Mediterranean Entente, and several other points. After consulting with Lothar von Schweinitz and J.M. von Radowitz, who agreed with Holstein on every issue, the matter was left up to William. He was being asked to abandon what he had encouraged only a week before. More concerned over the implications of conflict with yet another

Chancellor, William threw the chance of renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty away.\textsuperscript{54}

Despite the decision to abandon the renewal on 27 March, Russia’s foreign minister Nicholas de Giers still tried to reach some kind of agreement with Germany. For Russia the decision meant isolation. The severance of the link with Vienna to discuss Balkan issues and relations solely depended on the goodwill of the Hohenzollerns and Habsburgs toward the Romanovs. Germany ignored all of the offers of Giers except the last, which only sought an exchange of promises to maintain relations despite changes in government. To refuse it would severely damage future relations. The old argument that Germany should refrain from any written agreements in order to protect the Triple Alliance dealt the final blow to any possible renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty.\textsuperscript{55} Giers, after several further attempts, finally abandoned hope of gaining written commitments from Germany.

The most telling result of the German decision was its move toward closer relations with Vienna, a move which had been building momentum since 1879. However, Vienna still

\textsuperscript{54}Grosse Politik, VII, 3, Berchem Memorandum, Berlin, 25 March, 1890, no.1368; see also Nichols, Germany After Bismarck, 54-55. For a further discussion on this meeting see Langer, Franco-Russian Alliance, 50-51, and Rich, Holstein, I, 311-313.

\textsuperscript{55}Grosse Politik, VII, 12-22, Schweinitz to Caprivi, St. Petersburg, April 3 - May 16, 1890; Hans Jakobs, Die Franzoesisch-Russischen Zweibundes (Berlin, 1964), 24.
chose a more independent course towards solving its problems in the Balkans in agreements with Great Britain or a direct understanding with Russia. Austria was probably even willing to sacrifice the Triple Alliance to arrive at decisions with these two powers, a thought which greatly disturbed the German Foreign Ministry. In committing to Vienna, Germany was giving support to Austria in the volatile Balkans. With its new ties to Austria, its courtship of British support, and its shortsighted dismissal of the Reinsurance Treaty, Germany had changed the European diplomatic scene from one of relative stability to one of instability and conflict.

The series of events leading to the dropping of the Reinsurance Treaty would indicate that German foreign policy was undergoing a basic change. Previously offensive, it now assumed a defensive character. Stability within and defense of the Triple Alliance became the main concerns. Most notable were two results of this change of posture: the strategic Heligoland Treaty with England on 1 July 1890 and the modest rapprochement with France. Both these instances were designed to maintain the Austrian and Italian alliances. Yet if defense was the key, then alliance with Austria placed Germany in the direct path of Russia in the Balkans. This had always been the case, but now there was no Bismarck to guide German policy. This was perhaps defensive for short-term purposes, but could not remain
defensive as the Balkans became more and more volatile. Officials in Berlin totally ignored the effect that nonrenewal would have in Russia. To those in St. Petersburg it seemed to confirm that William was anti-Russian. Thus Russia would have found it difficult to believe any assurances of peace from Berlin. The breakdown of the treaty indicates two points: that Caprivi's administration, at least in the early days, believed it was following Bismarck's policy, and in fact never had any intention of departing from it; and Bismarckian policy meant assurance of the Triple Alliance to the new men in Berlin and the German people.

With the possibility of any Russian agreement behind them and England having become the center of diplomatic attention, Germany adopted a policy of open options, as many as possible, to improve Russian relations while maintaining efforts in London. German public opinion, however, was impatient. Germans needed new conquests. With this in mind, the Foreign Ministry set on a course of invigoration of foreign policy with overseas ventures. This was much more a show to quiet public dissatisfaction than a well-reasoned policy and was actually a resumption of the Bismarckian policy, the only difference being that the

policy toward France had changed. The main author of the policy was Paul Kayser, head of the Colonial Section of the Foreign Ministry. His theory was that overseas ventures would gain favor among those Germans dissatisfied with the Anglo-German agreement of 1890 and who showed interest in colonial matters. By any measure this encompassed very few in the average population. But to business, nationalists, and the pressure groups it was popular. Such a policy would allow prestige, profit, and, with Germany acting as mediator for its own interests, German meddling in a broader range of colonial matters. As long as no one's vital interests were not involved, the policy would not be dangerous.

The reason this policy increased opportunity in colonial matters was also its basic flaw. The system had no logical plan or conclusion, but instead waited for something to happen before a decision was made as to what action was to be taken. This was crisis diplomacy. Considering the uncertainty which other nations felt as to German intentions, this was the worst possible policy to adopt. It threatened complications with the British because Britain was the largest colonial power. Both Kayser and William II saw the policy as a way to curb public opinion concerning weakness in facing Britain while Holstein regarded it as letting the British know it would be best to have Germany as a friend and uphold the Triple Alliance. Holstein's policy toward England was one of cultivating closer relations not
only between Germany and England, but also between England and the Triple Alliance. Hatzfeldt, however, complained that the whole idea was inconsistent and would force the British away instead of drawing them nearer, as well as drive the French and Russians closer together. The case of the British alienation was even more severe since the policy involved colonial acquisitions and possessions. If England stood to lose anything important it would certainly develop grave suspicions as to German motives. This was in fact the case, as the rejection of the Roseberry government’s offer over Samoan possessions in 1894 widened the gulf between Britain and the Triple Alliance. 57

Despite the warnings of seasoned diplomatic veterans such as Hatzfeldt, Germany went after new colonial acquisitions as enthusiastically as it had in the 1880s. Samoa was claimed as a sole possession, 58 British agreements in the Congo were protested, and quarrels with the British over a variety of colonial matters erupted. Even the ascension of Hohenlohe - an old, tired, but extremely able man - to the Chancellorship in 1894 did nothing to ease the tension or


58 A treaty of 1889 held that Samoa was to be governed by the United States, Great Britain, and Germany. The March 1894 insurrection led Germany to believe the U.S. wished to withdraw, and thus Germany requested British withdrawal also to make a favorable impression on the German public. See Paul Kennedy, The Samoan Tangle: A Study in Anglo - German - American Relations, 1878-1900 (New York, 1974), 108, for further discussion.
decrease colonial activities. Eighteen ninety-five saw the beginning of German meddling in the Far East (suspicious of British seizure of Shanghai and Russian moves toward the Dardanelles) and friction over the Transvaal. In the latter, Anglo-German relations nearly collapsed over the Jameson Raid, led by Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, which attempted to overthrow the government of President Paul Kruger in the Transvaal. On this account Germany was not wholly without justification in its reactions of indignation, for the British did take on an attitude of superiority in regard to the situation. Yet even if justified, German actions were undiplomatic, insulting, and threatening. And, as always, German motives and long-term policies were vague. 59

The Transvaal Crisis of 1896, heightened by the Jameson Raid of 1895, provide insight into the deficiencies of German diplomacy. The Transvaal was independent, though still requiring British permission to conclude treaties. German monopolies in the National Bank, importation, and domestic production for exportation, as well as exportation itself, controlled 20 percent of the foreign capital invested in the country. British control over foreign policy in the region, coupled with the event of the Jameson Raid - a prime excuse for getting a foot in the door - could

59Sontag, Germany and England, 294; Grosse Politik, VIII, 129-33, 452, 455-7, 463.
not be viewed indifferently in Germany. Hatzfeldt in London was ordered to inquire if the raid was the result of British sponsorship, and if so, to break off diplomatic ties immediately. The answer to the inquiry was negative, but the Kaiser, having taken over personal control of the affair, flew into a rage. He proposed drastic action, such as sending troops and establishing a protectorate over the Transvaal. Even his Chancellor considered him mentally unbalanced. To prevent any drastic action, a telegram from the Kaiser to Krueger was sent, congratulating him on repulsing foreign advances. This was extremely inflammatory to the British, since the use of the word "foreign" in the text of the telegram still implied British involvement. The public reaction in Britain reflected the intense anti-German feeling growing on the popular level, not just in the British Foreign Office. The entire situation had served only to widen the Anglo-German gap, draw France closer to Russia, and became yet another failure of German foreign policy. It was also seen as a personal failure by the Kaiser.

Public opinion in Germany, however, differed greatly from the actuality of the situation. The people most interested

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in foreign policy applauded the Krueger telegram. The press loved it; Colonial Leagues and the Pan-German League praised the government’s resolution in the matter. These domestic groups completely missed the point that since the loss of the Russian alliance the instability of German policy on the domestic level had been deteriorating Germany’s foreign position. The press hailed the Triple Alliance as solid, indefatigable, and praised the new course as the awakening of German policy from the darkness of the Caprivi Ministry and the return of a more aggressive Bismarkian policy. This course, incidently, fit perfectly with the new industrial might of the Reich.

The system would seem, and should have seemed, clear to any observer. The whole of German society desired recognition. This was, for Germany, the main driving force of politics and foreign policy in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Society’s aspirations and expectations coincided with an expanding capitalist economy. The leaders of industry and society had one common goal: to reform Germany from a European to a world power. To redirect this force, only one element was needed, and it was the one thing Germany, with all its industrial might and politically vigorous self-assuredness, could not produce. This was quite simply a cautious, but not necessarily brilliant, man

who could see the ludicrousness of the German course and would have worked to bring about a consistent, sane policy sufficient for German needs.

Despite the capitalist transformation of German society and the growing influence, indeed predominance, of industry in the economy, political power remained in the hands of the Junkers. The Junkers had only partially molded with the urban middle class. To remain in power, the landed interest needed political allies who could extend its diminishing economic base. Here the concept of Sammlungspolitik was born, referring to the defensive alliance of the capitalists and the landowners, two groups united by fear of foreign competition and democratic reform. This coalition had its roots as early as 1848, but several factors in the 1870s brought it to fruition: the national question had been solved, if only temporarily; the depression of 1873 had set in with devastating effects to the economy, but even more to the ruin of German industry; and finally, the rise of an organized urban proletariat. The Bismarckian settlement of protective tariffs and Anti-Socialist Law in 1878-9 marked the appearance of this political coalition, and excepting for the disruption of the Caprivi Chancellorship, carried Sammlungspolitik into the next century. 62

62 For a better understanding of the foundations and overall history of this coalition the major sources are Hans Rosenberg, Grosse Depression und Bismarckszeit: Wirtschaftsablauf, Gesellschaft und Politik in Mitteleuropa (Berlin, 1967) and Helmut Bohme, Deutschlands Weg zur
Sammlungspolitik in 1897 and the newly proclaimed Weltpolitik of the new Hohenlohe Chancellorship were, assuredly, connected by more than a protectionist impulse. They both lent themselves to the more aggressive pursuit of German world interests, embodied in the First Navy Bill and the seizure of Kiaochow. The system instituted within the coalition was one of mutual benefits, politically and economically, between the industrial and agrarian sectors. Eckart Kehr, who has already been mentioned in connection with this particular theory and was its leading exponent, put the argument in this form: "For industry the fleet, Weltpolitik and expansion, for the agrarians the tariffs and the upholding of the social supremacy of the Conservatives, and as a consequence of this social and economic compromise, for the Centre Party the political hegemony."63 In political terms, the aristocracy would remain in political power supported by the industrialists, and the political party representing this dominant political force would be the Centre Party.

Thus, as the coalition grew and blossomed new branches, or pressure groups centered around specific interests (such as the Navy League) or more general movements (Pan-Germanism), the situation in Germany began to entrench


63 Eckart Kehr, Schachtflottenbau und Parteipolitik 1894-1901 (Berlin, 1930), 217.
itself. Neither the concept of **Primat der Innenpolitik** nor its opposite of **Primat der Aussenpolitik** may satisfactorily explain, separately or together, the movement of the German states in the 1890s without the realization that German foreign policy resulted not from a two-way street between pressure groups and government in which the government made foreign policy, but from a triangle connecting the German government, German pressure groups, and foreign powers. Any action was interpreted as good or bad by the pressure groups; the wait-and-see policy of the government was now coupled with a popular front, whose mottos were espoused enthusiastically by the press, which determined policy when it was finally made toward a given situation. The resulting reaction of a foreign power to the course of action dictated to the German government by inside pressure came full back to these domestic forces, thus beginning another round of jackboot diplomacy and political action. Such a system was perpetual in the sense that all that was needed to keep it going was a third partner, or foreign power (should we hold to the German mind set and say adversary?), and there existed a bountiful supply of these considering the policy of waiting for situations to arise and then deciding policy. This was what historians today consider **Krisepolitik**, but in actual operation it was much more complex when it is observed that from every point of the triangle, action could be initiated. For example, while it is true that political
pressure became the engine to German foreign policy, it is equally true that the government had its own motives, its own little auxiliary engine, to kick start a series of actions and reactions. Even Bismarck had made sure there were crises when the army estimates were proposed. In 1892, the Caprivi government laid before the Reichstag a bill which called for sizeable increases in the army. This was done in reaction to the Rosebery government’s isolation policy toward the Triple Alliance. The government justified the bill by raising the threat of two-front war before the German people. This not only ensured passage of the bill, but also turned public opinion against Britain, now seen as unreliable. And, of course, any British action would be taken as unfriendly and would set the course of action back to the German government. The chain of reaction and action was reversible. The inconsistency of this policy scared everyone outside of the Triple Alliance and even one of its own members, Italy, whose weakness made the possibility of a continental war a dreadful thought.

\[64\] Sontag, *Germany and England*, 258; Eckart Kehr, *Economic Interests, Militarism, and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History*, ed. Gordon Craig (Berkely, 1977), chaps. 1 and 2.
The Pan-German League was the result of a split of the old Colonial Society in 1887, which itself was an uneasy union between the Colonial League of 1882 and the Society for German Colonization of 1884. Established in 1891 as the General German League, the name was changed in 1894 to the Pan-German League. The leader of the League, the prodigal son of German nationalism, was Carl Peters. The League's later aims certainly outgrew its original colonial aims, and its foundation brought something new to the German political state: a group which was consistently nationalistic. This entailed a set policy or a developing one toward domestic and foreign issues (of course, however, the League chose to concentrate only on foreign issues). Its policy was vague, with no truly defined long-term interests, and called for the establishment of German power on a broader basis. Most of its endeavors centered on propaganda in colonial issues. Any defined policy also had to be tied to the economic and political life of the nation through its membership. The League was not just the result of crisis; it intended to stay.65

The qualities of the Pan-German League which created its speedy growth were its appeal to the local activists and its

65 Geoff Eley, Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change After Bismarck (New Haven, Conn., 1980), 47-49. Peters was a curious figure. He was a mixture of trickster, patriot, and Jew baiter. He desired to imitate British colonial triumphs. His actions in East Africa did not help to ease Anglo-German tensions and reserved for him the serious distrust of Bismarck.
political flexibility in terms of access to politics for those either opposed to elitist politics or unable to join its ranks. It offered non-class based opportunities which the existing parties did and could not offer. This appealed to a far broader range of Germans than the *Honoratiorenpolitik* of those parties existing before 1890. These organizations were occasional, primarily organized around elections, and had no true contract or procedure other than the dictates of the class itself (ie, the wealthy, aristocratic, and nobility). There was little or no local involvement on their part. This left the time between the elections to the directives of party leadership. Consequently, when trouble arose these groups were found to be inadequate to handle the political mobilization of the mass electorate. For example, after setbacks in naval appropriations in the Reichstag in March 1897, measures backed by the Centre Party but thoroughly opposed by the socialists, Alfred von Tirpitz enlisted the Pan-Germans and the Colonial Union as propaganda tools and won massive popular support for the naval program. In 1900, the Reichstag responded with the First Navy Law.

The failures and shortcomings of the old elitist parties in the face of crisis opened the door to Pan-Germanism. The difficulties of political access were made into an ideology which formed the popular foundations of the League. Its politics became that of repudiation of other parties and the
commitment to only national goals. Pan-Germanism formed a surrogate of sorts for those who disliked the conventional politics and parties, namely the aspiring bourgeoisie. In another sense, the constitutional structure of the Reich gave limited power to the Reichstag, but protected the interests of the Junkers. The true source of power was most often the bureaucracy. This provided another reason for staying out of the party system as it existed up to 1890. What the Pan-German League gave such people was a collective identity, thus making access to and influence on the government easier for the interests of a conservative, business-minded middle class and at the same time threatening the Bismarckian social alliance.\textsuperscript{66}

However, the base on which the Pan-German League stood created its main problem during the 1890s. Ernst Hasse, the Pan-German Chairman, and Adolf Lehr, the League's leading member, had rationalized the organization and administration of the group, but there still existed no clear political practice nor any notion as to what the League should be doing. With no criteria as to outside domestic political affiliation, the League was at risk of becoming the refuge of any sort of nationalism. Pan-Germanism needed to distance itself from these groups and

\textsuperscript{66}ibid., 56.
define its own politics. An important issue was needed to focus the Pan-German attention and specify its purpose and commitment. Otherwise, Pan-Germanism would expire from lack of coherence and direction.

The appearance of other specialized organizations only prolonged the uncertainties of the Pan-German League. Pan-Germans were finding that cultural ethnicity was not enough to hold an organization together, particularly with other specialized organizations appearing. Concrete goals supported by "real" events were needed to give substance to general principles. In January 1896, the Krueger Telegram and the Kaiser's pronouncement of Weltpolitik gave the Pan-Germans their "real" events. Pressure was already being exerted by commercial interests for a stronger navy, with the Colonial Society even calling for a battlefleet. Public discussion of a fleet increased dramatically with the Jameson Raid. The Pan-Germans endorsed the idea of voluntary naval subscription on January 19, one day after the Kaiser's Weltpolitik speech. In a very true sense, the Pan-German League promulgated its own problems in these actions, mainly due to a lack of close ties with commercial interests.

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67 Hasse's opening address to the Eisenbach convention, 25 May, 1902, in Kundgebungen, Beschluesse und Forderungen des Alideutschen Verbandes, 1890-1902 (Munich, 1902), 94.
Compared to the composition of the Pan-Germans, the German Navy League was a much more cohesive and smaller group. It was also more indicative of its time than the Pan-Germans. From its beginning, the German Navy was a place for bourgeoisie military careers and advancement outside the strict class structure of the Prussian Army, where advancement was barred to all not of non-Junker lineage. Even the Kaiser recognized their discrimination and pleaded with the General Staff to adopt a wider spectrum of eligibility, but to no avail. The Army, the last refuge of the Junkers, and its leaders were stubborn. Thus, not only did a gap between the Army and Navy widen, but the Navy, and thus the future Navy League, made its ties irrevocably with the middle class. And with the commercial ties of the middle class, the naval officer and his civilian cousin were easily brought together. 68

The Navy also had social ties to the university professors, constituted mainly from the middle class. These "Flotten Professoren," recognized as some of the best minds in German academic life, came from every discipline. But this relationship ran deeper than affiliation alone. The

68 Kriegswissenschaftliche Abteilung der Marine, Der Admiralstab der Kaiserlichen Marine, (Bern, 1936), 58. No chief of the General Staff nor any Minister of War before 1914 was of bourgeoisie origin. The contrast with the Navy is evident. Only seven of the fifty-seven admirals and senior officers of the Admirality Staff from 1899-1918 belonged to the nobility. The pattern in the Imperial Naval Office was much the same. (Das Reichsmarineamt, Handbuch fuer das deutsche Reich auf das Jahr 1898 (Berlin, 1898), 193.
very nature of German intellectualism determined these ties. A degree of apathy toward western traditions, a strong suspicion (more a dislike) of absolute values and reason, and as culmination of state and power were all traits correspondent to the Navy and the middle class alike. Along with a theory of economics which itself was a Darwinian power struggle (naturally against Britain) and the popularity of the Mahan Thesis, it is easy to envisage how academic theories and the call for naval expansion could be united. The "Flotten Professoren" provided the academic foundations and theoretical underpinnings of Weltpolitik, an essential quality absent among the Pan-Germans and other societies.70

Though naval societies and leagues existed in Bavaria and in the Baltic and North Sea coasts by 1890, it was not until 1898 that Alfred Krupp and Prince Wied presented a formal backing for a Navy League. On 30 April 1898, the first meeting of the newly founded German Navy League (Deutscher

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70 Holger H. Herwig, "Luxury" Fleet: The Imperial German Navy, 1888-1918 (London, 1980), 40. Alfred Mahan, a retired fleet admiral of the United States, wrote *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* in 1890. The work fit into the popular notion that English power derived from its navy and that Germany must have a navy to equal or surpass Britain. It is unfortunate that most Germans did not also notice the emphasis the work put on England’s strategic position, whose boundaries are not in contest with the other European powers.
Flottenverein) brought together some eighty industrialists and intellectuals. From this point onward, the Navy League was to grow enormously through the backing of industry (for profit's sake) and middle class elements, becoming the disseminator and propaganda instrument of one great national issue: Navalism. And its role as such was not without support from the Reichstag, which passed the First Navy Bill on 10 April 1898. The bill called for the building of 19 battleships, 8 armored cruisers, 12 large cruisers, and 30 light cruisers by 1 April 1904. The cost was not to exceed 408,900,000 G.M. Though strong enough for limited sea war with France and Russia, the fleet was far from being a threat to Britain. The Second Navy Bill of 14 June 1900, partly a result of the Boer War and the Boxer Rebellion in China, called for no less than the doubling of the fleet with no cost limit to construction. Not only did the Navy Bill of 1898 and 1900 give the all clear for the full-fledged construction of a German battlefleet, but also gave its "real" events, ones which remained a continuing issue up to World War I. The resulting arms race between Germany and Britain lent itself to the support of the League which helped to foster its very existence.

However, just as the Pan-German League, the Navy League was not without its problems. In many aspects, it was the result of business and industry concerned over the

\[71\] *ibid.*, 40-42.
establishment of a Flottenbund by E.F. Stroschein. The Flottenbund resembled the Pan-Germans in composition and followed a strict ideology concerning the naval issue. It was a broad-based and undisciplined movement which business interests could not and would not tolerate within the naval movement.  

This intervention has been interpreted as a dampener which brought the naval movement under safe control. In truth, it was an extension of Sammlungspolitik. The very nature of Stroschein’s Flottenbund placed it in the category of so many other unsuccessful organizations that its success was uncertain. However, with a navy led and supported by an industrial middle class, the possibility of a sustained organization was far greater. Yet the preempting of a more agitational movement was the basis for the Navy League’s problems. Though the concerns of Sammlungspolitik were present in the foundation of the Navy League, it is clear that the Navy league was not an outgrowth of the Sammlung. The two were at cross purposes. The League leadership sought to follow no course of political agitation, while the Sammlung naturally felt that its partnership in the League did not require an ideological stand on naval enthusiasm, but only an agitation which would provoke a call for more ships. This inner-party conflict produced two very important results. First, much of the ideological leadership of the Navy League became

72 Eley, Reshaping the German Right, 80.
desensitized to the blind profiteering of the Sammlung, eventually accepting it as a natural part of the call to expansion and Weltpolitik. Secondly, and due in part to desensitization, Tripitz' "risk theory" became more acceptable to the League and drew greater support as the means to attain the aims of Weltpolitik. However, Sammlungspolitik, as well as the ability of the League to control naval enthusiasm, were soon to show their limits.

Industry and agriculture pursued opposing aims in the areas of foreign and domestic policy, and yet as the ruling class their’s was the determining decision in political navigation. A unified policy was impossible for lack of common ground. Not until Johannes Miguel brought these two sectors together in the political strategy known as Sammlungspolitik did any common ground for a unified policy exist. Sammlungspolitik was unique in that it disregarded party lines entirely to focus on pure class politics. Indeed, industry and agriculture agreed to stop their individual efforts at monopolization of power in the state.

73 The ‘risk theory’ was a bait to content industry. The navy to be built would serve no defensive purpose, but was purely a weapon of offense. The assumption was that a navy as strong or stronger than the English navy would bring that nation to an accommodation. The theory did invoke hostility from England, but instead of bringing the English to the bargaining table initiated an arms race.
and political elimination of one another; quite the opposite, the two would form a front against the proletariat. Actually, this is what Bismarck had started with the Anti-Socialist Laws.

This was the foremost motive for the joining of industry and agriculture in favor of single interest primacy. Neither the policy of social insurance nor the Subversion and Penitentiary Bills proved especially effective, creating a sense of impatience. But until *Sammlungspolitik*, the one weapon which would work against the proletariat had not been exploited: the redressing of the terrible social and political situation within Germany with a successful foreign policy that was flashy and aggressive. Such a foreign policy would be credited to the existing order, thus eliminating the proletariat threat. *Sammlungspolitik*, sought to use Bismarckian exploitation to further limits than ever before in foreign policy. If necessary, it would artificially create foreign policy situations to temporarily or apparently solve domestic problems. In this, the press added greatly by exaggerating foreign policy situations and inflaming public opinion. The overall goal, however, was not temporary solutions, but a foreign policy free of

*74* Kehr, *Economic Interest, Militarism and Foreign Policy*, 38.
Bismarck’s European limitations. Essentially, *Weltpolitik* and its successor were meant to reinforce the threatened ruling class.

The question is still open as to whether or not such a goal was at all possible. The point here is that Germany adopted only a certain kind of foreign policy to solve its internal strife. As it happened, what little control existed was soon lost over this policy, and the internal forces which it sought to placate later determined foreign policy. This change in the course of foreign policy, induced by internal political and social factors, was to be the determining factor in the rejection of an Anglo-German alliance. The anti-British policy, since Britain stood in the way of German power, and anti-Russian policy at the beginning of the twentieth century were the result of *Sammlungspolitik’s* growth in the area of foreign policy and its construction of the agrarian-industrial front against the proletariat and its social democratic rhetoric.

Even though Miguel’s coalition reassembled the disrupted Bismarckian bloc, gave some definition to the ideology of the Right and provided a semblance of structure and policy for the government, its limitations were all too clear. *Sammlungspolitik* was incapable, in the long run, of providing two vital functions for the Right of the

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Wilhelmine era: reintegration of the various functions on a long-term basis, and reconstructions of a popular legitimacy for the power bloc.\textsuperscript{76} It lacked the militant nationalism needed to bring in the proletariat. In short, \textit{Sammlungspolitik} did not fit the emerging political life at the turn of the century in many ways. In failing to gain popular support, the policy was ultimately unable to provide an economic rallying point nor provide an organizational form for the Right while the separate parties kept their individual identities. Also, the policy did not reach any accommodation of the forces generated by the imperialist foreign policy, namely the radical nationalists. And finally, it failed to reconcile the agrarians to the idea of an urban, industrial, capitalist society in which the protection of landed income was not the priority of government. This latter point was the major failure of the policy since this was the major long-term issue of the period.

In these ways the decisions of 1897 created a framework for right-wing politics which could not endure. They sought to use the Bismarckian policy to such an extent in a political atmosphere that changed so rapidly that \textit{Sammlungspolitik} was soon obsolete. The policy was forced to adjust to stable parliamentary politics, thus emphasizing

\textsuperscript{76}Geoff Eley, \textit{Sammlungspolitik} (New Haven, Conn., 1983), 67.
the inadequacies of the policy in the new context. The backwardness of *Sammlungspolitik*, the very fact that it was tied to the "social dominance of a ruling group which was economically no longer viable" ensured that right-wing politics would soon outgrow its relevance. The failure of the ruling strata to maintain control over the political situation ushered in the dominance of those forces which it had sought to control.

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77 Kehr, *Schlachtflottenbau und Parteipolitik*, 278.
Chapter III
Chancellors, Intimates, and Subordinates, 1890-1900

Just as the unification of Germany under Bismarck had ushered in a new era in European diplomacy, the fall of Bismarck as the leading statesman of the day witnessed a virtual revolution in diplomacy. In many ways, it is more proper to call the diplomacy of 1890 and afterwards a devolution, at least as far as Germany is concerned. Bismarck’s impact had been in building a new diplomatic system, a new balance. Germany as it appeared in 1890 was literally Bismarck’s child. The foundation of the Second Reich had represented the concentration of immense power and prosperity, but it lacked a guiding ideal. There was no set of higher values than the state, whose primary mission was the protection and nurturing of its power and position. The diplomatic revolution of 1890 was more subtle and by far more menacing in retrospect than Bismarck’s system had ever been. While Bismarck had sought a status quo insuring German continental domination and trained (or harangued) his diplomats into following this line, his and their successors harbored a world view, the political dimensions of which were limited by their lack of understanding in international politics.

If there is any one element that must be attributed as the basic deformity of German diplomacy, foreign policy, and
diplomats after 1890, it is a lack of range of scope and understanding. Bismarck's had been a limited scope of endeavor. He must have realized the practicality of this all too well. To establish a nation in the heart of Europe was quite enough to insure dominance in European affairs, or at least active participation if successful. To travel beyond this without the cooperation of Russia or France and Britain meant the subjugation of Germany to forces it was not yet prepared to handle. Bismarck's understanding of the European situation and Germany's place in it limited his ambitions. Conversely, those after Bismarck lacked this crucial understanding as well as a great deal of the old Chancellor's ability. For them, aims and ambitions in policy were molded to fit their appetites. The conservative policy of Bismarck could now be discarded since Germany was the strongest power in Europe -- outwardly if not inwardly.

With monarchial solidarity seeming to rest more between Germany and Austria-Hungary and Russia being cut loose to go its own way, the old policy did not even seem practical. What Germany was experiencing was a revolt against Bismarckian restraints. The role Bismarck had envisioned for Germany no longer satisfied Germans. It may be assumed that a substantial part of the population in 1890, perhaps one-third, were of the post-unification period and that most leaders like Bismarck who held significant power before 1871 were replaced by men who came to power after 1871. The
older generation viewed the status quo as tenuous; the younger generation was to view unification as a historical necessity and the status quo as an obstacle to German power. Whereas the older generation compared Germany to Austria-Hungary and France, the younger adopted a world standard of Britain and Russia. This departure from old policies in favor of a new imperialistic role was typical of the prevailing European attitude. However, the effect was that of giving a complicated toy to an immature child. The younger generation did not even realize how close Bismarck came to failing or how poorly his system operated.

Though only minor as an immediate effect, the new German policy indicated an abrupt change in German attitudes toward its own power and the European power system. The contradiction between Bismarck and his successors implied the future problems of German policy. In German eyes, the status quo in and outside Germany was unacceptable. Acceptance of the European status quo was necessary to change the status quo outside Europe. On the other hand, to change the status quo in Europe required acceptance of that outside Europe. This would allow the other powers to come into conflict and give Germany a free hand in Europe. Germany might have succeeded if it had pursued one or the other of these policies consistently. Instead, Germany sought both aims simultaneously, but achieved neither. In an ironic sense the two aims were linked. Germany’s switch
to a world vision required a base of power in Europe incompatible with that which existed. Revolt against the old system was an implication of the whole German state system, and the risks inherent in the system put it in opposition to the restraining forces of the other powers. For a nation which had adopted a risky policy, however, Germany showed little willingness to take risks.

In no better way can this policy be reflected than in the men around whom the "new Germany" grew. Many of these men were of outstanding character or ability but many had neither. An in-depth study of all the key figures alone would require several volumes. In the short space allowed for this study, however, only a marginal and at times superficial treatment of the aspects of a very select group of these men is possible. Fittingly, their number should be chosen from those at the hub of power. The starting point for this investigation is where the new met the old in a final clash, where a military administrator suddenly found himself the second Chancellor of Bismarck’s Reich.

Leo von Caprivi was a professional soldier well noted for administrative skill. From 1882 to 1886 he served as Chief of the Admiralty and his service reforms while at this post gave the still small navy a doctrine and sense of purpose. He was also a realist, realizing that any immediate successor to Bismarck was doomed to failure. He
did not want the burden but bore it out of a sense of duty. But despite his sense of duty and honor and even his considerable administrative energy, he was a man of limited abilities in foreign and domestic affairs. In both these areas Caprivi was devoid of the basic knowledge and intuition which makes a successful politician, much like the Kaiser. This led him to adequacy in domestic affairs and deference to experts in foreign policy.\(^{78}\)

The origins of Caprivi’s difficulties lie in the fact that he was not a decisive man when the stakes were as high as those concerning a whole nation and other nations. Caprivi is best known as a man of commercial treaties and military organization, and yet his chancellorship marked a turning point in a very comprehensive way. William II, indicating his intentions to lead the government, began his personal regime. He became a hindrance to Caprivi and all who would succeed him. Here is where Caprivi is significant. Caprivi felt it was time to demonstrate that the Bismarckian constitution of the Reich could be made to work in the hand of men other than Bismarck.\(^{79}\) But the constitution set up by Bismarck was never meant as a fundamental law. It was often unclear and served only as a fundamental law. It was often unclear and served only as a fundamental law. It was often unclear and served only as a

\(^{78}\)Nichols, *Germany after Bismarck*, 29ff.

set of rules as long as Bismarck could achieve his aims through it. Constitutional considerations were never uppermost in his mind and he felt free to change the rules if his policy demanded it. The problem was that Caprivi accepted the constitution as fundamental law and refused to adopt a Bismarckian approach to it, resulting in a contradiction of purposes and ability. To Caprivi and his successors, the constitution was fundamental and as such the stability of the Reich, once safeguarded in the personage of Bismarck, was now the ward of a constitution never intended for such a purpose. Caprivi’s clashes with the Kaiser, his approach to internal political issues, and his handling of the nonrenewal of the Reinsurance Treaty all indicate the lack of initiative that was to become a hallmark of his administration.  

When Caprivi took over the Chancellorship, however, he was immediately faced with the necessity for quick action in foreign affairs. Bismarck had begun negotiations for the renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty, the cornerstone of his policy. Caprivi’s experience had never led him to any contact with international affairs. Certainly not a man to shun responsibility, he asked for information on the pending

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81 ibid., 81.
question from the subordinate functionaries of the foreign office, most notably Friedrich von Holstein. All these men were of the opinion that the treaty with Russia was incompatible with German obligations to Austria, Italy, and Romania. This view was eventually accepted even by Schweinnitz, the ambassador to St. Petersburg. The policy of reinsurance toward Russia was considered a thing of the past and the last remnants of the Bismarckian imposition went with it. Apart from the resulting change in Germany’s position in Europe, Caprivi started the dangerous practice of leaving foreign policy matters to his subordinates, relying far too heavily on their expertise and, in fact, giving them full control of the course of foreign policy. 82 Nevertheless, it would seem that the "new" direction foreign policy agreed with Caprivi’s conceptions. His calm acceptance of splitting Europe into two camps implies a military rather than diplomatic approach. He rejected all later Russian attempts of even a simple manifestation of political sympathy. 83 His handling of these matters proved that the constitution required a Chancellor familiar with and capable in diplomacy.


83 Grosse Politik, VII, 22-23. A comparison of the memorandums of Holstein, Marschall, Kiderlen, and Raschdau, all of May 20, 1890, shows that it was Caprivi’s decision to make the refusal absolute while the foreign Office inclined toward a dilatory or even open option policy.
Despite promises of continuing where Bismarck had left off, Caprivi’s tenure as Chancellor and the first half of his successor Hohenlohe were a transitional period. Caprivi carried on the Bismarckian tradition of continental concentration, but Hohenlohe abandoned it. Caprivi, in his commercial treaties and work toward solving internal rifts, emerges as a possible alternative to Weltpolitik. Yet his position was far too weak for him to set up his policy as the long-term policy of the Reich. He believed Germany had no chance of ever becoming a world power, and so he worked at home on strengthening the army, limiting the navy’s role, and seeking nominal relations with England. Setting his efforts against the problems Germany faced, he found his greatest enemy within Germany itself. His conservation of an old system was neither understood nor appreciated. Germans had come to perceive their destiny as lying beyond the limits of Europe. The system, even with the reforms of Caprivi, was no longer suited to the desires of the people. Once the Chancellor was overthrown, his policy was discarded and replaced. Captain von Mueller, wrote in a memorandum to Admiral Prince Heinrich, the Kaiser’s brother:

Caprivi’s policy, now so widely ridiculed, would have been brilliantly vindicated by history if the German people were not coming to accept an entirely different opinion of their ability and duty to expand than that expressed in our naval and colonial development so far....Now, the Caprivi policy had been officially abandoned, and the new reich government will hesitantly put to the nation the question - in the form of the new Navy Bill - whether the other policy, Weltpolitik, really
Whether or not his policy was viable comes under question if examination is made of his calm acceptance of the lapse with Russia. His foreign policy aims, while never as complicated as Bismarck's, were never as clear-cut either. He apparently saw advantage to losing the Russian alliance in that this would simplify the demands of foreign policy upon him. And if it is considered that his handling of foreign affairs most usually required deference to subordinates with skill in diplomacy, then it certainly cannot be held that his failure was due totally to a new desire of expansion among the German people. Instead, it must be assumed that Caprivi was a man who lacked diplomatic knowledge. He tried to compensate with a simplification of terms, but was obviously led by the policies of William and the advice of Holstein and others; he felt he was doomed to failure, a circumstance certainly difficult to cope with for a professional soldier. And in the chaos of the international affairs of the 1890s, administrative skill was not enough to make up for his lack of understanding and the actions he was forced take contradictory to his ideas. It
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84 Der Kaiser. Aufzeichnungen des Chefs des Marinekabinettts Admiral Georg Alexander von Muller ueber die Aera Wilhellem II, ed. by W Goerlitz (Berlin, Frankfurt, Zuerich, 1965), 36-41. The passage quoted is on page 40, an English version of which may be found in J.C.G. Roehl, From Bismarck to Hitler: the Problem of Continuity in German History (London, 1970), 56-60 along with supporting argumentation.
would seem more than anything else that Caprivi was his own worst enemy, not by choice but by the simple fact that he was not a politician nor a diplomat. He was the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Because Caprivi did not stage coup d'etat's from above nor even follow a policy of repression against the Socialists, the anti-Caprivi conservatives forced his resignation. This is not to say that he was forced out of power. Quite likely, with the support of Marschall von Bieberstein and Holstein, two always faithful to him, he could have remained in power. But Caprivi was tired and disenchanted. Former companions in the field were now his political enemies. The job of controlling his Prussian Ministers of State, the Foreign Office, and various others his duties required placed increasing strain on him. Every task set before him became increasingly difficult, especially with Philipp von Eulenberg (the Kaiser's personal friend and advisor) undercutting his every move. All this and William II's frightening inconsistency caused Caprivi to submit his resignation in October, 1894. After some deliberation, William let him go. 85

Purportedly, when William asked of Eulenberg whom he could now appoint, Eulenberg retorted, "A man who is neither

85 Roehl, Germany Without Bismarck, 241-70.
conservative nor liberal, neither ultra-montane nor radical, neither clerical nor atheist, is hard to find." If this was actually what was said, then it was not far from the truth. Political talent was a rare thing to find, especially considering William’s preference of men not so strongly opinionated as himself. His final choice, Prince Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfuerst, fit his expectations as to what a Chancellor should be in most circumstances, with the new Chancellor only occasionally blocking William’s way.

Hohenlohe’s career in politics was a respected one. He had been instrumental in evading opposition to Empire in southern Germany, serving after 1871 as the Ambassador to Paris and governor of Alsace-Lorraine. Despite his experience, though, he was not considered to be capable of anything greater than what he had thus achieved. He was vague, indecisive, and generally very unsure of himself. Add to this the fact that he was much older when he took over the Chancellorship than Bismarck had been when he established the Chancellor’s duties and the picture is that of a respectable man easily controlled by the Kaiser. Hohenlohe’s stubbornness did stop some of the Kaiser’s more dangerous ideas, but it could not take the place of positive

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leadership. The inter-palace and inter-agency fighting characteristic of the Caprivi administration became so intense under Hohenlohe as to block any initiative on policy. 87

Much more than his predecessor, Hohenlohe concentrated on the domestic problems at the time, defining foreign affairs to von Marschall and Holstein. The actions he took during his chancellorship did show he knew the value of good relations with the Kaiser, but consequently nothing of the implications involved in allowing Williams free hand. Most usually Hohenlohe would request time to reconsider a matter if he and William disagreed. He considered this far preferable to Caprivi’s confrontations with William. The time requested for reconsideration, he reasoned, would allow the Kaiser’s temper and anger to abate and allow for calmer, more fruitful discussion. 88 It is no surprise that this is the tact Hohenlohe used as a diplomat, and it must be remembered he was a Bismarckian diplomat, taking orders and being led by the master. As Chancellor, it was his job to give orders and lead while restraining the Kaiser’s ambitions. This was a task for which his training, experience, and personality were ill-suited. He was, in

87 Nicholas, Germany after Bismarck, 37-44. For a more complete estimation of Hohenlahe by his colleagues, see Theodore Heo, b. Friedrich Narmann, der Mann, das Werk, die Zeit (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1937), 199 f.

short, a timid old man.

The only true success of Hohenlohe’s method was in its very first use. It was William’s desire during 1884 and 1885 to enact legislation against the Social Democratic Party, essentially a revival of Bismarck’s antisocialist laws (*Ausnahmegesitze*). These laws had lapsed after Bismarck’s fall, and the Kaiser threatened the Reichstag to pass such legislation which would result in elimination of universal manhood suffrage and thus the creation of a more cooperative parliament. Hohenlohe, an aristocrat, had no objection to such laws, but being a moderate liberal he insisted that such legislation be passed legally. Furthermore, he pointed out to William that repressive measures only increased the public’s fear of political reaction. When William flew into a rage, Hohenlohe postponed the issue. When the Prussian ministers agreed with Hohenlohe’s stand on the antisocialist laws William, not wanting to dismiss Hohenlohe only one year after Caprivi, had no other recourse but to allow the Chancellor to have his way.\(^89\)

Similarly, the Jameson Raid into the Transvaal in late 1895 proved that Hohenlohe’s method was successful. Unable to prevent the sending of the famed Kruger Telegram,

\(^{89}\) The Kaiser to Caprivi, Sept. 9, 1894, in Zechlin, *Stoatsstreicdrawe*, 191-92; for the Kaiser’s political mood in 1894-95, see *ibid.*, 186-88; an Nichols, *Germany after Bismarck*, 33334, 39, 341-42.
Hohenlohe soon found he could not contain his master’s desire for naval expansion by simple postponement. Instead, he requested postponement and consolation with the leaders of the larger parties to determine if passage was possible. All three party leaders consulted agreed that the tax burden of the navy’s regular budget might even have trouble passing the Reichstag; any prospect of a special loan was hopeless. Hohenlohe then warned the Kaiser that the introduction and defeat of such a bill would be a humiliation for the Kaiser himself in the eyes of the other European nations. William, once again blocked, acquiesced to the chancellor’s opinion.

Thusfar, Hohenlohe had been able to accomplish his prime objective of preventing a conflict with the Reichstag over naval expansion. His aim in promoting fleet expansion was also to keep the friendship of Britain, though the Naval Bill he laid before the Reichstag on 6 December 1897 was from the start aimed at Britain. In his speech on the bill he disclaimed any intention of challenging Britain, saying:

This measure shows you that we are not thinking of competing with the great sea powers, and for those with eyes to see it demonstrates that a policy of adventure is far from our minds. Precisely because we want to carry out a peaceful policy, we must make an effort to build our fleet into a power factor which carries the necessary weight in the eyes of friend and foe alike.... In maritime questions, Germany must be able to speak a modest but, above all, a wholly German word.90

These words were to quiet parliamentary fears over naval

90Quoted in Steinberg, *Yesterday’s Deterrent*, 164.
expansion. Consequently he felt that his method was the proper one, ignoring repeated warnings from Holstein that he should exclude William from direct involvement in policy-making.\textsuperscript{91} But the Chancellor’s procrastination made William, who interpreted postponement as a lack of sincerity, suspicious, thus ruining the relationship between chancellor and Kaiser that Hohenlohe wished to preserve.\textsuperscript{92} Had Hohenlohe not sought to secure William’s consent of his own plans by this same method, he might have preserved the cordial relationship with the Kaiser. In an attempt to gain passage of a military court reform bill, the Chancellor found his role reversed. William turned Hohenlohe’s own method against him. Caught between the threat of dismissal or resignation and the possible constitutional crisis that might follow any further confrontation, Hohenlohe resigned himself to a compromise for which he had no liking. After two years of debate in the Reichstag, the Military Court Bills passed and the relationship between Chancellor and Kaiser became one of hostility and suspicion. Impatient with Hohenlohe’s cautious maneuvers, William replaced him with Bernhard von Buelow, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in

\textsuperscript{91}Haller, Eulenberg, 183-85; Norman Rich, Friedrich von Holstein: Politics and Diplomacy in the Era of Bismarck and William II (New York, 1965), II, 484, 505-8, 842.

\textsuperscript{92}J. David Farley, “Government by Procrastination: Chancellor Hohenlahe and Kaiser William II, 1894-1900,” Central European History, 7 (June, 1974), 168-70. (entire article runs 159-183)
October 1900. 93

Little will be said of Buelow due to the limited scope of this study. It is clear that he was very nationalistic, but he was also a trained diplomat. He had held quite fervently until 1887 that the primary focus of foreign relations must be Russia. Whether due to his own nationalism, the influence of associates or the Kaiser, or some other influence, Buelow suddenly switched his diplomatic focal point to England. Most likely, however, it would seem very likely that Buelow's nationalism was a world view in actuality. His work on the expansion of the battlefleet is evidence that as long as he was responsible for the course of German foreign policy his design was for world power. 94 Whatever the case, the Kaiser now had a Chancellor who accepted and espoused the case for German Weltpolitik and whose actions were as devastating to Germany's world position as those of the Kaiser himself.

The chancellors Caprivi and Hohenlohe had little if any influence overall. Most of their efforts were either stymied during their terms in office or were abandoned once they were gone. Most of the blame for this lies in the fact

93 ibid., 177-182.

that they were merely chosen as instruments of the Kaiser's will. They, however, chose to remain closer to the ideals of the constitution and were not willing to forsake it for consistent policy. This led to suspicion and hostility for the most part with no reasonable chance of any viable policy emerging. Added to this were the subordinates of the Foreign Office to whom matters of foreign policy and diplomacy were left, in particular Friedrich Holstein. Another detriment to the authority of the chancellors were those intimate with Kaiser. The most notable of this group was Philipp zu Eulenburg. Between the subordinates and the intimates, the power of the chancellorship decreased and the will of the Kaiser was influenced and his views on foreign policy advocated.

Philipp Eulenburg was the most powerful member of the entourage known as the "Liebenberg Circle." His relationship with the Kaiser was unique and differed from all others because of its closeness and strangeness. Consequently, not even William's official advisors had such opportunity to influence him. William had first met Eulenburg in 1886 while hunting at the East Prussian estate of Proekelwitz. The two immediately found in each other a complementing personality. So taken was William with Eulenburg that he induced him to stay on for an extra week of hunting. By the time William acceded to the throne, their friendship was firmly established. At first Eulenburg
feared that the social gap between them would necessarily have to widen with William’s position. This fear was short-lived, however, as William found the friendship of Eulenburg an antidote for the pressure and loneliness of the throne. William spent much of his free and "working" time with Eulenberg. Eulenberg, in return, hosted the young Kaiser at many parties, introducing him to some of the wealthiest and most influential men from across Germany and Europe. The social gap which had been bridged by friendship was now spanned also by politics as William engineered his friend’s diplomatic prominence. Such intimacy allowed Eulenburg to arrange appointments and thus influence policy over time. His new position of power allowed him to place friends in positions of importance and influence policy even more. Not until 1907 were his enemies able to destroy him with charges of homosexuality.95

In examining Eulenburg’s personality, it must be realized that this was the basis for his relationships and political importance. Such an examination also brings into light the fact that his homosexuality was very relevant to his career. This must not be misinterpreted. Although it was an aspect which endeared him to William and made him charming and affable to others, it is also what made him completely

devoted to William in every way. Yet his background was not unlike those of his contemporaries. Born to an old noble Prussian family, he received a Gymnasium education. He served some time in the military, even a stint in the Franco-Prussian War, but soon switched to a career in the civil service. Though earning a doctorate in law, he found the friends acquired while preparing for it more useful than the degree itself. Soon tired of the routine of the civil service, he again changed careers, this time to the diplomatic corps, where he stayed until his retirement in 1902. However, no matter his position, his income never quite matched his tastes. When William made Eulenburg a Prince in 1900, the court nobility were disturbed by this disparity. No matter how admirable his qualities, they felt that wealth was a requisite for nobility. Without it one could not maintain the necessary lifestyle.

Until the time he met William, Eulenburg’s diplomatic career was relatively undistinguished. Bismarck thought of him as capable of more damage than he was worth. When he first met William he was first secretary to the Prussian legation in Munich. Both Holstein and the Bismarcks felt he

96 William to Eulenberg, Nov. 8, 1886 in J.C.G. Roehl, Philipp Eulenbergs Politische Korrespondenz, I (Boppordam Rhein, 1976-), no, 188.

97 Eulenburg also worried that his financial position was not appropriate to such a title. See Eulenberg to William, May 12, 1899 in Roehl, Eulenbergs Korrespondenz, vol. 3.
could be a good influence on the young William and gave him access to and advice on information from the Foreign Office.\textsuperscript{98} By 1888, with his friendship with William firmly secured, Eulenburg began his meteoric rise as a diplomat. At first he acted only as a liaison between the Foreign Office and William, and he carried out policy according to the dictates of Holstein. As the conflict with Bismarck grew in 1889-90, however, Eulenburg gradually moved toward an acceptance and even advocation of William's ideas. In a more disturbing sense, he was apt to follow his own personal policies. In effect, he was developing his own personal regime and was gradually becoming less and less dependent on others for his political thought. By the time of Bismarck's dismissal, Eulenburg was at the center of high politics.\textsuperscript{99}

Ultimately, the policy which Eulenburg followed toward William was neither one of advocacy or opposition, but quite simply prevention to preserve William's personal popularity. William was reckless, fiery, and often exaggerated the need for forceful action. While his influence is nonetheless apparent, it would seem that Eulenburg's main object was to make the Kaiser's plans more plausible.\textsuperscript{100} If it is to be said that Eulenburg was a detrimental force to the whole of

\textsuperscript{98}ibid., I, no. 5, 315.

\textsuperscript{99}Hull, \textit{The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II}, 80-83.

\textsuperscript{100}Hortmut Pogge von Strandmann and Immannuel Geiss, \textit{Die Erforderlickfeit des Unmoeqlichen} (Frank Hurt, 1965), 8 ff.
German policy, then in making the Kaiser's schemes plausible he truly was such a force. It would seem that any advisor influential enough to further a leader's plans would be of benefit to the whole of policy. In Wilhemine Germany, however, this was just the opposite. William's ideas, even when made plausible, were nonetheless dangerous. The idea of Eulenburg as a political intriguer working for the advocation of his own policy cannot hold true since his policy was always identical to William's. His love for William required this. That Eulenburg was much more a conservative, and thus more moderate, than William indicates that, all good intentions for the Kaiser put aside, his was as detrimental a role to German policy as William's because he preserved William's course. German foreign policy would have stagnated or, better, found a new course had not William's plans been made acceptable to Holstein and the Foreign Office. Even Eulenburg was aware of his effect upon the Kaiser. He realized his aim as that of re-establishing William's power to run the government himself, using the subordinates and bureaucracy not as agencies of policy in themselves, but as tools of the Kaiser's policy:

It is difficult to admit, but the establishment of the German Empire, that is, the blending of Liberal and German with Prussian blood, the combination of a ruling statesman [Bismarck] and a sleeping Kaiser-hero [Wilhelm I] have ruined the old Prussian Kingdom. A king who rules by himself, despite the fact that this is his right, is unthinkable in the eyes of the 'educated, progressive' people... When William appears as an actual ruler, that is only his perfect right. The
only question is whether the consequences can be endured in the long run.101

Eliminating all other possible routes as far too risky to reestablish the power of the Kaiser and the predominance of traditional Prussian politics, Eulenburg settled the policy he deemed comparatively risk free. This policy was one of William allying himself with the conservatives, in particular the secondary circle of men close to the Kaiser, the industrialists.

The two men most associated with William from the business sphere, Fritz Krupp and Albert Ballin, were like Eulenburg negative forces, but of a different kind. Eulenburg's impact was his devotion to the preservation of William's personal image to a great degree but tempered with some insight at least into the problems of radical action. His was not, however, a mind which ever realized the danger of making the Kaiser's plans plausible. Krupp and Ballin, on the other hand, showed very little insight or interest in the problems of German power. For many years historians assumed that William's interest in Krupp's steel and armament company and Ballin's Hamburg-American line was due to actual financial investment in the firms. Indeed William was interested in the fortunes of the companies, Ballin's

more so than Krupp's, but it is evident that his attraction to the two men was more for fulfillment of his goals and personal friendship than monetary gains. 102 Both were captains, or Kaisers, in respective industries. Both professed a dislike of those things not quite German. But more important, each reflected a side of the Kaiser and, in essence, became a completion of the Kaiser's views.

It would not be redundant to state that William II was a two-sided man. At times he was frail, nervous, and weak; at others, he roared like a lion, seemingly ready to conquer the world. His attraction to these two men and the influence they had upon him reflect his need not only for like minds, but like personalities gathered around him. A dual personality such as himself might have led to quarreling, but individual personalities appealing to either of his separate sides suited his need for fulfillment. Ballin was strong and aggressive; Krupp was a weaker personality and had a nervous condition which often left him incapacitated. Also, these individuals were becoming part of the whole movement of German nationalism, reckless though it was, and support of the Kaiser's plans (if only through pursuit of financial gain) greatly influenced the Kaiser in naval and armament decisions.

Like everyone who served him for long, however, Ballin

102 Bernhard, Huldermann, Albert Ballin (London, 1922), 106.
and Krupp were as much subordinates of William as he was of their advice. Both were not only awed by him, but also sorry for him. Ballin’s own words describe a circle of men witnessing a man who would go from "childlike, happy optimism" to "almost helpless depression" at any sigh of criticism. Later in his life, Ballin could not even bring himself to tell the kaiser the war was lost. In the end, Ballin and Krupp’s influence was negligible and almost as destructive as such because they normally bowed to William’s wishes.

On the other end of those influencing the policy was Friedrich von Holstein. His role was entirely opposite that of Eulenburg’s. The snapping of the Russian tie and the shattering of the Bismarckian system in 1890 had left him the strongest force in the new policy. His influence was not to wane until 1897. Raschdau commented on this man, noting his good-natured contempt for his superiors.

Schwenitz noted to Caprivi, Holstein’s apparent intention to go over the heads of these superiors to accomplish foreign policy goals, describing him as a "personality who is not quite right in the head" and who was using his position and the service to serve his own goals of foreign policy. After

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complaining without success to Caprivi, Schwenitz resigned his post in St. Petersburg. Such was Holstein’s enigma inside the Foreign Ministry. His authority and judgement became the overriding decision on the choices of ambassadors and any ambassador whose career had developed under Bismarck was encouraged to resign.

Holstein’s difference from Eulenburg lay in the fact that Schwenitz was correct in observing Holstein as a disturbing personality. Born in 1837, his father recommended the diplomatic service for his son after having other fields closed to him, rejecting his legal career, and refusing to buy land and become a member of the landed gentry. From the moment he applied for transfer to the Reichsauswärtigesdienst, his career was linked to Bismarck. After some difficulty with the Prussian Foreign Minister Schleinitz, he was given an attache’ post in St. Petersburg. During the next years, his association with the Bismarck’s grew to one of intimacy. In 1862, Holstein returned to Germany to prepare for admission exams into the regular diplomatic service, which he readily passed, earning the Secretary of Legation post in Rio de Janiero. Recalled in December 1863 to Denmark, he was then attached to the Prussian London Embassy in April 1864, staying there until mid summer 1865. Journeying to North America, he completely

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missed the Austro-Prussian War and reportedly became involved with the wife of senator Charles Sumner. This episode so insulted and wounded Holstein emotionally that in later years he became a recluse in his social life. The other dramatic event in Holstein’s life came in 1873. Serving Ambassador Harry Arnim in Paris, Holstein was accused of being Bismark’s stool pigeon against Arnim when the Chancellor and Ambassador came into conflict. No evidence supports this conclusion, but the event drove Holstein even further into reclusion in his social life and work.

On closer examination, certain semblances between Holstein and the Kaiser are brought out. Holstein eliminated opposition by controlling who got what position and where, often giving posts to those of little if any talent. This action resulted in something quite similar to the entourage which the Kaiser grouped around him. Every aspect of that entourage was fulfilling some psychological need of William’s. So too were those in the Foreign Service and Ministry with whom Holstein encircled himself, but in a far more important sense. These men served as political fulfillment. In the most general terms, Holstein’s ‘entourage’ was centered around him to serve his need for political importance, much in the same way as William’s ‘entourage’ complimented his dual personality.

While Holstein enjoyed power, he always avoided its
outward trappings, partly to retain the power he had. In doing so he became a man of mystery and a scapegoat for others when their policies led Germany to disaster. He was a grey blur in the Wilhelmstrasse. Prince Bernhard von Buelow was foremost of his critics, describing him as innately evil, a "corsaire,.... created for devilments."¹⁰⁶ Yet others testify that Holstein was a good-hearted man, contrary to the general impression. His greatest fault was excessive suspicion leading to vindictive hate. Again, Holstein and William compare favorably here. Both took criticism as a personal attack. It is therefore hard to imagine Ambassador to Italy Anton von Monts' appraisal of Holstein as a man who selflessly surrendered himself to the service. The assessment that he was the hardest worker in the foreign office is true, but it is not always clear to what purpose the effort went.¹⁰⁷

Holstein's influence has been exaggerated, but is was quite out of proportion to the office he held. The twenty-six years of his political career were spent as a vortraegenderrat, roughly equivalent to an assistant under secretary. Knowing that a higher position would lay a burden of more responsibility on him which in turn would

¹⁰⁶Prince Bernhard von Buelow, Memoirs of Prince Bernhard von Buelow, 4 (Boston, 1931-32), 394-95.

diminish his authority, he refused all offers of promotion. The great misfortune about Holstein was how he was put to use. His task for Bismarck had been in the collection of data. This data, reported in superb Bismarckian-style dispatches, was excellent and of great value to Bismarck in forming judgements. The leaders of Wilhelmine Germany, however, not only depended on him for data but judgement also. In truth, Holstein was the only one to turn to, and here was the unnoticed danger.\textsuperscript{108}

Holstein is perhaps the perfect example of the risks taken by a nation when relying on a career diplomat. Germany was unfortunate in choosing an imperfect specimen in which to place its trust. Bismarck exemplifies what can be done by a well-rounded personality in a special situation; Holstein exemplifies the reverse. While as good a technical diplomat as Bismarck, Holstein lacked personality and judgement; while his political ideas were sound, he was unable to keep up with the times. When mixed with overcalculation, excessive suspicion, and personal vindictiveness, his inabilities in the role of \textit{de facto} direction of foreign policy did appreciable damage to Germany.\textsuperscript{109}

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\textsuperscript{108}ibid., 47-48.
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For all his faults, Holstein had correctly appraised the relationships between the Kaiser and Eulenburg. He reached the logical conclusion that the only way to stop William and save the monarchy was to allow him to follow through with one of his wild schemes. He was convinced the resulting fiasco and the threat of a mass resignation by the ministers would lead to responsible government. It was a risky last resort, and one Holstein could not bring himself to attempt. 110

These three examples of influence within Wilhelmine policy are all negative and very much different from each other. But they do illustrate several fundamental ideas. First, to make a policy stick, one had to be close to William. Since he was not known to base his decisions on careful thought, proximity was a definite tool of influence. Second, one had to be familiar with William's personality and know how to handle his moods to advantage. Third, to have consistent influence on policy one also had to have a consistent Weltanschauung on several levels: personal, domestic and foreign policy, and even rank and title.

Narrowing one's focus to a single arena damaged or destroyed other. But they do illustrate several fundamental ideas. First, to make a policy stick, one had to be close to William. Since he was not known to base his decisions on careful thought, proximity was a definite tool of influence. Second, one had to be familiar with William's personality and know how to handle his moods to advantage. Third, to have consistent influence on policy one also had to have a consistent Weltanschauung on several levels: personal, domestic and foreign policy, and even rank and title.

Narrowing one's focus to a single arena damaged or destroyed

110 The Tarisch spy scandal was much of the reason for Halstein's reluctance to act. Without the support of Marschall, who was involved in the prosecution of the spy trial, or the support of Eulenburg to any degree at all, Halstein may have felt the move too risky for Germany and his own career. See Rich, Halstein, II, for more detail on the affair and its consequences.
victories in others. Finally, one’s politics were more assured of acceptance if William agreed with them or believed he should agree with them for the sake of tradition and the nation. Once Eulenburg was gone, only the military entourage was able to fulfill these requirements, especially Tirpitz.

The most fundamental problem concerning those influencing William and policy was a lack of coherent policy not at the top but rather at lower levels. Neither Eulenburg, the industrialists, or Holstein were able or sufficiently attempted to come together in agreement on basic issues of policy. If they had done so, there would have existed a much higher degree of consistency in policy and, consequently, a much higher degree of stability in European politics. Much of the problem lay in the fact that these three groupings of power, though supposedly seeking glory for Germany, were instead pursuing three different courses. Unofficially Eulenburg and the industrialists sought gains for themselves and either gave in to the Kaiser or moderated his extravagant ideas so as to make them acceptable. This patching up of difficulties and lack of will to face the Kaiser created a ruler who believed himself capable of rule. When Eulenburg faded into the background in 1906 -- as did Holstein after the First Moroccan Crisis -- the military entourage which took his place never criticized and was for the most part wholly in agreement with William, and thus
William and Germany’s delusion of responsible rule continued.

On the other hand, the only true official power was not the Chancellor or even the Kaiser, but Holstein. His importance died out after 1897, but in the seven years he dominated the Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service he made it an independent agency of policy acting in accordance with his own view of policy and the ability of the Kaiser to make policy decisions. Much of his independence of action came from the fact that he was the only one after Bismarck who exhibited any knowledge of the diplomatic scene, but also because unlike the Chancellor, he was out of contact with the Kaiser. The final analysis is simple: there existed too many political variables and policy variations, all working in opposite directions combined with a lack of communication, for a coherent policy dominated by one figure or through a logical system to emerge. Had such direction emerged from the pinnacle of power or from a mere subordinate, it would have been much preferable to the chaos which existed.
The reorientation of Russian policy after the cancellation of the Reinsurance Treaty was only natural. No fault can be found in the considerations of the statesmen in St. Petersburg and abroad. Their position was this: faced with German dominance on the continent, the most likely solution seemed alliance with France if the cost was not excessive. However, Russian policy had also antagonized England and this was an even greater problem than Germany. With German unification in 1871, Russian continental concerns had switched to the Near East, the obvious aim being control of the Bosporus and Dardanelles. Being an age-old policy, it had been followed unswervingly as an indispensable part of Russian policy. Through a policy of indirect action to avoid resistance from other European powers, Russia hoped to gain control of the Balkans and open the road to Constantinople. In the interests of its aims, Russia had paid special attention to the anti-Austrian Serbians and Bulgarians since 1877. However, since its exclusion from Italian and German affairs, Austria’s interest in the Balkans had blocked Russian aims, but Germany took no part in these activities. Bismarck stated that Germany did not oppose Russian acquisition of the Straits. The only resentment that the Russians could have
felt was that their own blundering had resulted in the Austro-German Alliance of 1879, even though this was a purely defensive pact and was in no way a show of German support for Austrian ambitions in the Balkans. 111

Resisting Austrian appeals for help, Bismarck attempted mediation through the Three Emperor’s League and direct compromise. He suggested agreements such as the eastern Balkans for Russia and the western Balkans for Austria. For Russia, this was only a means to an end, and during the Congress of Berlin Russia even prepared a proposal for abandonment of the Western Balkans to Austria. In 1886-87, Russia also inclined toward similar petition proposals by Bismarck. 112 English satisfaction with the Treaty of Berlin was matched only by Russian disillusionment. The sentiment on a whole was that Russia had been deprived of any reward by England and Austria. Russia placed much of the blame on Bismarck for doing nothing. 113 But it must be remembered that Bismarck was acting only as mediator, and even in this position was inclined to seek agreements guaranteeing the highest degree of stability to European politics and thus securing Germany’s hold on the continent. This was his recognized policy, and trickery or favoritism toward Russia

111 Langer, Franco-Russian Alliance, 82-85.

112 J.V. Fuller, Bismarck’s Diplomacy at its Zenith (Cambridge, 1922), 238-240.

was not a conscious act. Hostility toward Bismarck also sprang from the Austro-German Alliance, particularly after the Austrians rejected all petition proposals. They did this for two reasons: first, Austria wished to eliminate Russian influence in the Balkans altogether to keep Turkey and the Slavic states weak; secondly, a Russian foothold of any kind in the region would possibly draw the Slavic states away from Austria and disrupt the Empire. The pivot of this policy was England. Without German support, England was the only European power who could stand in the way, and more importantly, was willing to stand in the way of Russian dominance in the Balkans.114

English policy during the previous century had been to block Russian ambitions toward the Straits. Some in England believed this policy archaic, but to most it was the main objective of policy. Disraeli was prepared to go to war over the issue in 1878. But the English remembered the great difficulty in stopping the Russians in 1854, realizing that only by checking them on both land and the sea was the policy viable. To this end, the English consistently supported Austrian policies in the Balkans. Any Austrian consent to a settlement in the Balkans would have resulted in the loss of English support for its policy, thus leaving Austria at the mercy of Russia and without German support.

After 1876 and particularly after 1886 Russian

114 G.P., IX, no. 2077 and no. 2084.
ambitions in the Balkans came to naught due to the cooperation of Austria and England. The complete expression of this cooperation can be seen in the 1887 Mediterranean Agreements. Due to the Mediterranean, Russia and England were irreconcilable enemies. In diplomatic terms, the best solution was England’s isolation. The proposals of compromise to Austria had been attempts as this. The Reinsurance Treaty of 1887 had the isolation of France as its object. From the Russian side it excluded Germany from support of Austria in the Balkans and even more important of adopting the English stance in the Straits, giving Russia insurance against German attack if she and England came into armed conflict.

Once the Bulgarian Crisis of 1886 finally convinced the Russians that further proposals to and agreements with Austria or England were futile, St. Petersburg politely informed Austria that Russia would not cooperate in future negotiations. On this matter the foreign minister Nicholas de Giers, Ambassador to Berlin Count Paul Shuvalov, and the Tsar were agreed but also agreed that agreements with Germany were desirable. The Tsar authorized negotiations and Giers and Shuvalov drew up a set of objects which Shuvalov took with him to Berlin in May 1887. First, Russia sought to maintain peace with guarantees from the strongest and most influential state of Europe (Germany) to protect

115 ibid., no. 2079; IV, no. 918.
herself from hostile European coalitions (Austria and England); second, to prevent arbitrary readjustment of the Balkan status quo and have recognized the preponderance of Russia in the two Bulgarias; third, to secure inviolability of the Straits through German support and the restraint, by force if necessary, of the other powers. 116

Armed with this set of objectives, Shuvalov departed for Berlin, arriving there on 10 May. Conferences between Bismarck and Shuvalov ran from 11 to 18 May. The second article of the Russian draft of the treaty corresponded with the second object listed above and presented no problem. But various drafts were required before an agreement could be reached on the troublesome first and second articles. Finally, Bismarck prepared to make Article I strictly defensive, which did not suit Shuvalov at all. This meant that each side would remain neutral only if the other were attacked by a third power. Shuvalov argued that Russia had many enemies while Germany only had one (France) and could not remain impassive in the face of every threat. Bismarck countered that Russia was only offering "half-neutrality" in a Franco-German war in return for the same in an Austro-Russian war, with full neutrality only in a conflict between Russia and England, Turkey or Italy. Unable to answer the argument, Shuvalov proceeded to work out a clause to Article I which read: "This provision would not apply to a war

116Langer, European Alliances and Alignments, 417-418.
against Austria or France if this war should result from an attack directed against one of these two latter powers by one of the High Contracting Parties."117 Giers and the Tsar were satisfied with the treaty, but Shuvalov still pressed Bismarck for aid in Bulgaria. Showing a lack of patience quite uncharacteristic to his diplomacy, Bismarck warned the Russians not to overestimate German friendship, threateningly concluding that if the old relationship with Russia came to an end, Germany could seek agreements elsewhere. Dissatisfied but tired of negotiations, Shuvalov agreed and the treaty was ratified in mid-June.

English attitudes toward France and the like policies of both nations towards the Near East explain much of England’s reluctance to enter into any agreement with Germany. French and English troops had fought side by side to stop Russian ambitions. After 1870, though playing a less significant role, France still supported England against Russian ambitions. Consequently, much to Bismarck’s dismay, the English never seriously considered any of Bismarck’s proposals aimed at France.118 Quite simply stated, Russia saw gain in a continued Franco-German antagonism. Had

117 G.P., V, nos. 1082 ff. For a text of the treaty, see Alfred Franzis Pribram, ed., Die politischen Geheimverträge Oesterreich - Ungarns, 1879-1984 (Vienna, Leipzig, 1920). This volume is essential for its text of treaties and negotiation of the Triple Alliance negotiations and renegotiations as well as material on the Reinsurance Treaty.

118 Langer, Franco-Russian Alliance, 88.
conditions not changed, it quite probably would have resulted in gains in the Balkans. This goes far in explaining Giers’ repeated attempts at renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty. Strengthening this course was the great deal of tension between France and Russia since 1870. Only after Bismarck did a gradual change occur. The turning point for this change came in 1887 when various agreements made Franco-Russian cooperation imperative. In 1887-88, Bismarck closed the German bond market to Russia, a move for which no adequate explanation was given or has been given since, but which certainly drove a loan-desperate Russia closer to France.119 Maneuvering to preserve peace, an element essential to preserving the Reich, Bismarck then worked out such agreements as the Mediterranean Agreements. These assurred the status quo in the whole of the Mediterranean. The agreement itself, concluded between Austria, England, and Italy, placed not Germany but England in a position of solid opposition to French and Russian expansion. The Reinsurance Treaty, in turn, encouraged Russian policy in the Near East, thus making France the only enemy of Germany, pitting France and Russia against England, and making an Anglo-German agreement more appealing to the

119 It may be speculated that Bismarck’s reasoning was simply his traditional support of the Junker class, not only in financial protection but for the tradition of German-Slavic tension as well. Fuller goes farther to suggest that Bismarck felt in control through the Reinsurance Treaty and could do as he pleased, believing that the Russians could not afford to question German actions.
government in London. Naturally, the two powers most threatened would seek cooperation against a common enemy, and so it was that France and Russia turned their combined suspicion towards England. Bismarck’s system was complete. He had surrounded Germany with states contesting against each other, leaving Germany free to seek its own aims.

Germany, as a common enemy, was the requirement for full Franco-Russian cooperation and possible alliance. This scenario did not exist before 1890. Despite the view of the French Revanchards that alliance with Russia was the only hope of slipping out of isolation, many French statesmen were either more realistic or were unable to reconcile their republicanism with Russian autocracy. Russia would not help in securing Alsace-Lorraine and any settlement with Russia would assuredly be to the detriment if not renunciation of French policy in the Near East. Most important, such an alliance would alienate England completely and drive it towards Germany. Russia did not wish to see France further weakened, but that was the extent of concern. The royal houses of both Germany and Russia were united by dynastic considerations, the Polish question, and opposition to republicanism. No Franco-Russian alliance was therefore possible as long as Russia viewed German friendship as its

120 Fuller, Bismarck’s Diplomacy at its Zenith, 29 ff. Fuller claims that Russia signed the Reinsurance Treaty only with the possibility of an Anglo-Russian war in mind.
only defense against attack from the West.\textsuperscript{121}

That was the situation in 1890. On the surface Europe seemed calm, but below both French and Russian attempts to destroy the Mediterranean coalition continued. With Bismarck on the scene there was little chance of success, since it was he who manipulated the powers in an attempt to maintain the status quo. Bismarck's disappearance was significant enough, and France and Russia both believed the collapse of the Triple Alliance was imminent. The abandonment of the Reinsurance Treaty was actually perceived in Berlin as a move to simplify the Bismarckian system and make it more attractive to members of the Triple Alliance. Continued French and Russian efforts to undermine this system, independent of each other until this time, were now gradually coming into sync. This cooperation grew as anxiety developed that Germany now sought to create its own coalition system instead of using a coalition system to maintain the status quo, thus becoming the enemy of Russia as well as France.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121}G.P. III, no. 455. For comments by Alexander III and Giers concerning the French Republic, see G.P. III, nos. 617, 621; IV, 760, 761; V, 978, 1118, 1112; VI 1205, 1210, 1218.

\textsuperscript{122}Pribram, Die politische Geheimvertraege Oesterreich-Ungarns, 48 ff; Kurt Koerlin, Zur Vorgeschichte der russisch-franzoesischen Buendnisse, 1979-1890 (Stuttgart, 1926), 223. See also Wilhelm Koehlen, ed., Revanche-idee und Panslavismus, vols of Zur europaeischen Politik (Berlin, 1919).
The new men in Berlin were more than a little apprehensive over the complexity of the Bismarckian system. Whether they sought to change this course or believed their actions would preserve it is difficult to ascertain. Only after the results of their actions did they realize the consequences, if only to a limited extent. Evidence cited in chapter two indicates that the change was not made consciously, but whether conscious or not the results were the same. Bismarck's system was shattered. Only the slightest chance for saving relations with Russia existed, but the government in Berlin let this chance slip away despite repeated renegotiation attempts by Russians. From 1890 to 1894 the situation slowly petrified, culminating in the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894.

Relations between France and Russia steadily grew more intimate by early 1891. By March 1891 a rapprochement between Germany and England was worked out, resulting in the Heligoland Treaty. German support of the Polish party in Posen further annoyed Russia, which at this time felt the need for French financial support at home and aid in Asia against Britain. On July 21, the French Battle Squadron received an enthusiastic welcome from sailors in the Kronstadt harbor. Incredibly, the French people took a Franco-Russia Alliance as a fact already, not knowing Russia's real situation but being so overcome with Russian enthusiasm. In late August 1891, the principles of a future
agreement were being laid down. The German government showed no signs of alarm and Caprivi, being constantly assured by Russia, expressed the opinion that these principles would restore the equilibrium of Europe and would in no way threaten peace. In truth, there was to be an armed peace with little understanding or equilibrium. Every German action drove Russia closer to France. The evidence is clear that the renewal of the Triple Alliance and Germany’s flirting with the English led to the conclusion of the entente.

In January 1892, the Tsar ratified the Franco-Russian Military Convention. In essence the provisions put forth were the basis of the future Franco-Russian Alliance. Negotiations in August 1893 led to even closer ties, and on 16 December the Tsar spoke openly to the chief French negotiator, Comte Montebello, describing his full intentions of alliance with France. This conversation meant the definitive acceptance of the August Convention. On January 4, 1894, Montebello replied to his government that the


124 The evidence that this was the situation is undeniable. The embittered Bismarck was correct in attributing the alliance to the mistakes of German policy. The conclusive evidence that English association with the Triple Alliance was the convincing element to the Tsar of the need for closer relations with the French may be found in G.P. VII, nos. 1502, 1507, and 1504 which emphasize Russia now felt more threatened than isolated; no. 1726; and the reports of Belgian diplomats in Koehler, 284, 288, 290-91.
Franco-Russian Alliance, consisting of the agreement of August 1891 and supplemented by the Military convention of 1894, was a reality.

German policy after 1893 sought to split the alliance in many ways. This may have been possible if German policy toward the end of the century had been conducted with more continuity of purpose. However, the belief that the "bear and the whale," as Holstein termed Russia and England, could not come to agreement and that Germany was strong enough to follow a unilateral free-handed policy only applied as long as it did not simultaneously oppose Russian and British interest. After 1898, Germany managed to do just this with the building of a large navy and support to Turkey. 125

Nevertheless, in the Autumn of 1894 a new phase of limited cooperation developed between Russia and Germany based on the common interests of the two conservative powers. The main reason for this rekindling of conservative considerations was the new Chancellor in Germany and the new Tsar in Russia, both very conservative minded men. This limited partnership found its field of cooperation in the Far East. The victorious Japanese had imposed the Peace Treaty of Shimonoseki on the Chinese at the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Both Germany and Russia had protested this vigorously, but to no effect. The Kaiser saw

125Hajo Holborn, Deutschland und die Tuerkei, 1878-90 (Berlin, 1926), 103ff.
the Japanese as a threat to Europe, but also wanted to
distract Russian interests from the Balkans, which would
probably put Germany in conflict with England. Russia’s
intervention was more direct and was a cause for the Russia-
Japanese War of 1904-1905. The most serious result of the
cooperative intervention for both nations was the
provocation of friction with Britain, especially now that
Germany was entering its Weltpolitik phase. Pressure on
Britain to join the Triple Alliance found no echo in London.
Consequently, Russia shied away from further Russo-German
cooperation in the light of Germany’s courting of an Anglo-
German agreement, realizing the difficulties of policy if
caught between interests and alliances.126 In Germany, the
relevance of the loss of Russian cooperation, if only
limited, was hardly noticed. Germany fell back on the
policy of a western European coalition and Russia was left
to slip away again.

The crux of the matter is that after 1894, the Franco-
Russian Alliance was a matter of fact. Diplomatically
speaking, Germany had created the situation for the alliance
and had to deal with the consequences of it. Nonacceptance
of this fact was a very serious diplomatic error. By its
manipulations and maneuvers to form coalition forces against

126Geiss, German Foreign Policy, 68-71; Ivo J. Lederer, Russian Foreign Policy: Essays in Historical Perspective (London, 1962), 204-6, 405-6.
this alliance, Germany proved its nonacceptance and consequential error. The pivot for further German policy until the outbreak of war in 1914 was to be England. The single enemy of Bismarckian policy was becoming two. German diplomacy turned its back on Russia. Instead of seeking to make gains with the only nation in Europe in formal alliances with France, thereby endearing itself to Russia and perhaps even France, Germany sought an aggressive policy against France through England, a matter which the English opposed. Only dynastic conservative ties remained and these were not enough to ensure steady relations. The personalities of Edward VII and William II were too different to allow harmony, even though Edward was William's uncle. This in itself was part of the problem. William always felt that his uncle disapproved of his ways, and as a result William became even more of a sensationalist. At times William would so upset Edward that the monarch simply ignored him altogether. But personalities were not the only problem. Edward and William held differing views of governing. Edward lived by the rules of a constitutional monarch and himself was known for a certain diplomatic skill. William showed none of his famous uncle's talent in foreign relations or tolerance for domestic troubles, preferring instead the mantle of an autocrat. Domestic and family ties, to a great extent, prevented any reconciliation
between Germany and England.  

Still, the immediate effect of the Franco-Russian Alliance was relative stability in European diplomacy. On the other hand, overseas expansion increased dramatically after 1894. Until 1904 European interests did not center on the Near East, but in Africa, Asia, and the Far East. Relations between governments became much more greatly affected by overseas rivalries than by European politics. The Triple and Dual Alliances did not prevent the formation of temporary alliances toward international ends. It was assumed that as long as the underdeveloped areas under scrutiny could be divided peacefully, the European situation would remain stable. Not until 1905 was the center of international relations once again formed in Europe.  

Largely due to this new situation in diplomacy, international politics between 1894 and 1904 developed along three main axis. The first of these axis was the Russian interests in the Far East to such an extent that its concerns in Europe were largely abandoned. Russia did not assist Britain to any great extent in punishing Turkey for massacres in Armenia, a situation in which she could have exploited traditional ambitions. To prevent any redress of the Eastern question in 1897, Russia went as far as to sign  

127 Sir Philip Montefiore Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh* (New York, 1964), 204-209.  

a status quo agreement concerning the Balkans with its prime rival in the region, Austria-Hungary. With this, Russia plunged into the Far East, a policy which was welcomed and encouraged by Germany.

The second axis was the adoption of a unilateral policy by Germany. A Franco-Russian Alliance was dangerous for Germany, but Germany was able to work with the fact that France and Russia were both on bad terms with Britain. Particularly after 1897, Germany played one or the other off against Britain, siding with one then the other and seeking a way to secure something for itself. Also during this time, Germany brought up the idea of a continental coalition aimed at Britain on several occasions. This idea was encouraged but never accepted in Paris or St. Petersburg. Overall, its anti-British policy yielded little, and in 1890 the German government came to the conclusion that it was time for a rapprochement with Britain.

The third tendency was a consequence of this decision, namely the growing isolation of Britain. Isolation had long been the favored policy of Great Britain. Salisbury, however, had felt it necessary to abandon this policy. In 1887 Britain entered into the Mediterranean Agreement with Italy and in 1891 had incorporated with the Triple Alliance enough to help drive Russia and France together. Agreement on the Near East lapsed as Russia turned to the Far East, and Britain looked to a positioning of the Ottoman Empire,
more regarded as highly suspicious in Germany, which wholly rejected the proposal. Resentful of German interference in the Transvaal, in controversy with France over Egypt, and alarmed over Russian moves in China, Britain was isolated in Europe in 1898. Given the situation of a German state dealing freely, Britain perceived an Anglo-German agreement as the most likely possibility to end this isolation.129

With German expansion abroad, an eventual conflict with Britain became unavoidable. The situation between the two nations was bad enough, and was aggravated more by German feelings toward Britain.130 Germans admired Britain but also felt inferior and resentful in regards to it. By the end of the century, Germany was far more anti-British than Britain was anti-German. The Kaiser, however, was never fully anti-British, and for tactical reasons, the German government pursued a policy of restraint. British resentment over the seizure of Kiaochow was only matched over concern with the growing German battle fleet. The more the fleet grew, the more challenged England felt and the more opposed it became to German expansion. From the German side, it became more important to maintain relations with England for fear of a continental war. Only an agreement

129 Oron James Hale, Publicity and Diplomacy, with Special Reference to England and Germany, 1890-1914. (New York, 1940), 171-75.

130 Kehr has an invaluable discussion of this in Englandhass und Weltpolitik, 149-75.
towards strengthening both navies would allow any rapprochement. Any attempts at improvement of relations following other lines would be futile if this fundamental element was not overcome.

The British were the first to initiate diplomatic activity in 1898. Britain was in a dilemma. There was risk of war with France in Africa, the coming of war in South Africa, Russian power in the Far East was growing, and on March 28 the German Reichstag passed the First Navy Law to construct the German battle fleet. On March 29, Joseph Chamberlain, British Colonial Secretary, met with German Ambassador Count Hatzfeldt, and explained that in light of its difficulties Britain would revise its world policy of nonalliance. Also, Britain would prefer a German alliance because of the small amount of problems between the two nations. Such an alliance would be equivalent to Britain joining the Triple Alliance, but Hatzfeldt took it to mean that Britain was ready to join the coalition, an error in understanding that helped considerably in bringing the negotiations to an end.131

The chance of an Anglo-German agreement was seriously hampered from both sides. From the start, the talks had a narrow political basis. Chamberlain and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Arthur Balfour, were the only cabinet members

131Rich, Holstein, II, 567-82. For the German side see G.P. 3779-3805.
to see an Anglo-German agreement as desirable. Berlin’s reaction to the initiative was cautious. No instructions for continuance of negotiations were given to Hatzfeldt. Bernhard von Buelow, Chancellor since 1897, saw the initiative as due to impending war with the French in Sudan. Britain met this suspicion with its own, seeing German requests for a clarification of its position with France as trying to force a rupture in Anglo-French relations for its own political ends.\footnote{ibid., 574f.} German restraint is explainable. Berlin feared Britain was using them to block Russian ambitions, but hoped that a worsening foreign position and the presence of a powerful German navy would force the British to offer better conditions.

By now it was clear that neither nation was committed to a full-fledged alliance. Only the intervention of Hermann von Eckardstein, London German Embassy Councillor, kept negotiations from ending at this point. But this intervention was without authorization and only meant to further Eckardstein’s political ambitions. The false information aborted a new round of talks. Though talks continued into early May, the idea of a general alliance was replaced by bilateral agreements on special problems such as the Baghdad Railway, Samoa, and the Portuguese colonies. Britain took these agreements as purely speculative. Germany seemed to be threatening Britain to force them to
make an Anglo-German treaty. In negotiations with Portugal, over colonial possessions and loans, Britain alienated Germany once more, while Germany persisted in its aim of possessing a colonial block in Africa. For all its promise, the possibility of an Anglo-German agreement had come to nothing.

After being isolated at the Hague Peace Conference of 1899 and attempts at exploiting British embarrassment in South Africa, Germany still remained neutral in the Boer War and even warded off French and Russian protests, receiving overtures of gratitude from England and violent reaction from the German public. German actions had amounted to support for the British and relations remained ambivalent. Buelow and Chamerberlain agreed to use this improvement of relations for a more serious rapprochement during the Kaiser’s visit to Britain. But German public opinion, excited to the point of hysteria by the English seizure of German mail boats in December 1899 and the passage of the Second Navy Law bringing the projected fleet to 36 capital ships negated attempts at rapprochement. The Boxer Rebellion in the summer of 1900 once again brought about hopes for some accommodation, since neither Germany nor Britain wished to see other nations make territorial gains

in China. Germany now hoped to bind Britain to the Triple Alliance. Germany realized that if it and Britain did not ally, France and Russia might well do so. Holstein wished to continue good relations with Britain, knowing that German naval ambitions were incompatible with this and consequently skeptical of them. In his view, closer ties should be sought without letting it appear that the initiative came from Germany. But again, Eckardstein's interference caused each side to believe too much in the other's eagerness for alliance. As a result, both sides waited for an overture from the other, an overture which was never to come.\footnote{134Rich, Holstein, II, 614-16; GP, 4511-698, 4980, 4979-5035, 5005.}

Nothing came out of Anglo-German diplomacy because Germany sought closer ties while Britain wanted only an understanding over such things as the Boer War and Samoa. Germany wished to bind Britain in a regular treaty to the Triple Alliance, a move which would have greatly increased the territorial security of Austria-Hungary and the strength of German dealings in the Balkans. However, concessions concerning the battle fleet, the area Britain considered critical, were out of the question. Britain would only agree to a loose arrangement on such terms. Negotiations, therefore, from 1898 to 1901, yielded nothing due to cross purposes. By December 1901, Britain no longer needed German support in South Africa and Germany was again convinced of
the impossibility of an Anglo-Franco-Russian Entente. On January 30, 1902, Britain entered an alliance with Japan. The British abandonment of its isolation policy with Germany as a partner was to be of serious detriment to German policy in the future. 135

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance began what Immanuel Geiss has called the 'containment' of German Weltpolitik. While this may not have been the original purpose behind the treaty, the realignments it set in motion, ending with the Triple Entente in 1907, certainly had that effect. A common interest of the treaty was halting Russian pressure in Korea. As in the Shimonoseki incident in 1895, Britain and Japan as naval powers faced the continental powers of Russia and Germany. Russian overtures to Germany, however, for a united Franco-German-Russian front demanding the status quo in China be maintained was rejected. Bülow put up the pretended fear that any alliance along these lines was encouragement to a Russian policy in Manchuria which could be embarrassing to Germany. Germany’s actual policy in the Far East as early as 1901 was to incite a war between Russia and Japan over Manchuria and Korea, though Russia and Japan needed little help from Germany in going to war. 136

The aim was to prevent cooperation between the two and bring Russia

135 G.P., ibid.
136 ibid., 5725, 5726.
closer to Germany in a fight against revolutionary forces in Europe. Buelow warned against pushing too quickly for fear of alarming the Russians into making an agreement with Japan and subsequently driving them closer to Britain. To his and the Kaiser’s disgust, these machinations to produce war seemed to have little effect, certainly not to the extent of rushing the Russians. By the autumn of 1903, tension was high but there was still no war. As the confrontation mounted in 1904, Germany remained neutral in hopes that a Russo-Japanese war would delay any rapprochement between Russia and Britain, and when the war broke out in February 1904, tried to turn Russian difficulties in the Far East against the Franco-Russian Alliance. This alliance was meant to counter threats from the Triple Alliance; France was not obliged to assist Russia against Japan, and its neutrality during the war was a strain to the alliance.

For Germany, the situation had become complicated. Renewal of the Triple Alliance was difficult due to the divergent aims of Austria-Hungary and Italy. Differences had not mattered so much when France was isolated and Italy’s imperialistic aims were not in conflict with Germany. After signing the Franco-Russian Alliance, France became more interested in a rapprochement with Italy.137 The secret agreements between France and Italy of November 1902 calling for neutrality in case of a war against any two

137Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 10.
other powers threatened the Triple Alliance. The question was asked whether the Triple Alliance was a defensive or offensive pact. The answer is that it was both. Behind the facade of defense, Austria-Hungary used the pact for gains in the Balkans and Germany in expansion of Weltpolitik. The Triple Alliance was renewed on June 28, 1902, but Italy’s liberalness and sympathy for the national movements in the Balkans threatened to widen the gulf between it and the more conservative members. In addition, Italy wanted territory in Austria and therefore saw no reason in being allied to her. From 1902 onwards, Italy drifted away from the Triple Alliance and in May 1915 opted to side with the Allies against Germany.\(^\text{138}\)

Even as the Triple alliance began to crumble, Britain and France entered into negotiations. Because of tension between Britain and Russia, the German Foreign Office thought any agreement impossible, but even the Tsar was urging France in that direction. The Entente itself, recognized on April 8, 1904, was not a formal alliance but pledged mutual diplomatic support over Egypt and Morocco. Still, the Entente began a phase of cooperation which soon evidenced itself in military and naval spheres. This Entente was the first real international move against

\(^{138}\text{F. Fellner, Der Dreibund (Vienna, 1906), 36-49.}\)
Germany now sought a diplomatic triumph. It became necessary to divert attention away from the long-term failure of Weltpolitik behind the new Entente. The weakness of Russia after its loss in the Russo-Japanese War and the weakness of the Franco-Russian Alliance due to French neutrality during the war offered Germany a chance to recoup its losses. Germany initiated a policy of isolating France by destroying the alliance with Russia and thus neutralizing the Anglo-French Entente. The first step was in concluding a commercial treaty with Russia in July 1904. This treaty made Russia dependent on exports from Germany. Russian resistance to this was weak due to its bleak situation. Exploitation of Russia in this ruthless fashion only increased resentment against Germany. Revolutionary unrest in 1905 found Germany resorting to the former idea of a Russo-German agreement. Had the policy been successful, the gains made by Germany would have been spectacular. Not only would France be isolated, but won over, following suit with a Russia entering bilateral agreements with Germany. Furthermore, such agreements would quiet fear of an emerging Triple Entente. Negotiations in November 1904 led to the first drafts of a Russo-German treaty, but French agreement

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was crucial. Russia would only agree to a treaty if France were asked to join. Germany, seeking only agreements with Russia which would draw France into an alliance where the German position would not be weakened, quickly lost interest and dropped negotiations. After the July 1905 failed meeting between the Tsar and Kaiser at Bjoerkoe, German leaders began to see the possibility of an encirclement of Germany by the other powers.140

Diplomatically, the failed attempts of the alliance at Bjoerkoe in the summer of 1905 had been doomed with the First Moroccan Crisis earlier in the year. Preceded by a political offensive against France, which brought about the downfall of the French Foreign Minister Declasse, Germany suggested an international conference in Morocco. Germany hoped to put conditions on French expansion in Morocco with the help of the international community. A diplomatic defeat in Morocco, Germany speculated, would force France to join a German-led coalition. But German speculation became diplomatic force. German pressure for the conference was handled clumsily. The Kaiser’s landing at Tangiers on March 31 in support of the Sultan only led to suspicion over Germany’s true motives, especially with the landing coming in the heels of the German rejection of a French initiative for bilateral agreements. It was clear to the world that Germany sought to humiliate France. This was also the first

140 G.P., 6118, 6127, 7349.
real test of the Entente.

The result of this diplomatic tangle was suspicion on the part of the rest of the world and a feeling of diplomatic victory in Germany due to Declasse's downfall. Germany now turned back to the East with the meeting at Bjoerkoe. But Russian reliance on German capital, which Germany used as a diplomatic weapon, was being supplemented through French loans once more. Also, the internal struggle among the Kaiser and his advisors over the provisions of the treaty dampened German enthusiasm. Add to this the fact that the Russian government would not endorse the signature of the Tsar over to a draft of the treaty (which Germany saw as binding) because it did not want to turn its back on France and give itself over to Germany, and it is easy to understand the failure to reach an agreement.\textsuperscript{141} The Franco-Russian Alliance, badly shaken for even a year, was solid once again.

The final development of the Moroccan Crisis was the Algeciras Conference of January-June 1906. By November 1905, it was clear that the separation of Russia from France would be difficult. Soon after entering the conference, Germany realized it had miscalculated. Only Austria supported the German position on Morocco. The other powers suspected Germany sought provocation for war with France.

\textsuperscript{141}\textit{ibid.}, 6202-58; and M.S. Anderson, \textit{The Eastern Question} (London, 1966), 58-89.
Faced with isolation, Holstein wished to abandon the conference, but Buelow and the Kaiser gave in to the principle of French control of Morocco in return for French concession to save German face. The Algeciras Act was signed on June 7, 1906. This diplomatic defeat highlighted what had too long been overlooked by Germany statesmen. Germany had overreached itself. The Entente was now firmly established and led directly to the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 and the isolation of Germany. Furthermore, Holstein fell from power, leaving Germany without any competent foreign policy direction. Because of its humiliation, Germany developed its fear of encirclement, resulting in the creation of the Schlieffen Plan, and a dislike of international conferences which could decide on German ambitions. International isolation had been painful and would decide the German course of action up to 1914.

142 Ibid., 7237-75.
Chapter V
Conclusions

The conflicting motives behind German foreign policy and diplomacy from 1890 to 1906 make it difficult to ascertain any one factor which affected the course of policy. Certainly before 1890 policy was more consistent, but that consistency had been deteriorating for several years. It is highly evident that one of Germany’s main problems was the lack of competent men willing to serve in the higher echelons of government. Several reasons exist for this. First of all, Bismarck had neglected to train others to take his place. Bismarck had wrapped the control of domestic and foreign policy around his own person. Whether this was for jealous motives or, in Bismarck’s view, there was simply no one able to perform the various duties involved as well as himself is unclear. But no matter the reasoning for it, Bismarck’s concentration of power was a detriment as his own control faltered and other forces began seeking political power.

Secondly, once Bismarck had gone, William began his own personal regime, attempting to take the place of Bismarck in governmental control. Had William possessed at least some of Bismarck’s ability, the course of German policy might have been more consistent. Also, the men he chose as his first two Chancellors, Leo von Caprivi and Chlodwig zu
Hohenlohe, were not chosen for shining political or diplomatic credentials (though Hohenlohe was a respected statesman on the local level and somewhat of a diplomat) but instead for ability to aid the Kaiser in his schemes by supporting him. He found this difficult with both Caprivi and Hohenlohe. In turn, these two men relied almost entirely in the end on subordinates in the Foreign Office for the making of foreign policy. Friedrich von Holstein is the most obvious example of this. It was he who formulated overall policy for the most part until 1897, and his manipulation of the field posts of the Foreign Office show that, like his Kaiser, he sought only those who would follow a line of policy dictated by him.

The men chosen for foreign diplomatic assignments leads to the third point. Those who assumed important posts abroad and in the Foreign Office after Bismarck were not of Bismarck's generation. They were of a generation born after 1861 or were too young to remember the events surrounding unification, and they saw power in a wholly different light from their predecessors. This in itself was not a serious detriment to the German position. But two influencing factors changed this generation gap into a fundamental defect of German policy making. First, there existed very few cautious men to guide the new policy of German world power as opposed to continental power. Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg and Georg Michaelis were cautious men, but
Bethmann Hollweg did not become Chancellor until 1909 (Michaelis not until 1917), and it might be speculated that the situation was already too difficult for even a cautious man to control. This is especially true with weak personalities such as those of Bethmann Hollweg and Michaelis. Secondly, the world situation in the 1890s changed too rapidly for German policy and policymakers to adapt.

As demonstrated in this study, the internal situation in Germany influencing policy up to 1890 had been one of preserving a status quo in and outside Germany to maintain German power. After 1890, those groups inside Germany who had led nationalistic tendencies found a new following. In retrospect, it is as if the passing on of Bismarck was a relief of some oppressive pressure on German dreams of world recognition. The Junkers envisioned controlling an expanding German base of power, the industrialists sought monetary gain through naval expansion, and the average German dreamed of a greater, more glorious Germany. The leaders of the German government, from the Kaiser downward, adopted and recklessly sought to achieve this popular sentiment. The shift in politics was sudden, from aristocratic, Honoratorieren- politik, to popular politics. Considering the outdated form of German government, this switch was all too sudden. The autocratic system did not have any efficient way of dealing with popular demands and
pressures of society. As a result, the popular sentiments adopted found immediate, autocratic expression instead of deliberated, rational application. Extended to policy, it produced a policy of risk, or crisis diplomacy, where the effects of any given crisis were observed and trying to take advantage once the effects were known.

While the flaws of government and William II’s amenableness to social tendencies are much to blame for the recklessness of policy, William’s close associates influenced him to such a degree that many times William’s ideas were those planted by others. Philipp von Eulenberg, Albert Ballin, and Fritz Krupp were not only his friends, but in ways mirror images of a multi-faceted personality. Eulenberg mirrored the Kaiser to a degree, but was conscious enough of his influence to use it. He tempered and polished William’s schemes. Ballin, the strong businessman, appealed to William’s aggressive, adventurous side. Krupp was weak, nervous, and found an empathetic relationship with William’s more timid side. These associations, though perhaps advantageous to William’s emotional states at times, certainly were detrimental to policy making.

Overall, the German government was an irrational institution. It combined old policies with new. It is no wonder that German policy making was chaotic. There were simply too many variables. It is even more obvious, as it should have been to the new men in Berlin in the 1890s, that
their erratic course in foreign policy would cause suspicion and distrust on the part of the other powers. Failing to notice this, despite warnings from more seasoned men, German foreign policy more or less bounced from situation to situation, crisis to crisis, each of ever-growing intensity, like a pinball going for tilt or oblivion. The failure to renew the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia marked the inauguration of this course. Chapter four of this study demonstrates that German policy had abandoned attempts at status quo agreements, and to a great degree long-term agreements, opting instead for crisis diplomacy. In short, German goals were short-term. No long range policy existed for the establishment of German world power. The desire for domination, the appetite for power, was so great that only policies which offered immediate satisfaction were sought. In the sense of a modern state, Germany was still far too backward to play the game of international politics responsibly.
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