1

THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR

GERMANY AS A WORLD POWER

To begin at the end.[1] At Versailles, on 28 June 1919, the Germans, albeit reluctantly, acceded to the peace terms imposed upon them by the victorious powers. Although Britain, France, and the United States had made most of the running, twenty-five other states were signatory to the treaty. By it, in article 231, they asserted not only the responsibility of the defeated for the loss and damage incurred as a result of the war, but also that the war had been 'imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies'.

The Germans had already made clear their rejection of the charge. On 27 May, in a fruitless endeavour to overcome the intransigence of the victors, four distinguished professors—two of them of seminal importance in the world of scholarship: Hans Delbrück, the effective founder of academic military history, and Max Weber, the political theorist—signed a memorandum claiming that Germany had fought a defensive war against Russian tsarism. Although beaten in the short-term debate, the German government fought back. A long-term project, examining not merely the immediate causes of the war but the entire range of international relations since 1871, was put in train. The Foreign Office assumed responsibility for the volumes, and ensured that the activities which it sponsored and the publications which it produced became the basis for all

[1] In addition to books specified in subsequent footnotes, the following works have been of general assistance throughout this chapter: Albertini, *Origins of the war*; Berghahn, *Germany and the approach of war*; Bridge and Bullen, *Great powers and the European states system*; Droz, *Les causes*; Fischer, *War of illusions*; Jarausch, *Enigmatic chancellor*; Joll, *Origins*; Kaiser, *Journal of modern history*, LV (1983), 442–74; Keiger, *France and the origins*; Kennedy, *Rise*; Koch (ed.), *Origins*; Krumeich, *Armaments*; Steiner, *Britain and the origins*; Williamson, *Politics of grand strategy*.

serious research working on the war's causes. Access to the documents once they had been published was denied to subsequent and possibly more independent scholars; a separate Reichstag inquiry—designed originally by the left to put the blame on the right, and then by the right to blame the left—dragged on and was overtaken; and the tactic of placing the events of July 1914 in the context of the previous decades successfully muddied the precise issue of war guilt.[2] Gradually the Germans' rejection of article 231 gained ground, although more conspicuously in Britain and America than in France. The Versailles Treaty itself was not ratified by the United States Senate and it became abundantly clear that the peace settlement had not resolved the frontier problems of eastern and central Europe in a convincing manner. In particular, the injustices done to Germans residing in the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian empire came to be widely recognized.

In Britain in 1933 Lloyd George, who in July 1911—three years before the outbreak of the war—had as chancellor of the exchequer delivered a clear warning to Germany, and who in December 1918 had been returned to power as prime minister on a wave of anti-German sentiment, began his war memoirs by stating that nobody in July 1914 had wanted European war, that nobody had expected it, and that 'the nations slithered over the brink'.[3] In the United States Sidney B. Fay, professor of history at Harvard, wrote in *The origins of the world war*, first published in 1928, that 'all the powers were more or less responsible', and that 'the War was caused by the system of international anarchy involved in alliances, armaments and secret diplomacy'.[4] By shifting the blame to '-isms' rather than individuals, to militarism, nationalism, and economic imperialism, Fay exculpated Germany. Only by re-emphasizing the immediate causes of the war, by stating that it was the resolve of Germany and Austria-Hungary during the crisis of July 1914 that enabled the war to occur, could the doyen of France's war historians, Pierre Renouvin, put across a Germanophobe perspective.[5] In the 1930s, for most of the English-speaking world, as indeed for Germany, the arguments of Fay and Lloyd George were the current orthodoxy.

The Second World War changed this perspective, albeit gradually rather than immediately. From the vantage-point of the second half of the century the two world wars could be seen as part of a whole, the years 1918 to 1939 representing a truce rather than a definitive break. Furthermore, given the relative lack of controversy about the origins of the second war, that it was caused by German aggression, and that Hitler—whether as leader of an enraptured German people or as embodiment of a deeply-rooted national will—was the prime culprit, it became possible to project back onto Germany

[2] Langdon, *July 1914*, 20–65; Herwig, *International Security*, XII (1972), 5–44; Droz, *Les causes*, 12–19.
[3] Lloyd George, *War memoirs*, i. 32.
[4] Fay, *Origins of the world war*, i. 2.
[5] Renouvin, *La Crise européenne*, 1939 edn., 183.

before 1933 the insights and continuities derived from a study of Nazi Germany.

In particular, the causes of the First World War could be re-examined in the light of those of the Second. The debate was also set in a general context, that of the peculiarities of Germany history, of Germany's *Sonderweg* (special path). Simply put, Germany was portrayed as a state where militarism and authoritarianism—partly owing to its Prussian origins, partly to its strategically vulnerable position—had been more easily exploited by leaders of a conservative and expansionist bent. The political thought of the Enlightenment and the bourgeois legacy of industrialization, which in west European states left a grounding of constitutionalism, in Germany was suborned by nationalism. The right used nationalism for its own conservative ends, and liberalism—in 1813, 1848, and 1919—did not take strong root. Hitler was presented as the climax of what went before.

It was against this background that the more specific controversy over the origins of the First World War was renewed. The key works, *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (*Germany's aims in the First World War*) and *Krieg der Illusionen* (*The war of illusions*), both by Fritz Fischer and published in 1961 and 1969 respectively, placed the burden of war guilt once again at the feet of Germany. Much of the detail of Fischer's case will be considered later in this book. Despite their opaque and dense presentation and despite the lack of a succinct argument, Fischer's books rent German historians into deeply entrenched camps. For them, more than for historians of other nationalities, the issue was fraught, since the overall thesis—the arguments about *Sonderweg* and the ongoing preoccupation with the effect of Hitler—concerned continuity in German history, and therefore was as much about Germany's current identity as about its past. The subtleties and differences of the interpretations put forward within the two camps were subsumed by the fundamental divide. Fischer's opponents, who constituted the majority, had to accept combat on Fischer's terms: in other words, they had to address the question of German expansionism before 1914, to ask whether Germany was prepared to go to war in fulfilment of its aims, to decide whether all the dominant groups in pre-war German society could be found culpable, and to consider whether their motivation was to use foreign policy to avert an internal social and political crisis. Fischer himself, in the foreword to *Krieg der Illusionen*, spelled out the primacy of domestic policy:

> the aim was to consolidate the position of the ruling classes with a successful imperialist foreign policy, indeed it was hoped a war would resolve the growing social tensions.... By 1912 at any rate the domestic crisis was apparent. The decision to go to war in 1914 was, in addition to the domestic considerations, based above all on military reflections which in turn depended on economic and political objectives. All these factors—and as regards both the masses and the Emperor there were also the

psychological elements—the Government was forced to consider. If one looks at all these forces it is possible to see a clear continuity of aim before and during the war.[6]

In 1967 Immanuel Geiss, a pupil of Fischer, put it more pithily:

> The determination of the German Empire—the most powerful conservative force in the world after Tsarist Russia—to uphold the conservative and monarchic principles by any means against the rising flood of democracy, plus its *Weltpolitik*, made war inevitable.[7]

In practice, this sort of argument is very hard to substantiate in precise terms from the evidence now available. But the challenge that Fischer, Geiss, and others issued compels historians—in addition to undertaking a fundamental reconsideration of the role of Germany—to make two connections not so readily made in the 1930s. Both are connections which come more easily to a generation to whom nuclear weapons—by finding their role as deterrents rather than as weapons of war—link more closely the issues of war and peace, and at the same time obscure the divisions between purely military functions and those of civilian society. First, the Fischer controversy forces historians to dispense with their traditional division between the causes of a war, a long-standing interest of academics and exhaustively worked over in undergraduate essays, and its course, the task of military historians and all too often neglected by those same undergraduates. Fischer's revisionism began with the development of German war aims during the war itself, and worked backwards to the war's origins, finding continuity between the two and using one to illuminate the other. In 1934, by contrast, C. R. M. F. Cruttwell's history of the war, reprinted as recently as 1991, felt it unnecessary to discuss the war's origins. Secondly, Fischer restated the interconnection between domestic policy and foreign policy. The point was well taken: recent studies of other nations and the origins of the war, and of their subsequent aims, have not been able to treat foreign policy as a discrete entity. Even more must this apply to the conduct of the war itself, frequently described as the first total war and entailing the mobilization of all the belligerents' industrial and economic resources.

Therefore, the initial task must be—as it was for the peacemakers of 1919—to consider Germany and its role in the origins of the war.

On 18 January 1871, at Versailles, in the same hall where, almost five decades later, the leaders of the new republic would have to accept defeat and humiliation, the king of Prussia was declared emperor of a united Germany. Technically the new nation was a federation: the independent German states retained

[6] Fischer, *War of illusions*, pp. viii–ix; on Fischer's reaction to the debate, see Fisher *World power or decline*; Droz, *Les causes*, provides an excellent historiographical survey.

[7] I. Geiss, 'Origins of the first world war', in Koch (ed.), *Origins*, 46.

their own monarchs, assemblies, taxation, and—in the cases of Saxony, Württemberg, and Bavaria (as well as Prussia)—their own armed forces. To balance the national parliament, the Reichstag, which was elected by universal manhood suffrage and by a secret ballot, there was an upper chamber, the Bundesrat, made up of representatives of the individual federal states. But in practice the achievement of unification, although long sought by liberal nationalists, was not a triumph for constitutionalism but for the monarchical-aristocratic principle on the one hand and for Prussia on the other. In ousting Austria from Germany, and in effecting unification, Bismarck and Prussian junkerdom had made fellow-travellers of the national liberals, had usurped nationalism for conservative ends, and had thus split liberal loyalties. Furthermore, universal suffrage, by linking the lower classes more closely as allies of the monarchy, was designed to isolate the liberals yet further. The Reichstag was therefore weak because its political parties were weak; furthermore, even should they manage to co-operate effectively, the constitution was so designed that Prussia would act as a counterweight. Prussia held seventeen out of fifty-eight votes in the Bundesrat: it was therefore in a position to block legislation. And the Prussian Chamber of Deputies was elected not by universal suffrage, but by a complicated three-class franchise weighted according to the amount of tax paid. The majority of federal ministers either held office by virtue of their Prussian appointment (the Prussian minister of war was de facto minister for all Germany) or were themselves Prussian: including the chancellor, they were accountable not to the Reichstag but to the Kaiser. The Kaiser himself, in addition to being the king of Prussia, had direct control of those areas of government where Germany most manifested itself as a nation, in foreign policy and in control of the army.

Implicit, therefore, within the new Germany was a host of interlocking structural tensions that required the mollifications of national success and victory on the battlefield. Fundamental was Germany's status as an industrializing power: Germany industrialized late but very rapidly, the value of her output increasing well over six times between 1855 and 1913. In 1870 agriculture still contributed 40 per cent of the total national product and employed 45 per cent of the total active population, but by 1910 it constituted 25 per cent of the total national product and as early as 1895 employed only 36 per cent of the workforce.[8] A political structure designed to meet the needs of an agricultural aristocracy abetted by a compliant peasantry increasingly did not reflect the true range of German society. Economic power shifted from Westphalia to the Ruhr, from East Prussia to Silesia; the contrast between Germany's ill-adapted constitution on the one hand and the envy of western liberals for the quality and rigour of its secondary and higher education on the other became more

[8] Tables in Trebilcock, *Industrialisation*, 433–5.

pronounced. With the growth of the urban working class, the device of universal suffrage posed a new threat to the Bismarckian settlement, that of socialism. A united and effective majority in the Reichstag could upset the checks and balances so carefully built into the constitution. If this were to happen, the highly personalized nature of Germany's government and the latent differences between the states could be exposed. Germany in 1871 was sufficiently centralized to upset the feelings of individual states, particularly those of Bavaria but also of Prussia, and yet insufficiently united to get the true benefits of central government. Given the divisions within the Reichstag, the chancellor's role was to manage the parties, to play one off against another; and yet he himself remained without a true party base. His authority rested on the support of the Kaiser and on the personal relationship between the two of them. This combination of socio-economic trends at one extreme and of individual primacy at the other highlighted the central ambiguity with regard to the constitution itself: because it was given from above, it could as easily be taken away. Political rights were not axiomatic.

In 1888 Wilhelm II ascended the throne, his father's reign cut short by cancer of the throat. The new Kaiser was young, energetic, and for many the representative of the waxing vigour of Germany itself. But the immaturity concomitant with these qualities was never outgrown, never supplemented with the wisdom of experience. 'Not quite sane' was a description that readily occurred to observers. His withered arm had prompted the withdrawal of his mother's love, leaving him deeply insecure, with a strong animosity towards her and towards her native land of Britain. He constantly asserted his personality and prejudices, but proved himself unable to sustain the hard work or the serious thought required to endow them with consistency. Anxious to be the shining leader, he succeeded only in endowing his decisions with theatricality rather than substance. The aged Bismarck concluded that, 'The Kaiser is like a balloon. If you do not hold fast to the string, you never know where he will be off to.'[9]

The Kaiser was the public image of Germany: both before and during the war his upturned moustache and spiked helmet shaped foreigners' perceptions. Nor was the image without reality. The Kaiser exercised personal rule, in which he devoutly believed, and which was allowed him by the ambiguities of the constitution, in two key ways. First, he had the right of appointment to all major governmental and service posts; and secondly, once appointed, a large number of those officials had the privilege of direct audience with the monarch. The army was the main buttress to Wilhelm's idea of monarchical

[9] Quoted by Paul Kennedy, in Röhl and Sombart (eds.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 155. Much of what follows rests on the essays in this book, particularly those of Röhl and Deist, and on Isabel V. Hull, *The entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II*.

MAP 1. EUROPE IN 1914

authority, and by 1914 over forty officers—including all those commanding the military districts of Germany—had access to him. In addition, his personal entourage at court was increasingly dominated by military influences. Wilhelm himself said that it was in regimental life that he found the security, the family and friends that he had hitherto lacked. But the officers with whom he surrounded himself were even more conservative and traditional than the officer corps as a whole. Nine out of ten came from noble families, and nineteen out of twenty from landowning or military backgrounds; the cavalry dominated over the technical arms, and the guards over other types of infantry. Furthermore, once attached to the court an officer might stay a very long time: 108 served continuously throughout the reign. The entourage constituted a cocoon into which the influences of industry and commerce, western and southern Germany could only rarely penetrate. The dominance of these military and traditional influences was never complete, but gradually—and especially after 1906–8—it grew. And as it grew the contrast between it and the rest of the army increased also. A major plank of the Kaiser's personal rule was his supreme command of the armed forces, but his grasp of the complexities of exercising that command remained rudimentary.

Moreover, it was in foreign policy that the Kaiser's personal rule remained most clearly untrammelled by constitutional considerations, and it was through imperialism that the Kaiser sought to legitimize the authority which he craved.

Germany's position in Europe after 1871 was at once threatening and vulnerable—threatening because central Europe was now dominated by a major power, casting shadows over Russia to the east and France to the west, and vulnerable because the new state had long, exposed land frontiers in the same directions. For Germany the danger of a revivified France, anxious to revenge the defeat of 1870–1 and to regain the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, was real enough: the memory of Napoleon's victories and the subsequent French occupation of Germany coloured Bismarck's determination that France should be weak and isolated as long as possible. But simultaneously Bismarck sought to reassure the states of Europe, to accustom them to the presence of a united and powerful Germany. The alliance with Austria-Hungary of 1879, guaranteeing mutual support in the event of an attack by Russia, therefore had stability as its primary objective. Bismarck hoped to restrain Austria in its dealings with Russia, and to persuade Russia that, rather than war with Germany, it should seek better relations. In 1882 Italy joined Germany and Austria-Hungary, and thus the Triple Alliance came into being.

In 1890 Wilhelm dismissed Bismarck—with good reason, as the chancellor was increasingly dominated by his own vanities and decreasingly able to manage the Reichstag. The situation which Bismarck left was in large measure

the legacy of the settlement which he had achieved in 1871. Agricultural depression and economic recession had highlighted the differences between East Elbian grain producers anxious to protect their frontier with high tariffs against imported food (particularly from Russia) on the one hand, and the representatives of new industry keen to free trade so as to secure markets for their manufactured goods on the other. The mutually reinforcing weaknesses of the Reichstag and of its parties encouraged these economic interest groups to form extra-parliamentary pressure groups, which themselves confirmed the weakness of the political structures. Within the Reichstag the effects of universal suffrage began to be felt as the social democrat vote almost trebled between 1877 and 1890, and reached over 2 million—or 27 per cent of the whole—in 1898. The split in the liberal vote, already exploited by Bismarck, was deepened as the national liberals supported the interests of industry, while the left-wing liberals, the Progressives, lacked organization and were unclear in their response to social democracy. The independent peasant farmer, the small shopkeeper, the white-collar worker—the so-called *Mittelstand* of Germany—alienated by big business and hence by national liberalism, turned to conservatism, or—if Catholic—to the Catholic Centre party. To combat these fissiparous tendencies and, above all, to rally industry and agriculture to a common cause and to oppose socialism, Germany needed—it was argued increasingly from 1895—a policy that would unite and reconcile rather than divide, a *Sammlungspolitik*.

The instrument chosen to effect the rallying of Germany was one that lay specifically within the Kaiser's competence, a more nationalist and imperialist foreign policy. It was Wilhelm who appointed the main architect of *Weltpolitik*, Bernhard von Bülow, first as foreign minister in 1897 and then in 1900 as chancellor, and in 1897 Bülow himself stated that he would be a 'tool' of the Kaiser's personal rule.[10] Bülow subscribed to the feeling of inevitability associated with German overseas expansion, the product of Germany's status as a major power and of the need for markets to satisfy its burgeoning manufacturing industry. In the late nineteenth century interstate relations frequently employed the vocabulary of social Darwinism. The belief that man's environment, rather than his individuality, determined his behaviour challenged liberal views of the relationship between the individual and the state. Rather than a minimalist role for the latter to allow the fruition of the former, social Darwinism suggested the subordination of the first to the second, and went on to clothe the nation with an identity and vitality of its own. States were dynamic entities, rising or declining according to fitness. Max Weber, in his inaugural lecture as professor of political economy at the University of Freiburg in 1895, reminded his countrymen:

[10] Hull, *The entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 97; see also Craig, *Modern Germany*, 273.

We must understand that the unification of Germany was a youthful prank performed by the nation in its old age and that, because of its expensiveness, it would have been better left undone if it was meant to be the end and not the beginning of a German policy of world power.[11]

But the connection between *Weltpolitik* and the war's outbreak is not a direct one. What *Weltpolitik* certainly did not imply was territorial expansion within Europe: the incorporation of subordinate non-national groupings into a greater *Reich* could only promote the fissiparous tendencies *Weltpolitik* was designed to dampen. Rather, the first focus of *Weltpolitik* could not have been geographically more distant—its hub was China and its apogee the acquisition of Kiaochow in 1897.[12] That Germany should wish to obtain colonies did not in itself surprise or alarm to an excessive degree the power most likely to be affected by that decision, Great Britain. In 1890 the two countries collaborated to the extent of exchanging Heligoland and Zanzibar. But as the disparate threads of domestic, colonial, and naval policy were woven together, so the whole acquired a vocabulary that was much more threatening to the status quo. The notion of pax Germanica replacing the pax Britannica, however irenic in theory, promised radical revisionism in practice. By 1914 the reality had not come close to matching the rhetoric. The empire which Germany had acquired barely deserved the title: it covered a million square miles, attracted one in a thousand of Germany's emigrants, absorbed a paltry 3.8 per cent of Germany's overseas investment, and accounted for 0.5 per cent of its overseas trade.[13] It was the manner of German foreign policy more than its objects, let alone its achievements, which was to provoke the other powers before 1914.

Nor was the conclusion that German objectives remained consonant with peace a misplaced one. For all the provocative phrases of Weber or his publicist, Friedrich Naumann, Bülow's objectives remained domestic. The purpose of *Weltpolitik* was to achieve integration within Germany, to reconcile agriculture and industry, to woo social democracy. By pointing liberalism overseas, in the pursuit of markets, Bülow hoped to minimize the friction with conservatism, and to produce the economic benefits which might still the political demands of the workers. Politically, *Weltpolitik* manifested itself in a series of bargains between interest groups; externally, it aimed at a sequence of minor successes. It spoke the language of a grand design but practised short-term expediency. However, the longer it survived the more its rhetoric created exaggerated popular expectations. And, given that *Sammlungspolitik* rested on

[11] Quoted by Craig, in *New York Review of Books*, 18 Feb. 1988 (referring to Mommsen, *Weber*).

[12] Peter Winzen, 'Zur Genesis von Weltmacht—Konzept und Weltpolitik', in Röhl (ed.), *Der Ort Kaiser Wilhelms II.*

[13] Steiner, *Britain and the origins*, 68–71; Herwig, *Luxury fleet*, ch. 6, esp. pp. 106–7.

ad hoc compromise, it had constantly to present itself with new targets.[14] Furthermore, the principal method used to implement *Weltpolitik*, the creation of a sizeable German navy, carried with it all the elements that would generate fresh problems—the challenge to Britain as a seapower, the need for hyperbolic and expansionist propaganda to get financial support for ship construction, and the potential subordination of diplomacy to arms policy. Much of Bülow's effort in foreign policy was to be directed to providing the cover for the fleet's creation.

As with *Weltpolitik* and Bülow, so with the navy and its architect, Alfred von Tirpitz, the Kaiser's role was direct and vital. Wilhelm's personal passion for his fleet was the customary blend of absurdity and energetic enthusiasm. He felt it appropriate to wear his admiral's uniform to performances of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer*, and yet was fired by technical interests in the ships of the British navy and in 1894 read Alfred Thayer Mahan's influential book *The influence of seapower upon history*. Seeing Germany as a potential colonial power, Wilhelm at first advocated the construction of cruisers, but in 1895 the naval high command recommended the creation of a battle fleet able to meet the French or the Russians in a major action in home waters. It argued that Germany's ability to flex its oceanic muscles was entirely dependent on its capacity to break out of the North Sea, and thus cruisers could not be effective in isolation but only as adjuncts to battleships. The Kaiser was convinced and ordered the planning of a fleet of twenty-five battleships. The Reichstag was less easily persuaded, and so in 1896–7 the need for a press campaign to popularize the navy and thus win over the Reichstag had become clear. In June 1897 the Kaiser appointed Tirpitz, still a relatively junior admiral, to head the Imperial Naval Office; his was the responsibility of guiding the naval programme through the Reichstag.[15]

The domestic functions of the navy laws were conciliatory. The navy was above all a creature of the new Germany, not of the old Prussia: unlike the army, it was a product of unification, an armed service that belonged to all the nation, and particularly to the industrialized middle class. Its officer corps was more bourgeois than that of the army (although its members were socially divided from within, and its middle-class origins did not prevent it from aping the mannerisms of the Prussian aristocracy). The creation of a regular building pattern was designed to please heavy industry, to provide a buffer against cyclical depression, and to take the sting out of socialism by ensuring full employment. These were the strengths on which Tirpitz could base his propaganda effort: he established an information service in the naval office to

[14] Amidst the vast literature on this subject, Kaiser, *Journal of Modern History*, LV (1983), 442–74, speaks much sense.

[15] The main works in English on the naval programme are Herwig, *Luxury fleet*, and Steinberg, *Yesterday's deterrent*.

liaise with the press, and by 1914 the Navy League—which was founded in 1898—could boast a membership of over a million. Tirpitz proved a consummate manager of the Reichstag, of its parties and its parliamentary committees, persuading its deputies that the fleet was a vital auxiliary to the expansion of German overseas trade, that its size would be modest and its purpose defensive, and that a fixed programme which would tie the Reichstag was not a programme without controls. When opposition within parliament became too strong, when liberal imperialism began to smell a rat, Tirpitz cowed it with the popular support of the pressure groups—the Colonial Society and the Pan-German League, and in due course the Navy League. The broad lines of his policy—the emphasis on battleships rather than cruisers, and the calculation of the fleet's overall size on the basis of arithmetic rather than combat efficiency—had already been established before he took up office. In 1898 the Reichstag approved a target of nineteen battleships, eight armoured cruisers, and twelve large and thirty light cruisers, to be completed by April 1904; it also agreed that battleships should be replaced every twenty-five years. In 1900 a new law aimed for thirty-eight battleships, twenty armoured cruisers, and thirty-eight light cruisers. Tirpitz planned that Germany should possess sixty capital ships by 1920, and hoped to have the cycle of their replacement so fixed that the Reichstag's approval would be redundant and the Kaiser's whims irrelevant.

Tirpitz had hoodwinked the Reichstag, both as to his domestic objectives and as to his international aims. The naval staff continued to plan for war with France or Russia, and viewed the possibility of hostilities against Britain with horror. But from the outset Tirpitz's putative enemy was the Royal Navy. He shared the Anglophobia of his royal master, and he linked commercial rivalry with Britain to the navalist propaganda emanating from the Imperial Naval Office. Tirpitz hoped to create a sufficiently large fleet to ensure that the Royal Navy would not risk a naval battle with the Germans for fear that—even if it won the engagement—it would then be too weak to face a third naval power. He recognized the possibility of a pre-emptive strike by the British before the German fleet was complete, a rerun of Nelson's sinking of the Danish fleet in harbour at Copenhagen, and so required Bülow's foreign policy to create the right conditions to cover the period of vulnerability by mollifying the British and even seeking agreement with them. On almost every count, Tirpitz's calculations with regard to likely British responses proved to be wrong.

Britain put its foreign policy through a rapid and dramatic reorientation after 1900. However, this was less the product of the new circumstances in Europe, and more a response to an accumulation of older and more global pressures. Until the middle years of the nineteenth century Britain led the world in industrial production; free trade guaranteed access to world markets

because no other country could manufacture so much so cheaply. But from then on other countries—particularly the United States and Germany—began to catch up: in 1870 Britain commanded 32 per cent of the world's manufacturing capacity, but by 1910 it had only 14.7 percent, behind both Germany (15.9 per cent) and the United States (35.3 per cent).[16] London remained the hub of the world's banking, insurance, and shipping markets until 1914, and Britain's invisible exports therefore helped mask its relative industrial decline. Nonetheless, it followed that for some the doctrinaire commitment to free trade—appropriate to the days of easy industrial supremacy—became an increasing, if self-imposed, burden. Given British opposition to protection, formal empire, the direct control of territory, with its guaranteed markets made more economic sense in 1900 than it had in 1850. However, the empire itself was enormously expensive, particularly in relation to the costs of its defence. The colonial ambitions of the other, now industrialized, European powers meant that the yardsticks by which the forces had to be judged were not simply—if they ever had been—the technological and military margin sufficient to defeat Zulus or Pathans. Seapower was the primary means by which free trade had been sustained, and by which both the home country and the colonies guarded against external attack. But what had been a source of stability before the industrialization of the continental powers became a well-spring for insecurity thereafter. Other nations transformed their financial administration and their banking systems, and proved willing to contract debts to fund naval programmes. The introduction of the iron-clad, steam-powered battleship in 1860, and the decision in 1889 that the Royal Navy should be maintained at sufficient strength to be at least equal to the next two ranking naval powers assumed that Britain's maritime rivals would restrain themselves. They did not, and Britain's defence spending soared. In 1884 British naval expenditure was £10.7 million; by 1899—in a period of relatively constant prices—it was £24.1 million (and it was to double again by 1914). Britain's total expenditure on the navy in the seven-year period 1897 to 1904 was 78 per cent higher than in the previous septennium.[17] Britain had perforce to adopt policies which eased the fiscal burdens of naval and imperial responsibility. The Boer War, which had cost £200 million and in which not far short of half a million men had served, vividly highlighted in double fashion the precarious nature of Britain's position. The war had been marked by early defeats and had been protracted; the commitment to it had left Britain's other possessions vulnerable and exposed. In 1901 Britain eased its problems in the western hemisphere with an agreement with the United States. In January 1902 it followed this up with a treaty with Japan, like America a rising naval power: the purpose of the treaty

[16] Kennedy, *Anglo-German antagonism*, 291.
[17] Offer, *First World War*, 6; Sumida, *In defence of naval supremacy*, 7, 13–23.

was limited and local, to help Britain balance Russia in the Far East and to ease the Royal Navy of its burdens in Chinese waters.

The German naval laws and the tub-thumping Teutonic exploitation of British embarrassment in South Africa did not at this stage produce a Eurocentric reconstruction of British strategy and diplomacy. German behaviour between 1898 and 1901 did mean that whatever attractions an Anglo-German alliance might have had for Britain were dissipated. But the end of British isolation in relation to Europe was determined by the relative position of the European powers in Africa and Asia, not within Europe itself. Improved relations with France and Russia, the former aspiring to control of North Africa and the Mediterranean, and thus challenging British control of Egypt and the Suez route to India, and the latter expanding south and east, also towards India, were the keys of future imperial policy.

Russia, spurned by a Germany focusing its foreign policy on the simplicities of the Triple Alliance after Bismarck's fall in 1890, and anxious for French loans to finance its industrialization, had come to terms with France between 1891 and 1894. The two powers ratified a military convention by which each agreed to defend the other in the event of a German attack, or of a German-supported attack by Austria-Hungary on Russia or by Italy on France: French and Russian mobilization was to follow immediately on the mobilization of any member of the Triple Alliance. Thus, in 1904 the Russo-Japanese War in Manchuria found France allied to the former and Britain to the latter; one pressure for an Anglo-French rapprochement was that both were wedded to a policy of mutual restraint in relation to Manchuria. However, the key motivation for France behind the affirmation of the *entente cordiale*, effected on 8 April of that year, was—as for Britain—imperial. After the drubbing of 1870, French ambitions—or those in France possessed of ambition—had looked away from the metropolis to North Africa. Delcassé, foreign minister from 1898, was anxious to expand France's influence from its colony, Algeria, into Morocco, to the exclusion of Germany. Britain, by agreement with France on the Moroccan question, in return secured its own controls over the gates of the Mediterranean, Gibraltar and Egypt, and hence over the route to India, the focus of the empire. The Entente was intended to affect the naval balance here and not in the North Sea.[18]

By 1904, therefore, the context in which Bülow's *Weltpolitik* was set seemed very different from that of 1897. The composing of French and British differences, the existence of secret clauses in this agreement (which actually concerned the division of Morocco), and the more formal Franco-Russian alliance, conjoined to play on German insecurities. Convinced that France wanted revenge for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, determined that Britain

[18] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, chs. 1 and 2.

would be challenged by the naval programme, and terrified by the strategic dilemma of a war on both its western and eastern fronts simultaneously, Germany projected its fears onto its putative opponents and in due course gave its imaginings a reality which in origin they need not have had.

German policy therefore aimed to woo Russia from France or to split France from Britain. Given Russia's weakness in 1904–5, its defeat at the hands of the Japanese and its subsequent revolution, the opportunities for the former seemed somewhat greater. In the event Russia saw any treaty with Germany as incompatible with its commitments to France, resisting the German offer of a defensive alliance in October 1904 and refusing to ratify the agreement reached between the Kaiser and the Tsar at Björkö in July 1905. The opportunity to divide Britain and France was presented by French policy in Morocco. Moroccan independence was guaranteed by the 1880 Madrid Convention. Delcassé's advancement of French interests was hardly compatible with Moroccan integrity, and on 31 March 1905 the Kaiser landed at Tangiers and declared his support for the Sultan's bid to maintain his independence.

On the face of it, despite its provocative nature, the Kaiser's action was fully justified and deserving of success. Both the French prime minister and French public opinion seemed to think so, and Delcassé—the author of France's Moroccan policy—was ousted by June. But divided counsels within Germany, themselves a reflection of the lack of centralized control, and the absence of diplomatic sensitivity turned success into humiliation.

What it seems fairly clear that Germany did *not* want was war. Many of those who argue that Germany did not plan for war in 1914 point to the 1905 crisis and show how much more favourable to Germany the international position was at that juncture. The French army was still reeling from the Dreyfus affair and from the Third Republic's continuing uncertainty as to its political loyalties. The British army was both small and focused on India. Above all, Russia's preoccupation with Japan removed the threat of a war on two fronts. The chief of the German general staff, Alfred von Schlieffen, recognized the opportunity for a preventive war. But the focus of the general staff's planning was German security in Europe; whatever German objectives in Morocco, they were not in the first instance concerned with that. Furthermore, Schlieffen's was not necessarily the dominant voice in German military counsels, let alone in Germany more generally. Of late the navy had enjoyed the higher profile, and yet Tirpitz did not regard the German fleet as ready to take on the Royal Navy. Indeed, the German navy in 1905 had no operational plan for war with Britain or with Britain and France.[19] Schlieffen recognized that the army did not have the means to attack Britain should Britain support France. Moreover,

[19] On German naval plans, see Lambi, *Navy and German power politics*, esp. 242–4, 257–60.

both Germany's allies, Italy and Austria-Hungary, looked as militarily weak as did Germany's putative opponents. In these circumstances, the caution uttered by the Prussian minister of war, von Einem, was compelling—and gained force when Schlieffen fell sick in the summer. Von Einem was particularly concerned by the fact that France had completed the re-equipment of its army with quick-firing field artillery but Germany had not.[20]

Weltpolitik, in other words a diplomatic success, not war, was Germany's purpose in 1905. But, behind the overall aim of disrupting the Entente, middle-distance German objectives diverged. Wilhelm stood for little more than he had publicly declared: an open door to Morocco was necessary given the volume of German trade. But others saw the opportunity to exchange concessions to the French for German gains elsewhere, and Friedrich von Holstein of the Foreign Ministry—to whom Bülow gave a free hand—wanted to emphasize to France the dangers of disregarding Germany.[21] The foreign office realized that militarizing the crisis, threatening war, albeit with no intention of going to war, could help it achieve these wider objectives. Delcassé regarded this posturing as bluff, but others in France, all too conscious of their military weakness, were less sure. Germany insisted on the summoning of a conference at Algeçiras in January 1906 to discuss the Moroccan question. But at the same time the Kaiser made it clear that Germany would not fight. Thus, in the subsequent deliberations Germany harvested all the disadvantages and none of the benefits that its earlier high-handedness had promised. Britain was provoked into hardening its support of France; furthermore, the Triple Alliance showed its weakness, Italy backing the Entente (and thus reflecting its own awareness of the relative naval balance in the Mediterranean) and Austria-Hungary urging Germany to be more conciliatory. The conference left France in a dominant position in Morocco.

The consequence of this, the first Moroccan crisis, was thus the reverse of that intended by Germany. The Entente gained a dynamism which it had hitherto lacked. Germany was plainly using colonial questions as an instrument in European and great power politics. Such an approach found a ready response within France. French colonial activity had been in part a substitute for the loss of status in Europe, the acquisition of empire a compensation for forfeiting Alsace-Lorraine. Popular enthusiasm for colonialism was therefore yoked to continental rivalries. Delcassé had, after all, sought out an alliance with Britain precisely to enable France the better to counter Germany. Many of the permanent civil servants within the Foreign Ministry, particularly those of the younger generation, were characterized by a blend of nationalism, colonialism, and anti-Germanism: with Delcassé's fall, French foreign policy lacked a

[20] Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian war planning*, 207–8; Herrmann, *Arming of Europe*, 30–5, 37–41, 52–5; Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 68–75.
[21] Balfour, *Kaiser*, 252–4.

guiding ministerial hand, and the civil servants became correspondingly more powerful.[22]

But it was the change in British attitudes that was really decisive in confirming the shift, and in directing colonial rivalries back into a European context. Late-nineteenth-century colonial rivalry has often been portrayed as an extra-European safety valve for the tensions of the great powers. In 1898 the French Colonel Marchand and Britain's General Kitchener had glared at each other at Fashoda, but both countries had treated their competition for the Upper Nile as a purely African problem. In 1902 and 1904 Britain had settled with Japan and France at least in order to remain isolated from Europe. But during the course of 1905 German behaviour caused the British to see the Moroccan crisis less as a colonial issue and increasingly as a European one. The Anglo-German rivalry, whose roots extended back over the previous three decades, and which had been nurtured by economic competition, now found clear political expression.

Germany's naval challenge was only a part, although the most concrete manifestation, of the two powers' mutual antagonism. The build-up of the Royal Navy pre-dated the 1898 German naval law: it was a product of the introduction of the iron-clad battleship, the two-power standard, and the need to sustain a consistent pattern of orders in order to use shipyard and industrial capacity effectively. But by 1901 the Admiralty was seriously worried by Germany's plans, and thereafter Germany provided the thrust to British naval policy. On the day before Trafalgar Day 1904 'Jackie' Fisher was appointed First Sea Lord. His brief was to cut naval spending, an objective which he believed he could achieve while simultaneously delivering gains in efficiency. By December the main outlines of his reforming programme were already clear. The combination of a steam-powered fleet with the Japanese and French agreements allowed Britain's battleships to concentrate on the North Sea without sacrificing their global mission. The redistribution scheme, which used the Atlantic Fleet at Gibraltar as a potential support for the Channel Fleet, meant that three-quarters of Britain's battleships were available to face the Germans.[23] Secondly, Fisher decided to begin work on a new and revolutionary class of battleship, the Dreadnought. In so doing he rendered obsolete Britain's existing naval superiority, but in practice he had little choice since other powers were on the brink of taking comparable decisions. Fisher's early thinking on warships was conditioned by rivalry with France and Russia, and put speed ahead of armour. Envisaging war in the Atlantic or the Pacific, he wanted a vessel whose speed would enable the Royal Navy to keep its opponents at a distance and so defeat them through long-range gunnery: he

[22] Keiger, *France and the origins*, ch. 2; Hayne, *French foreign office*, 139–40.
[23] Marder, *From the Dreadnought*, i. 40–2.

dubbed this the 'battle cruiser'. But by 1905, when the first Dreadnought was laid down, the likely enemy was Germany and the probable theatre of operations the more confined spaces of the North Sea. The ship that therefore resulted was a battleship, and her most striking feature was not her speed of 22 knots but her armament.[24] Her size enabled her to mount five twin-turrets with 12-inch guns: her broadside and her effective range were double those of a pre-Dreadnought. The battleship had secured a fresh lease of life by being able to operate outside torpedo range. Fisher's anti-Germanism was as pronounced as Tirpitz's Anglophobia, and his hopes for a preventive war with Germany in 1905 were quite sufficient to justify German fears of another Copenhagen. But in his calmer moments Fisher, like Tirpitz, rationalized his fleet as a deterrent.[25]

Simultaneous with the anti-German shift in British naval thought was a comparable and similar growth within the British Foreign Office. Some members of the diplomatic service, like Eyre Crowe, were not immune to the navalism which accompanied Fisher's reforms. But most important was a belief in the balance of power in Europe, and the conviction after 1905 that Germany represented a threat to it. In the British case, ministerial direction from December 1905 was firm and continuous. Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who became prime minister when the Liberals were returned to power that month, appointed Sir Edward Grey as his foreign secretary. Grey, a liberal imperialist, used a cross-party appeal to win Conservative support for his policies, and to remove foreign policy from party-political debate and endow it with consistency and direction. Indeed, he managed to remain remarkably independent of his own cabinet, and thus minimize any challenge from the government's own left wing. The Liberals' programme of social reform, and after 1910 the preoccupations of domestic problems, meant that both parliament and cabinet were happy to collude in the separation of Britain's foreign policy from the mainstream. Thus Grey was left free to pursue a design that aimed at maintaining peace in Europe by preparing for war, and that saw Britain's role as the arbitrator in balancing power in Europe. Grey's stance was moral and high-minded, but it was also shrewdly realistic: a dominant power in Europe would threaten Britain's command of the sea at its most vulnerable point—the Channel—and so the European balance was an integral component in imperial security.[26]

The immediate threat to European stability, it was clear by 1906, came from Germany. Thus British policy leaned towards France and towards giving the Entente firmer shape and direction, albeit without a formal commitment. Paul

[24] Sumida, *In defence of naval supremacy*, 37–61.

[25] Marder (ed.), *Fear God and dread nought*, ii. 51, 55.

[26] Howard, *Continental commitment*, 51–2; on the British position in general, see Steiner, *Britain and the origins*.

Cambon, France's ambassador in London, picked up the mood in 1905, and worried that the Liberals might back-pedal encouraged the French to seek ways of making the Entente a defensive alliance. In December 1905 and January 1906 the two powers arranged and conducted military staff talks which continued until May 1906. Grey was a driving force in these conversations, but he insisted to the French that they did not compromise British neutrality, and to begin with set them directly in the context of the Moroccan crisis. Even when he later acknowledged that the maintenance of the Entente would itself be a cause for war, he omitted to inform the cabinet of the talks.[27]

Therefore, when in 1907 Britain settled its differences with Russia, the treaty could not, like the earlier agreements with Japan and France, remain set solely in a local and colonial context. The arena for British and Russian rivalry was Asia, and for Britain the worry of Russian penetration through Persia and Afghanistan to the frontiers of India itself. In November 1904 fears of Russians at the Khyber led the viceroy in India to demand a potential reinforcement of 143,686 men in addition to the army already in India.[28] Therefore, Britain's rapprochement with Russia was not a revolution in British foreign policy: it was a diplomatic conclusion determined by strategic and financial common sense, and one which Grey himself had espoused ever since he had been parliamentary under-secretary at the Foreign Office in the early 1890s. The main domestic obstacle had been Liberal sentiment, averse to any agreement with a reactionary autocracy. Such sensibilities were eased by the constitutional reforms introduced in Russia after the 1905 revolution, and were further consoled by the treaty's Asiatic context, which rendered it the solution to a long-standing imperial rivalry. But the implications were much greater than the fact that not so many troops would have to go to India. The Anglo-Russian convention was the coping-stone of the Anglo-French Entente. The Triple Entente had become simultaneously the means by which Britain could contain Germany in Europe, and also a contrivance for moderating relations with France and Russia. If Britain wanted to support France, it had also to accommodate Russia. French capital was increasingly—by 1914 it would be a quarter of all French investments—committed to Russia; the falling French birth rate—the lowest of the major powers in Europe—rendered France reliant on Russia's military manpower. Thus, for Conservatives the settlement was the first stage in facing a fresh threat, that of Germany.

What made the Anglo-Russian convention possible was less change in Britain than change in Russia. The twin blows of defeat in Manchuria and revolution at home convinced the Tsar's advisers that war prompted domestic upheaval. The principal objective of P. A. Stolypin, the chairman of the

[27] Williamson, *Politics of grand strategy*, ch. 3, esp. 72–4, 81–3.
[28] Gooch, *Plans of war*, 217.

Council of Ministers from 1906 to 1911, was the corollary of this point: peace was necessary to enable domestic consolidation. Thus, both Stolypin and Russia's foreign minister, A. P. Izvolsky, were anxious not merely to end Russia's forward policy in the Far East but also to secure its frontiers elsewhere. Settlement with Britain in Central Asia was one element in a package that might also embrace Germany in the Baltic and Austria-Hungary in the Balkans. But Russia lacked the strength to shape its own policy. Although in certain senses both Britain and France needed Russia more than Russia needed them, the latter was handicapped by its inability to set and follow its own agenda. As the first Moroccan crisis had shown, it had to choose between the emerging blocs. Although Russia would persist in seeking understandings with Germany and Austria-Hungary, in the last resort it remained wedded to France and Britain, finding on each occasion that it did so that the Entente tightened.[29]

In Germany, therefore, the overriding consequence of the 1905 Moroccan crisis was an unravelling of *Weltpolitik*. There can be no greater indictment of German diplomacy than the fact that the deep-seated hostilities of Britain, France and Russia had been resolved so rapidly. The constellation which faced it in 1907 had seemed unimaginable: before 1904 a Franco-British Entente was improbable, then in 1904–5 it had been hoped that the *entente cordiale* would weaken the Franco-Russian convention, and throughout there had remained the assumption that Britain and Russia were irreconcilable. More specifically, the false assumptions which Tirpitz's naval policy had made of Britain were now writ large. The calculations of German naval deficiency had not reckoned on Fisher's redistribution of the British fleet; the gradualism of the naval build-up was no longer tenable with the commissioning of the first Dreadnought; and Britain—despite a hiccough in 1907—declared its determination to continue building to the two-power standard, which meant that Germany could never reach a sufficient level for effective deterrence. To use epithets like 'paranoid' and 'fatalistic' of Germany after 1905—adjectives more appropriate to individuals than nations—does not seem so misplaced. German expansion, conceived in limited terms and apparently no more ambitious than that allowed to other powers, had triggered the creation of a power bloc which not only seemed to prevent the flexing of Germany's own industrial and commercial muscle but also to encircle Germany by land to the east and west and by sea to the north.

The vocabulary of personal emotion is of course rendered more appropriate in the context of personal rule. Bülow and *Weltpolitik*, Tirpitz and the navy—these were the creatures by which the Kaiser had attempted to legitimize his

[29] McDonald, *United government and foreign policy in Russia*, 4, 97–110; Neilson, *Britain and the last Tsar*, pp. xiv, 11–12, 267–9; D. W. Spring, *Slavonic and East European Review*, LXVI (1988), 583–91.

own position; Wilhelm himself had been Germany's emissary in Tangiers. His principal adviser, and indeed the architect of the means by which the Kaiser's personal rule might be effected, was Philipp von Eulenburg. In 1908 Eulenburg was arraigned on a charge of homosexuality. The implications for the imperial court as a whole went beyond scandal and loss of prestige; Eulenburg's departure left the Kaiser's entourage dominated by the military. Furthermore, in November of the same year Wilhelm gave a typically vainglorious interview to the London *Daily Telegraph*, which aroused the fury of all parties in the Reichstag and opened a split between the monarch and his foreign office. The accumulation of these blows marks the point at which personal rule can be accounted to have failed. Given the fact that Germany's constitution was designed to rest on the Kaiser's command—above all in the areas of war and diplomacy—Wilhelm's subsequent loss of confidence left a vacuum which was probably even more dangerous to Germany than his earlier assertions of authority.

No comparable self-doubts seem to have assailed Tirpitz. In 1906 he used the mood generated by the Moroccan crisis to pass a supplementary naval bill, increasing the annual spending on the fleet by 35 per cent. However, it was the 1908 bill that accepted the acceleration of the German programme in the light of the Dreadnought, and which institutionalized a naval arms race between the two powers. The life of a capital ship was reduced from twenty-five years to twenty, so that Germany would build not three but four ships a year between 1908 and 1911, and would therefore have a total of fifty-eight capital ships by 1920. Privately, Tirpitz was aiming at a rate of three—not the agreed two—ships a year in the period 1912–17.

The cost of such a programme revealed the fragility of any compromise on which *Sammlungspolitik* might rest. In the 1907 elections Bülow fought a successful campaign on an appeal to *Weltpolitik*, convincing the left-liberals, the Progressives, that they should join his bloc so as to balance reactionary influences within it and avoid the threat of a Centre party–socialist coalition; the socialists actually lost thirty-six seats. But Bülow had little with which he could hold the Progressives over the long term. Even more importantly, the financing of the navy would split conservatives and national liberals. The additional cost per ship when built to Dreadnought standards was 7 million marks, and a further 60 million marks were required for improved port facilities.[30] The deficit anticipated by the 1908 naval programme was 500 million gold marks. The national debt was almost double that of 1900. To put federal finances on a sound footing Bülow had to diminish the powers of the individual states, which were still largely responsible for their own taxation: he would therefore expose a sore which *Weltpolitik* had been designed to

[30] Epkenhans, *Wilhelminische Flottenrüstung*, 26.

heal. To meet part of the deficit he planned to increase inheritance tax; thus the navy came home to roost, directly challenging the interests of conservative landowners. The Centre party joined with the Conservatives in calling for a tax on mobile capital: together they crushed the inheritance tax proposal, and passed the burden of taxation on to business and urban interests. The economic consequences of *Weltpolitik* had divided, not united, the different forms of property-ownership. In June 1909 Bülow, no longer able to manage the Reichstag and held responsible by the Kaiser for the *Daily Telegraph* affair, resigned the chancellorship.

Bülow had the satisfaction of nominating his successor, Theodor von Bethmann Hollweg, a Prussian bureaucrat and former secretary of state for the interior. Bethmann Hollweg was a cabinet politician, not a popular national leader. Reserved, conscientious, and honest, he never mastered the office of which he was to be the incumbent until 1917. Fritz Fischer has bracketed Bethmann with the military and Prussian influences that were to dominate Germany during the war; by contrast, Sir Edward Grey and other contemporary observers imagined that in him rested Germany's hopes for liberalism and true parliamentary government. Neither view is wholly correct. Bethmann Hollweg was a conservative and saw the position of government as above—not dependent on—the political parties. But he was also pragmatic enough to recognize that reform, albeit limited, of the Prussian suffrage was required: typically, the measure he proposed in 1910 was sufficient to alienate the right and insufficient to please the left. Thus, even more than was the case with Bülow, his management of the Reichstag constituted a succession of short-lived compromises. Not even the conservatives, who now acted as an agrarian interest group rather than as the supporters of the political status quo, were reliable. In any case, in the 1912 elections all the parties of the right and centre lost ground to the socialists, who won sixty-seven seats to become the largest party in the Reichstag. Bethmann Hollweg's power, therefore, rested to an increasing degree on external pressure groups and on his relationship—always lukewarm—with the Kaiser himself.[31]

Bülow had managed the Reichstag by use of *Weltpolitik*. But when Bethmann Hollweg became chancellor the financial implications of the navy's expansion ensured that *Weltpolitik* was deeply divisive in its effects. Bethmann therefore forswore *Weltpolitik*, at least in its more aggressive forms, for a policy of détente. He did so for reasons not of foreign policy, a field in which he had no previous experience, but of domestic political necessity. Indeed, even had he tried to manipulate the parties by the use of nationalist appeals, he might well not have succeeded. The 1909 budget had still not resolved Germany's economic problems. Nor was it only among conservatives—with their fears of

[31] Jarausch, *Enigmatic chancellor*, 71–91.

increased inheritance taxes—that opposition to naval spending was now to be found. Industry itself was divided: between 1904 and 1914 Britain was Germany's best overseas customer, and Germany was Britain's second best; twenty-two out of forty international producer cartels were Anglo-German organizations.[32] Thus, while some German concerns welcomed the steady orders which the naval arms race generated, others—including not only bankers but also iron and steel exporters—stood to lose by any further deterioration in Germany's relations with Britain.

An Anglo-German naval agreement was therefore the main means by which Bethmann sought to extricate himself from his problems. By 1908 Bülow had already been thinking along similar lines, but Tirpitz had proved strongly opposed and he had been abetted by the Kaiser. The argument that naval construction might browbeat the British into a German agreement was no longer deemed relevant. This is not to say that Tirpitz now wanted war with Britain. He recognized full well that such a conflict would be futile. The opportunity to exploit the *tabula rasa* which the Dreadnought revolution had, at least in theory, created had not been seized; Germany's implementation of it lagged three years behind Britain's, and its building targets still did not aspire to equivalence. However, Tirpitz did aim to break Britain's commitment to the two-power standard. He proposed a formula under which ostensibly Germany would build two ships a year for every three built by Britain, but whose effects in practice would produce three and four. Germany would not reduce its programme, and Britain would have to increase its own if it wished to maintain its lead. Furthermore, because Britain had a larger fleet in the first place, more of its new construction would be replacing obsolete ships rather than adding to the total size of the fleet. Thus the gap in the effective size of the two forces would be narrowed. Tirpitz derived some comfort from the fact that radical pressures on Britain's Liberal government produced a rationale for the fleet that eschewed reference to the two-power standard, but in reality the talks held out little prospect of a successful outcome. Bethmann Hollweg wished to use the specific issue of a naval agreement to secure a much wider objective, that of British neutrality. In April 1910 the Germans actually proposed that Britain commit itself to neutrality before a naval agreement was concluded: to the Foreign Office in London it seemed that Germany was using a naval lever to secure British isolation and German domination of the continent.[33]

Bethmann Hollweg's efforts at détente were not limited to Britain. Germany's rivalry with France and Russia found its focus in Europe and not further afield; the roots of the Triple Entente were to be traced to colonial questions, and thus the chances that long-term imperial tensions between the Entente

[32] Steiner, *Britain and the origins*, 60–4.
[33] Ibid. 54–6; Epkenhans, *Wilhelminische Flottenrüstung*, 32–91.

partners might reappear seemed good. Bilateral arrangements with France and Russia on extra-European questions promised some loosening of the Entente. Furthermore, they accorded well with Bethmann's increasing personal sense that Germany needed colonies of its own. The détente which France and Germany achieved between 1909 and 1910 was limited, and primarily motivated by economic links (German exports to France increased 38 per cent in 1905–9), which the governments—and particularly Jules Cambon, France's ambassador in Berlin—endeavoured to clothe with political formulae. In February 1909 the Germans recognized French political interests in Morocco, and France recognized Germany's economic interests; discussions took place about possible co-operation in the Congo and the Cameroons, and French short-term capital was loaned to Germany for the construction of the Baghdad railway.[34] The latter also provided the basis, in November 1910, of an agreement between Germany and Russia: Russia approved of the extension of the Baghdad railway, while Germany undertook to help in the opening of railways in Russia's sphere of interest in Persia.

By early 1911 France was worried by the implications of Bethmann's policy for Entente unity, although it does not seem to have conceived of its next step in that light. Indubitably, however, one of the repercussions of the 1911 Moroccan crisis was a reinvigoration of Anglo-French links. The resumption of a forward French policy in Morocco was largely the responsibility of the younger generation of French Foreign Ministry bureaucrats, who dominated a weak and inexperienced foreign minister.[35] Their target was as much Germany and an end to the détente which Jules Cambon had fostered as it was an expansion of French influence in North Africa. 'The solution of the Moroccan crisis', Charles Maurras wrote in *Action française*, 'is not to be found in Fez but among the pines of the Vosges. What is afoot in Morocco makes sense only if we are prepared to fight in the Vosges.'[36] The second Moroccan crisis made explicit what had been implicit in the first: colonial questions were not to be dealt with simply on their own terms but were projected back into European rivalries. Indeed, the geographical position of Morocco—affecting as it did the balance of power in the Mediterranean—was bound to make the isolation of problems here from problems in Europe that much more difficult than it was for any disputes over spheres of responsibility in Central Asia or Equatorial Africa.

Using the excuse of riots against the Sultan in Fez, the French ordered troops into Morocco on 17 April 1911. Once in, the soldiers were slow to depart. The French were clearly in contravention of the Algeçiras act. Neither the Spanish nor the British were very pleased, and the Germans gave the French a specific warning. However, the French having reopened the Moroccan question, the

[34] Duroselle, *La France*, 12–19; Keiger, *France and the origins*, 37–40; Kaiser, *Politics and war*, 321–2.
[35] Keiger, *France and the origins*, 34; Hayne, *French foreign office*, 199–214.
[36] Quoted in Morris, *The Scaremongers*, 286.

Germans, and specifically Kiderlen-Wächter, the foreign minister, saw the opportunity for a diplomatic success in true *Weltpolitik* style. Joseph Caillaux, France's prime minister from June, was conscious of the weakness of the French position, and was more conciliatory than his Foreign Office. Through secret negotiations—which bypassed the Foreign Office—he encouraged Kiderlen in the pursuit of German objectives. Kiderlen wished to trade German recognition of the French position in Morocco for concessions in the Congo. On 1 July, on the pretext of protecting German commercial interests, the German warship, *Panther*, appeared at Agadir.

Such sabre-rattling—although the Germans had no intention of going to war, and indeed were still without a naval plan for operations against Britain—could only provoke. Germany had seen the issue as one between France and Germany only. The employment of sea-power, however limited, immediately raised the hackles of Britain. Paramount was the fear of Germany acquiring an Atlantic port. The inadequacy of British naval and military intelligence only served to reinforce Germanophobe prejudice: the whereabouts of the German fleet was uncertain in July, and in September false indications of German preparations on the Belgian frontier suggested imminent invasion.[37] During July Grey's attitude hardened: the crisis was no longer concerned with the irresponsibility of French imperial policy but with the survival of the Entente. On this occasion the cabinet was involved: evidence of the degree of Britain's commitment would be calculated to infuriate the radicals and pacifists within the Liberal party, and increase the reliance of a government that lacked an overall parliamentary majority on Conservative support. On 21 July Lloyd George, as chancellor of the exchequer, spoke in the Mansion House: without naming Germany, he clearly stated that Britain would fight rather than let its status as a great power go unacknowledged. The Mansion House speech was designed above all for domestic purposes: by supporting Grey's foreign policy, Lloyd George—the hero of the left and the author of the Liberals' package of social reforms—split the radicals and assured the Liberal imperialists of support in the cabinet and in the party. But it also had an international effect. It faced Germany with the threat of war, however veiled, and Kiderlen-Wächter could not command the support either of Germany's ally, Austria-Hungary, or of the Kaiser to play for such stakes. In the event Kiderlen got what he had asked for; Caillaux continued to bypass his foreign ministry and on 4 November Germany—in exchange for recognizing a French protectorate over Morocco—was guaranteed respect for its economic interests and received a slice of the French Congo. But popular feeling in Germany was characterized by a sense of humiliation. The iron and steel industries had hoped for concessions to mine the ores of southern Morocco itself. Expectations had been roused and

[37] Hiley, *Historical Journal*, XXVI (1983), 881–4.

then disappointed. Both the Kaiser and Bethmann Hollweg lost credit. The frustration at diplomacy's failure to gain for Germany the status its power warranted grew apace.

Much of this feeling was directed against Britain, and in Britain too the crisis had the effect of hardening popular sentiment. Britain was the power that had taken the initiative in elevating a colonial dispute into a European crisis: henceforth it was not to be deflected from having Europe, rather than the empire, as the focus of its foreign policy. At the Committee of Imperial Defence on 23 August 1911 strategy followed suit.

It is tempting to argue that British military thought had already anticipated diplomacy in assuming a continental thrust. In 1903 and 1908 the Committee of Imperial Defence had concluded that British naval supremacy ensured that there was little prospect of a successful hostile invasion of Britain. Furthermore, the succession of alliances, ending with the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention, lessened the number of strategic options which the newly created general staff had to consider. The possibility of operations against Germany in Europe, first adumbrated in 1902 and the object of a war game in 1905, gradually grew in importance. But until 1907 any major continental operations which the army envisaged were centred on India, not—despite the 1906 Anglo-French staff talks—on Europe. The purpose of the latter was diplomatic, not strategic. They were fostered by the politicians, Grey and the secretary of war, Haldane, rather than by the soldiers, who had formed a low estimate of the French army.[38] The British Expeditionary Force of six divisions, ready to be dispatched to any quarter of the globe, and fashioned by Haldane, was the fruit of cash constraints, not strategic reappraisal. The burgeoning costs of the navy, plus the Liberals' domestic reforms, necessitated savings: between 1905/6 and 1909/10 Haldane had lopped £2.5 million from the army estimates. Haldane's army was still the projectile of the navy, relying on sea-power for ubiquity and concentration, and so gaining in effectiveness and in flexibility while remaining small.[39]

Two factors contributed to the emerging dominance of continentalism in British military thought. First, the navy itself showed little interest in amphibious operations: the fleet wanted a big sea battle in the event of European war not the more mundane tasks of transporting and supplying limited land warfare on the European periphery. The one plan it did develop, that for a landing on the Baltic coast, was dismissed as unworkable by the army as early as the winter of 1908–9.[40] Secondly, Henry Wilson, a noted Francophile,

[38] Herrmann, *Arming of Europe*, 55–6, 84.

[39] Gooch, *Plans of war*, 165–73; Gooch, *Prospect of war*, pp. vii–viii, 93–112; Spiers, *Haldane*, 3–4, 9, 38–44, 64–5, 71–3, 77–81, 193–5.

[40] Paul Hayes, 'Britain, Germany and the Admiralty's plans for attacking German territory 1906–1915', in Freedman *et al.* (eds.), *War, strategy and international politics*.

convinced that war in Europe was inevitable and possessed of political instincts few British soldiers could match, became director of military operations in August 1910. Wilson promptly began to give substance to the 1906 staff talks; he conveniently calculated that the British contribution of six divisions was sufficient to swing the balance in a Franco-German conflict, and set about planning the transport of those divisions to France. Thus, when in the wake of the Agadir crisis the Committee of Imperial Defence met on 23 August 1911 to review British strategy in the event of a European war, the army's case was well developed and specific. By contrast, the presentation of Sir A. K. Wilson, Fisher's successor as First Sea Lord, was shambling and ill-thought-out. The navy's potential supporters were not present at the meeting; instead, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill—representatives of the radicals in the government—were convinced by the arguments for rapid continental intervention in the event of a Franco-German war. In the wake of that meeting Churchill was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. The effect was to divide Churchill from Lloyd George, so weakening the radicals' voice in the cabinet. The significance of this move became increasingly evident in late 1913 and early 1914, by which stage the chancellor of the exchequer regarded the European scene as increasingly peaceful and the case for a reduction in naval spending in 1915 as correspondingly stronger.[41] Ostensibly Churchill's task was to create a naval staff, so that the senior service could prepare itself as well as the army had done for strategic discussions, but it was also to bring the navy into line with continental thought. The French navy in 1906 had already decided to concentrate its strength in the Mediterranean, and Fisher's redistribution had weighted the British navy towards the Atlantic and the Channel; these independent decisions were made complementary by the institution of Anglo-French naval talks in 1912. The Royal Navy was prepared to accept operational plans that confirmed its existing deployment, and consigned what was seen as a subsidiary theatre to the secondary naval power.

Although the consequence of the second Moroccan crisis was a closer identification between British strategy and French, no formal alliance resulted. The cabinet was informed in November 1911 of the Anglo-French staff talks, and a year later agreed, as the culmination of the naval discussions, that the two powers would consult each other in the event of an attack by a third party. In German eyes British diplomacy was now focused on the Entente, not on the concert of Europe, with the Foreign Office too ready to interpret every crisis, however fomented, as the consequence of a Berlin-driven conspiracy.[42] Nonetheless, Grey warded off French pressure for an even tighter commitment,

[41] Grigg, *Lloyd George*, 133; Gilbert, *Lloyd George*, 76.

[42] Gregor Schöllgen, 'Germany's foreign policy in the age of imperialism: a vicious circle?', 129–30, and Gustav Schmidt, 'Contradictory postures and conflicting objectives: the July crisis', 138, in Schöllgen (ed.), *Escape into war?*.

citing his fear of radical opposition in parliament and the accompanying danger that even these limited agreements could thus be undermined. The concert of Europe remained his ideal means of managing the continent; the Entente was a device by which Britain could maintain its free hand, while simultaneously cautioning the Germans and moderating French and German behaviour.[43] Britain's refusal to align itself unequivocally created an ambiguity in great power relations between 1911 and 1914, for Grey's faith in the concert system was not reciprocated elsewhere. Conferences had, after all, not proved to be to Germany's advantage.

French foreign policy, while not pursuing an entirely straight course after 1911, gained considerably in coherence and direction. Caillaux's secret communications with Germany were intercepted and deciphered by the intelligence service of the very Foreign Ministry he was trying to bypass. In January 1912 the Germanophobe and radical, Georges Clemenceau, used this information to engineer the fall of Caillaux's government. Raymond Poincaré, who formed the new ministry, had been rapporteur of the Senate commission to examine the Franco-German treaty of 4 November 1911, and assumed the foreign office portfolio himself. In January 1913 Poincaré became president, an office that he was to hold until 1920. He was thus able to provide the continuity which proved so elusive, given the endemic ministerial instability of the Third Republic. Partly by sheer hard work, partly by creating his own administrative structure, and partly by his direct access to intercepted diplomatic messages, he contrived to be independent of the machinations of the bureaux of the foreign ministry, and to a considerable degree to insulate foreign policy from the seven changes of government experienced by France between 1912 and 1914.

Poincaré himself was a Lorrainer; he was a patriot and he distrusted Germany. But it would be mistaken to conclude that France either sought war or did so to recover Alsace-Lorraine. If Germany and France found themselves at war for other reasons, the lost provinces would, quite clearly, become a war aim for France. *Révanche* figured large in German projections of French ambitions, but in practice mattered little to most Frenchmen. The provinces increasingly identified themselves with Germany, and not even the Zabern incident of 1913, which made abundantly clear the high-handedness of the German military presence, evoked an official French response.

Poincaré's foreign policy had two main aims. Domestically, he hoped to establish a political consensus, drawing support from the left and right of the centre, and weakening *Action française* on the extreme right and socialism on the left. His chances of success were boosted by the fact that radicalism, like liberalism in Germany, was being split between left and right: at the beginning

[43] Steiner, *Britain and the origins*, 244–5; also 113, 117.

of the century anticlericalism had sponsored a fusion of the radicals and socialists, but after 1906 the socialists had been pulled away from the bourgeois radicals by the need to respond to the trades-union movement. Externally, Poincaré saw the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente as creating a European balance of power and fostering continental security through mutual rivalry. To that end, the coalition of the opposing alliance was as important as that of his own. The activities of Jules Cambon in Berlin, fostering Franco-German détente, were rebuffed as a threat to Entente solidarity; but so too were the efforts of Barrère, France's ambassador in Rome, to draw Italy out of the Triple Alliance by exploiting Italian hostility for Austria-Hungary. One of the paradoxes of European security before 1914 was that each of the major players—Grey, Bethmann Hollweg, and Poincaré himself—sought to create stability, but each used different means as appropriate to its achievement.

It followed from Poincaré's commitment to the Entente that Franco-Russian relations, as well as Anglo-French, should be strengthened in 1912. From the German perspective such moves were far from reassuring: they cut across Bethmann Hollweg's policy of détente and they confirmed fears of a two-front war. Poincaré's policy did nothing to lessen the tensions in European relations, and to that extent he promoted war rather than averted it.[44] Moreover, his policy in relation to Russia in 1912 was open to more than one interpretation. Poincaré's defenders argue that his object was to manage Russia, not egg her on: the lack of Russian support for France during the 1911 crisis and German efforts to woo Russia combined with a desire to restrain Russia in her policies towards the Ottoman empire and the Balkans. But to the Russians themselves, and even to Henry Wilson, Poincaré could seem an adventurist.[45] In July 1912 the French and Russian general staffs met, as they had been doing since 1892 under the terms of the military convention. The following month Poincaré visited Russia in order to learn more of Russian involvement in the Balkans. He assured the Russians that should Russia and Austria-Hungary come to blows over the Balkans, and should the Germans then support the Austrians, they could rely on French support. Poincaré gave this undertaking knowing that in all probability the Germans would strike against France first, in order to secure their rear before turning east. The commitment did not, therefore, represent a major shift in the French position; rather, it was vital to the plans of the French general staff who hoped thus to secure Russian support against any German attack on France. On 17 November 1912 Poincaré reiterated his undertaking to Russia: France's concern for its own defence therefore allowed Russia to be more adventurous—not less so—in the Balkans. Poincaré reaffirmed his Russian policy by appointing Delcassé as

[44] Hayne, *French foreign policy*, 242–3.
[45] Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 239–41.

France's ambassador in St Petersburg in February 1913.[46] In the summer, the French government intervened in Russian negotiations on the French stock market for a loan to finance railway construction. The French objective was to bring pressure to bear on the speed of Russian mobilization, so as to co-ordinate mutually supporting attacks on Germany from east and west: the French said they would concentrate 200,000 more troops than they had undertaken to do in 1892.[47]

All the threads of Poincaré's foreign policy were brought together during the course of 1913 by the debate on the extension of the period of military service to three years. At one level this was a purely technical question. In 1905 the term of service was set at two years: loud and long were the complaints of regular soldiers, who felt that all their time was taken up with basic training and that the level of training then acquired was inadequate. Force was given to their arguments by the relative decline in the French population (France in 1910 had to take 83 per cent of her available manpower to produce the same size army as Germany did with 57.3 per cent),[48] and by the need to match the increases authorized for the Germany army in 1912–13. Professional military wisdom therefore calculated that a longer period of service would produce an army that was both larger and more competent. The domestic arguments of the French army were of course at one with the strategy which the alliance with Russia now demanded: both Poincaré and the French general staff had committed France to taking the offensive against Germany if need be. The alliance and the three-year law therefore interlocked.[49] So powerful were these arguments that the radicals could not unite on the issue, but split, some acknowledging the threat posed by the level of German military preparedness and others accepting the socialists' preference for a short-term citizen army. The debate showed how relatively little French politics were polarized when foreign policy was employed in a domestic context: the radicals and socialists did form a fresh bloc in October 1913, but the issue that united them was less opposition to three-year service and more the advocacy of income tax as a means to finance it. Finally, although set in the context of popular nationalism, the three-year service law was presented by the government as a means of reassurance and of deterrence in Franco-German relations. The minister of war, addressing the army committee of the Chamber of Deputies on 11 March 1913, accepted that defensive requirements necessitated German manpower increases, given the threats to east and west: 'Quite frankly, and I mean this most sincerely,' he declared, 'I do not think that at this moment, as I utter these words, or even yesterday, Germany has or had the intention to pounce upon France.'[50]

[46] On Poincaré's policy in general, see Keiger, *France and the origins*; on the importance of the 1912 guarantees, L. C. F. Turner, 'Russian mobilisation in 1914' in Kennedy (ed.), *War plans*, 252–6.
[47] Krumeich, *Armaments*, ch. 6. [48] Ritter, *Sword and the sceptre*, ii. 223.
[49] Krumeich, *Armaments*, esp. 17–18, 125. [50] Quoted in ibid. 74.

While the Moroccan crisis hardened the Entente, and in particular France's advocacy of robustness as a means to deterrence, it alarmed Bethmann Hollweg. He did not abandon *Weltpolitik*, but he did soften it, recognizing that its pursuit should be harmonized at least with Britain. Furthermore, the chances of domestic support for a renewed attempt at an Anglo-German naval agreement seemed, on the face of it, reasonable. The naval budget had grown 134 per cent between 1904 and 1912, against an army increase of 47 per cent; naval spending now exceeded half the total military expenditure.[51] By espousing the army's case for attention Bethmann could deflect the navy's, and so play off one against the other. Furthermore, the navy itself was divided by Tirpitz's building programme: Henning von Holtzendorff, the commander of the High Seas Fleet, wanted to improve training and efficiency rather than to have more ships. On the political front, the composition of the Reichstag did not augur well for the navy's chances of further funds: the January 1912 elections had been a triumph for the left and, in March 1912, introduction of a new inheritance tax undermined any residual support from the right. The Treasury and the Bundesrat—for similar financial reasons—backed Bethmann against Tirpitz. Finally, German hopes that the British Liberal government would be more amenable than it had been in 1909 and 1910 were buoyed by the anxiety of its more radical members at the heightened Anglo-German tension; Herbert Asquith's cabinet (Asquith succeeded Campbell-Bannerman as prime minister in 1908) had to show its supporters that it had at least tried to reach an understanding with Germany.

In practice, the prospects of success were remote. Tirpitz was now openly set on a rate of construction that would proceed independently of Britain, and would give Germany a ratio of 2 : 3 in capital ships. He proposed a supplementary naval law, that would prevent a return to a building rate of two vessels per year as planned, and would instead commit Germany to three ships in each of 1912, 1914, and 1916. Domestically his cards were stronger than first appearances suggested. To those supportive of détente he could argue that Britain would never negotiate if Germany embarked on reductions unilaterally. The case for firmness was of course equally attractive to those who identified Britain as the primary author of Gemany's humiliation at Agadir. And for Tirpitz himself, conscious of the domestic political pressures now mounting against the naval programme, an international agreement fixing rates of shipbuilding would at least secure the programme's independence of the Reichstag. The Kaiser, listening to the naval attaché in London rather than to the German ambassador, backed Tirpitz and not Bethmann Hollweg. Bethmann's domestic position was further weakened on 9 February 1912 when Churchill sarcastically and provocatively characterized the German navy as a 'luxury fleet'.

[51] Herwig, *Luxury fleet*, 75.

Therefore, when the British emissary Haldane, the secretary of state for war and a student of German philosophy, arrived in Berlin, his expectations were not great. The Kaiser, it is true, was as usual using bluster and declamation as a substitute for diplomacy, and at bottom hoped and even believed that a strong line would bring Britain to terms more readily than overt conciliation. But Bethmann Hollweg still wished for a general undertaking of neutrality on Britain's part, and his hopes were raised by Haldane's apparent inclination to discuss political issues rather than naval matters. Even more encouraging was Churchill's suggestion on 18 March of a 'naval holiday'. For most Germans this suggested that their strong line had triumphed; however, Tirpitz was momentarily nonplussed, since Churchill's suggested ratio of sixteen British Dreadnoughts for ten German implied a break in the building tempo. Four days later the 1912 German supplementary naval law was published. Churchill calculated that it would compel Britain to build five ships in one year and then four the next year over a six-year period, at a cost of an extra 3 million pounds a year.[52] Whatever the financial burden, Britain was not prepared to be neutralized, to leave France to German domination, and so undermine its own strategic position. The talks reached an impasse. The Anglo-French naval agreement of 1912 was therefore in part a gesture of solidarity towards France after the flirtation with Germany. It was also profoundly pragmatic: to control naval building Britain had—given the 1912 German law—to ask France to take on responsibility for the Mediterranean in the name of the Entente.

The naval balance in the Mediterranean highlighted the fact that by the summer of 1912 both sides, and particularly Britain, were pursuing policies that were increasingly driven by factors in addition to those that determined their relationship with each other. Britain maintained a one-power standard in the Mediterranean, so that it would be equivalent to the next largest local navy after that of France. Thus the decision by Austria-Hungary to lay down two Dreadnoughts in 1910 and a further two in 1912 (so matching Italy's programme) was both a driving force in the Anglo-French naval agreement and a factor in the abandonment of the idea of a 'naval holiday'.[53] Similarly Australia, New Zealand, and to a lesser extent Canada showed an interest in contributing to the Dreadnought programme, not so much because of the German threat in the North Sea as because of their worries about Japan in the Pacific. The equivalent German pressure was the Russian decision to replace the Baltic fleet lost at Tsushima. The effect of these secondary naval arms races was to compound the principal one, each side aggregating the forces of its opponent, although elements of its own building were a response to other pressures. In May 1912 Churchill declared that Britain would build two new

[52] Marder, *From the Dreadnought*, i. 275–6; Epkenhans, *Wilhelminische Flottenrüstung*, 114–42.
[53] Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 174–5, 215.

ships for every additional German ship; the implication of his programme was that by 1917 Britain would have fifty-one Dreadnoughts to Germany's twenty-eight.

Nonetheless, by late 1912 the heat had gone out of the Anglo-German naval arms race. This was due primarily neither to Churchill's determined response nor to Bethmann Hollweg's pursuit of détente. The core explanation was the implosion of *Sammlungspolitik* itself. By 1912 the latter had become more of a vehicle by which to drive Germany's armaments policies than an end in itself.[54] Arms spending in 1913 accounted for only 4.7 per cent of Gemany's net social product, and it was therefore too small to have any stabilizing effect in the economy as a whole; much of it was spent on personnel rather than plant, and its consequences were to reduce the capital available for further investment while driving up interest rates. Bethmann Hollweg's response was contradictory. On the one hand he publicly rejected international competition over arms, while on the other he espoused the army's case against that of the navy.[55] The latter was the ultimate loser. Crucially, the Kaiser withdrew his support for Tirpitz, and at the same time elements within the navy itself demanded that manning and training should take priority over matériel. On 6 February 1913 Tirpitz announced to the Reichstag's budget committee that he now found Churchill's proposed 16 : 10 Dreadnought ratio acceptable. Germany's renunciation of the Anglo-German naval arms race was effectively unilateral.[56]

The other bridge to détente open to Bethmann Hollweg was through colonial policy. Here Bethmann enjoyed greater success. Neither France nor Britain was opposed to German colonialism per se, provided it did not clash with their own interests. In the Moroccan agreement France accepted German ambitions in Central Africa; so did Britain in its negotiations with Germany over the Portuguese colonies, and specifically Angola. Between 1912 and 1914 Britain and Germany found that their interests in the Baghdad railway could, by dividing the line at Basra, be rendered complementary rather than contradictory: simultaneously Germany—short of capital because of the demands of its own rapid industrialization—welcomed French finance and involvement in the project. Within France the formation of the radical–socialist bloc in October 1913 forced Poincaré to appoint a radical, Doumergue, as prime minister, and Doumergue brought back Caillaux as his finance minister. By late 1913 both Poincaré's orientation of French foreign policy and even his status as president looked less secure, and when in January 1914 Germany and Russia argued over their respective interests in Turkey, French support for Russia was more cautious than Russia might have expected. Furthermore, the question of the three-year law was reopened for debate. Bethmann's hope, that

[54] Geyer, *Deutsche Rüstungspolitik*, 89.
[55] Kroboth, *Finanzpolitik des Deutschen Reiches*, 306, 312.
[56] Epkenhans, *Wilhelminische Flottenrüstungspolitik*, 312–24, 343, 396.

extra-European interests carefully played would show more points of contact between France and Germany and would reveal the underlying tensions between the imperial ambitions of the Entente powers, seemed to be well founded. Certainly it provided the basis for much of the optimism with which many Europeans greeted 1914. But Bethmann's policy worked because it was limited. It was effective in certain geographical areas where tensions were already low; it did not push any of the Entente powers into breaking with its allies. And it came too late. Colonial antagonisms had already shaped European alliances; it would take a long time and considerable patience before colonial agreements could loosen those alliances.

Bethmann Hollweg had come to share Bülow's position, to recognize that Germany's economic strength and great-power status made expansionist pretensions legitimate. To that extent détente was his version of *Weltpolitik*. Furthermore, it was clear that in Bethmann's hands, even more than in Bülow's, *Weltpolitik* could be accommodated in international politics. The events of 1905–14 showed that Franco-German and Anglo-German disputes could be settled without war. Even the naval rivalry had become institutionalized to the point where Churchill could claim, admittedly after the event, that it was increasingly irrelevant to Anglo-German controversies.[57] Bethmann's confidant the youthful Kurt Riezler, in his pseudonymous work of 1913, *Grundzüge der Weltpolitik* (the fundamentals of world policy), concluded that the dangers of defeat were such that war had lost its utility and that, although it might occur through irrationality or dire necessity, it would not occur through calculation. In particular, he saw the alliance system as a restraint, since in no one crisis would all allies simultaneously view their interests as so threatened that they would support each other to the point of war.[58]

Riezler's analysis, however, also revealed exactly how destructive *Weltpolitik* had been to the tenor of west European relations. All nations, he thought, conceived of coexistence 'as a preparation for hostility, as a postponement of hostility'; armaments were therefore a form of that postponement and were an essential component of the bluff necessary in diplomacy. *Weltpolitik* had militarized international relations. The naval arms race had assumed a momentum of its own, with ship construction planned up to a decade ahead, and with national budgets and patterns of employment shaped round it. The alliances had been given substance and direction by staff talks and war plans. Despite the very great level of economic interdependence between France, Britain, and Germany in 1914, and the genuine need of most businessmen and industrialists for peace, economic rivalry was increasingly expressed in national terms. Most important of all, the effect of the two Moroccan crises

[57] Churchill, *Unknown war*, 49. [58] Thompson, *In the eye of the storm*, 60–5.

was to subordinate colonial questions to European. They had shown that, geographically, the division between Europe and the rest of the world was not as neat as the populations of north-west Europe sometimes seemed to imagine. The problems of the North African coastline, the balance of power in the Mediterranean, could not but affect the other powers on the Mediterranean littoral—Turkey, which was simultaneously of Europe and Asia, and Italy and Austria-Hungary. Nor had *Weltpolitik* succeeded in resolving Germany's domestic tensions: at best it had postponed them. Germany did not in the end go to war in pursuit of its *Weltpolitik*. But the conduct of *Weltpolitik*, and the setbacks which it entailed, contributed to its sense of humiliation, beleaguerment, and fatalism in 1914. And, once war was declared, the continuity of *Weltpolitik*—both in terms of Germany's war aims and in terms of Germany's domestic political and social pressures—was to become all too evident.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND THE BALKANS

In both the major crises triggered by Germany in the pursuit of *Weltpolitik*, the two Moroccan confrontations of 1905 and 1911, Germany enjoyed less than fulsome support from its major ally, Austria-Hungary.[59] During the war German generals were apt to cite Nibelung loyalty when referring to the Austro-German alliance, but they did so between clenched teeth. The shared Germanic traditions to which such comparisons appealed suggested a common identity that was in practice largely superficial—or, if real, was subscribed to only by a minority (since in 1910 Germans constituted a quarter of the total) of the Austro-Hungarian population. The more recent history of the two countries suggested division rather than fusion. In 1866 Prussia had summarily ended Austria's leadership of the Germanic states on the battlefield, and although the memory of that war seems to have rankled remarkably little, the subsequent thrust of Germany's development highlighted differences as much as points of contact. German unification elevated the idea of nationalism, but Austria-Hungary—as a multinational empire—had perforce relied for its continued

[59] In addition to the works cited in n. 1 above, the following books and articles have been of general assistance in the writing of this section: Beztuzhev, *Journal of Contemporary History*, I (1966), 93–112; Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo*; Dedijer, *Road to Sarajevo*; Lieven, *Russia and the origins*; Leslie, *Wiener Beiträge*, XX (1993), 307–94; Linke, *Miltärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 32 (1982), 9–34; May, *Passing of the Hapsburg monarchy*; Mommsen, *Central European History*, VI (1973), 3–43; Mommsen, 'Topos of inevitable war in Germany in the decade before 1914', in Berghahn and Kitchen (eds.), *Germany in the age of total war*; Pares, *Fall of the Russian monarchy*; Renouvin, *Crise Européenne*; Röhl, *Historical Journal*, XII (1969), 651–73; C. J. Smith, *Russia's struggle for power*; Stone, *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), 95–111; Turner, *Origins*; Valiani, *End of Austria-Hungary*; Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*; Zeman, *Break-up of the Habsburg Empire*.

integrity throughout the nineteenth century on supra-nationalism. In order to consolidate its legitimacy as a government, Austria-Hungary had used the networks of international relations, the authority of treaties, to buttress the domestic status quo; the creation of Germany, the cuckoo in the European nest, had upset the Concert system and the balance of power. Most important of all, economic development had transformed these otherwise implicit distinctions into direct and overt competition. Although the growth rate in industry in Austria-Hungary was impressive between 1890 and 1914, it started from a low point and its effect was patchy. Over that period railway construction in the empire all but matched that of Germany, but by 1913 the density of track per square kilometre of territory was only a third that of its ally. In Hungary the number of industrial workers rose by 76 per cent between 1898 and 1913, but industrial workers only constituted 17 per cent of the working population. In Austria industrial productivity increased 50 per cent between 1900 and 1910, but in that latter year 56.5 per cent of the workforce of Austria-Hungary were still in agriculture. Agricultural productivity had risen, but remained low relative to other states and, even in those years when yields were sufficient, protectionism acted as a block to food exports.[60] The dual monarchy was therefore in no position to compete with Germany, which used its productive capacity as an arm of its foreign policy. Throughout the decade before the First World War Austria-Hungary saw its Balkan markets fall to its ally. In 1901–5 Romania drew 28.5 per cent of its imports from Austria-Hungary and 27.1 per cent from Germany; by 1913 these figures were 23.4 and 40.3 per cent.[61] Most galling of all was the outcome of Austria-Hungary's decision to impose economic sanctions on Serbia in 1906. In retaliation for Serbia's decision not to order arms from the Skoda works in Bohemia but from the French, Austria-Hungary refused to import Serbian livestock, in particular pigs. Serbia's response was to find alternative markets, including Germany: by 1910, when Austro-Serb commercial relations were resumed, Germany had replaced Austria-Hungary as one of Serbia's principal trading partners.[62]

It was therefore necessity rather than affection which fuelled the Nibelung compact. For Germany, Austria-Hungary was better than no ally at all. The dual monarchy broke the ring of encircling and seemingly hostile powers; more positively, and increasingly more importantly, Austria-Hungary was the land bridge not merely to the Balkans but to Asia Minor. For the Habsburg monarchy the Austro-German alliance replaced the Concert of Europe as the bulwark behind its fragile identity. For Germans within Austria the alliance removed any possible conflict of loyalty: 1866 had seemingly sundered them

[60] Macartney, *Habsburg Empire*, 755–6; Trebilcock, *Industrialization*, 443–4; Valiani, *End of Austria-Hungary*, 4.

[61] Fischer, 'World policy, world power and German war aims', in Koch (ed.), *Origins*, 150–1.

[62] Bridge, *From Sadowa*, 277–80; see also 268–9; Dedijer, *Road to Sarajevo*, 368–9.

from Germany proper, but the alliance and its potentialities had reunited them. Moreover, Germany's support also extended to the Magyars, whose landowning aristocracy dominated Hungary in power if not in numbers, and whom the Kaiser portrayed as honorary Teutons in their battle against the Slav. The alliance therefore provided the *Ausgleich* of 1867 with an external validation which its parlous domestic condition made indispensable.[63]

Although in 1815 and again in 1848 the Habsburgs had evaded the threat of nationalism, in 1867 they had struck a compromise with Hungary. Franz Joseph became simultaneously emperor of Austria and king of Hungary. Each state had its own assembly, the Austrian Reichsrat and the Hungarian Diet. Delegations of the two convened once a year, albeit in separate buildings, to approve common expenditure. Ministers for the two nations were answerable to the emperor. The two national ministers president, plus the three joint ministers—the foreign minister, the minister of war, and the common minister of finance—together constituted the common ministerial council. The foreign minister set the agenda for the common council and thus became the de facto chancellor of the dual monarchy. The army itself was also common to both parts of the empire, and in many ways the most effective embodiment of its supra-national and multinational status, although in addition Austria and Hungary each had a separate territorial army. The *Ausgleich* was a pragmatic and sensible response which lasted until 1918. Its strength rested on its application of internal imperialism: the Germans, albeit in a somewhat more liberal and enlightened clothing, were left free to dominate Austria, while Hungary was consigned—by virtue of a very restrictive franchise—to the Magyars. Its weaknesses were twofold. First, the *Ausgleich* was renewable every ten years: Austria-Hungary was therefore on perpetual notice as to its future. Secondly, it was a compromise that commended itself to only one group, the Magyars. For everybody else it was a halfway house. A few wanted a return to centralism. More saw the relative independence achieved by the Magyars as an indication that comparable devolution might be possible for the other ethnic groups. Of the 20 million inhabitants of Hungary, less than half were Magyars and the remainder included Romanians (nearly 3 million), Slovaks and Croats (nearly 2 million of each), and Serbs (less than a million). Austria was even more variegated: 10 million Germans formed the largest group in the total population of 28 million, but 4.9 million Poles and 3.2 million Ruthenes lived in Galicia, 6.5 million Czechs in Bohemia, and there were smaller groupings of Slovenes, Italians, Serbs, and Croats. For many of these the *Ausgleich* became not a stopping point, but an intermediate stage to trialism (a third, Slav, component in the empire) or even federalism.[64]

[63] Shanafelt, *The secret enemy*, 4–6.

[64] Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, 14–30; Renouvin, *Crise européene*, 94; Leslie, *Wiener Beiträge*, XX (1993), 367–8.

The major block to change, and indeed the key element in domestic politics in the decade before the First World War, was the intransigence of the Magyars. Either trialism or federalism would diminish Hungary; the Magyar solution was one of repression and of Magyarization, particularly in relation to the use of the Hungarian language. In 1903 the Hungarian Diet declined to increase the recruit contingent for the army in line with the growth in population without the effective formation of a separate Hungarian army. Franz Joseph refused, a challenge to the unity of the army being a challenge to Habsburg authority itself. The Diet was twice dissolved in an effort to form a fresh government, and even the possibility of a military occupation mooted. However, the solution to the impasse most attractive to the monarchy was to widen the Hungarian franchise: the power of the Magyar aristocracy would be broken and at the same time sufficient national divisions created to allow the possibility of enhanced Habsburg influence. By the same token the major Magyar parties, and in particular Count Istvan Tisza, Hungary's minister president in 1903–5 and again from 1913, were determined to block suffrage reform. Magyar compliance with Franz Joseph's instructions was so minimal that in 1914 only 6 per cent of Hungary's population enjoyed the vote and only fifty of the 453 deputies in the Diet were not Magyars.[65] On the other hand, the threat of universal suffrage contributed to the renewal of the *Ausgleich* (albeit on terms which left the Austrians paying 63.6 per cent of the common expenses). Furthermore, Tisza forced through the army bill in 1912 and reformed the Diet so as to make its proceedings more workable. He also moderated policy towards the Croats, second only to the Romanians as the largest and most independent of the non-Magyar groupings in Hungary. Tisza was shrewd enough to realize that Magyar bloody-mindedness must not go so far as to make the *Ausgleich* unworkable: that would only hasten its demise. Hungary would maximize its power, he calculated, if it established itself as the key element in a continuing empire, and indeed if that empire remained a member of a major international alliance. The by-products of such policies—effective government and the enhancement of the army—pleased Franz Joseph, and were sufficient to persuade him to abandon the pursuit of real political reform.

But the Magyars knew that the confrontation was only deferred. Franz Joseph had come to the throne in 1848, and his succession could not be long postponed. His heir, Franz Ferdinand, was notorious for his anti-Magyar views. Both trialism and federalism had been canvassed within Franz Ferdinand's circle, although the heir apparent ultimately embraced centralism through the idea of a greater German Austria.[66] Whatever the means, the Magyars could expect a renewed challenge to their position in the not too

[65] May, *Hapsburg monarchy*, 394. [66] Dedijer, *Road to Sarajevo*, ch. 7.

MAP 2. THE BALKAN PENINSULA IN 1914

distant future and this alone was sufficient to confirm the precarious state of the *Ausgleich.*

Franz Joseph's espousal of a moderate liberalism did not proceed from any love of liberalism per se but from its attraction as a device to soften national opposition and thus indirectly to buttress Habsburg power. Within Austria liberalism of this sort was progressively applied, but without achieving the expected effects. South Slav and Czech culture and education received a considerable boost from ordinances in 1880 and 1881 which allowed official languages other than German. The suffrage of 1882 progressively enfranchised the lower middle class, the shopkeeper and the artisan. The Poles in Galicia became effectively self-governing. The final step, that of universal suffrage introduced in 1907, was in part the corollary of Franz Joseph's attempt to carry through the same reform in Hungary. It was also prompted by an exaggerated fear of socialism, the 1905 Russian revolution having stimulated disturbances in Vienna and Prague. Socialism, if brought within the Reichsrat, might be channelled towards reformism, not revolution; it might—as a supra-national movement, committed to the benefits of large economic units—buttress the larger forum of the empire as a whole; and it was hoped that the clerical parties would react and organize a more conservatively inclined lower-class vote. In the 1907 elections the socialists duly increased their representation sixfold, to eighty-six seats out of 516. But socialism in Austria was not the threat or the force it was in western Europe: nationalism splintered it too, and the Czechs broke away from the Austrian socialists to form their own party. The 1907 franchise had been calculated on the basis of national groupings, and indeed had had to rest on the existence of the divisions which nationalism would create in order to prevent a Slav coalition outnumbering the German representation within the Reichsrat. Therefore, although party loyalties reflecting class and occupational factors were formed, ethnic division was pre-eminent. Czech obstruction was particularly vociferous. Only the Poles, driven into loyalty by their fear of the Russians and of the latter's support for the Ruthenes in Galicia, could be counted on. Parliamentary government, even parliamentary debate, was rendered impossible, and in March 1914 Count Karl Sturgkh, Austria's minister president since 1910, adjourned the Reichstag altogether. It was not to reconvene until 1917. The trappings of constitutionalism thus proved more resilient and more continuous in Hungary, where they were buttressed by a form of domestic colonialism, than they did in the more liberal conditions of Austria.

Because one of the most important political changes to emerge from the First World War was the fragmentation of the Austro-Hungarian empire into a number of new nation states, it is tempting to conclude that the disintegration was well in train before the war broke out. It is true that major change, presumably on Franz Joseph's death, was generally expected, and that the

vulnerabilities of the *Ausgleich* and hence of Austria-Hungary as a whole were acknowledged. But most national groups derived benefits as well as disadvantages from membership of the empire, and therefore the majority before 1914 looked to federalism, not independence.

The cultural diversity of Vienna, home before 1914 to Freud and the philosopher Wittgenstein, the writers Rilke and Karl Kraus, the painter Gustav Klimt, and the composers Mahler, Richard Strauss, and Schoenberg, and the relative liberalism of the Habsburg empire compared with the autocracy of its Slav neighbour, Russia—all these were plus points for the inhabitants of Austria-Hungary. The strength and size of the bureaucracy, consciously expanded to embrace the nationalities of the empire, meant that effective administration continued regardless of parliamentary paralysis. Ministers were drawn from the civil service and were enabled to govern by virtue of paragraph 14 of the Austrian constitution, which conferred emergency powers when the Reichsrat was not in session.

What was, however, true was that if any state manifested a close connection between domestic policy and foreign policy, if in any country the former directed the latter, it was not so much Germany as Austria-Hungary. Generally speaking, and with notable exceptions, Austria-Hungary was neither a bellicose nor expansionist actor in international relations after 1866. The defence budget declined from the 1890s until 1912, and the war of 1866 ought to have been sufficient reminder that fighting did not necessarily resolve problems in a satisfactory manner. But in the debate on the *Ausgleich* and its future the funding and the recruitment of the army were pivotal; for some, its employment in war would be the best way to cut through the debate and the procrastination. Furthermore, the dual monarchy's ethnic groups prevented the empire from lapsing into any form of isolation. With the exception of the Magyars, each of them could look to a national homeland that lay outside the frontiers of the empire—to Serbia, to Romania, to Italy, to Russia, and even to Germany. Domestic and foreign policy were therefore inextricably linked. In 1815 Metternich had used the Concert of Europe to give this racial pot-pourri external validation and support; by 1914 the relative decline of the Concert system could only enhance Austria-Hungary's dependence on the Austro-German alliance as a substitute.

However unstable the dual monarchy might appear, however much it might seem a relic of the eighteenth century, its survival was much less remarkable than that of its immediate eastern neighbour, the Ottoman empire. The origins of the tensions in the Balkans which became the immediate cause of the First World War lie not so much in Austrian aggression (although in time this came to play its part) as in Ottoman senescence. In July 1908 the Young Turks, a group of Turkish patriots, backed by the III army corps at Salonika (the army being an agent of modernization), staged a revolution

against the oriental despotism of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Abdul Hamid granted the constitution which the Young Turks demanded, but then in April 1909 staged a counter-revolution. The Young Turks rallied, ousted Abdul Hamid, and installed his brother, Mohammed V, as the new Sultan.

The Young Turks' revolution threatened to transform the situation in European Turkey. Over the last half of the nineteenth century the great powers of Europe had endeavoured to manage Turkey's decline, and in particular its withdrawal from the Balkans, in as gradual a manner as possible. In 1878 they had stepped in after the Russian defeat of Turkey, and at the Congress of Berlin had acknowledged the independence of Serbia, Romania, Montenegro, and Bulgaria, the latter albeit under Ottoman suzerainty, and had entrusted to Austria-Hungary the administration of Bosnia-Herzogovina while leaving it technically in Turkish possession. Turkey's lingering status as a European power was confirmed by its continued direct rule over Rumelia and Macedonia. Russia, although understandably peeved at not reaping any return from its success on the battlefield, had come to accept that it must collaborate with Austria-Hungary in the management of Ottoman decline. Neither power, least of all Russia after the Manchurian defeat and the subsequent revolution, could afford disturbance on its frontiers. By July 1908, however, both had acknowledged an interest in revising the Congress of Berlin—Russia, thwarted in its Far Eastern ambitions, had turned south-west and wanted the use of the Black Sea straits for its warships, and Austria-Hungary was anxious to regularize its position in Bosnia-Herzogovina.

Austrian urgency derived from its relationship with Serbia: the latter, rather than be content with its position as a client of the dual monarchy, was touting itself as the 'Piedmont' of the South Slavs—the nation that would lead the way to the formation of a large independent South Slav state. A greater Serbia would not only draw in Bosnia-Herzogovina but also the Serbs and possibly Croats resident within the empire proper: external problems would be projected back into the domestic arrangements of the dual monarchy. In 1907 Austria-Hungary had planned a railway line to link the Austrian and Turkish networks south of Serbia, so as to consolidate the empire's stabilizing influence in the Balkans and at the same time outflank Serbia. Britain (which wrongly saw the proposal as an extension of German ambitions, and part of a Berlin-to-Baghdad railway) and Russia opposed, and by 1908 Austria-Hungary was confronted with a loss of prestige in the Balkans. Then in July the Young Turks' revolution put all the assumptions underpinning Austrian and even Russian policy into reverse. The Young Turks might apply the principles of democracy and nationalism to the Balkans, in which case Austro-Russian abilities to manage the situation would be considerably dented. Similar effects would follow on any precipitate completion of Turkish withdrawal from

Europe. Alternatively, a reinvigorated Ottoman empire might try to reassert its crumbling position in the Balkans. However, that was likely only to provoke the insurrectionary talents of Turkey's Slav subjects.

On 16 and 17 September 1908 the foreign ministers of Austria-Hungary and Russia, Aehrenthal and Izvolsky, met at Buchlau to discuss the position.[67] Both were acting independently of their alliance partners. Aehrenthal brought to the meeting a self-confidence unwarranted by the overall situation in the Balkans but no doubt buttressed by his awareness of Russia's relative weakness. In this he was right: when confrontation loomed in March 1909 the Russian minister of war said that the Russian army was not fit even for defensive operations. But Aehrenthal's aim was not aggression. Like Izvolsky, he intended to improve, not worsen, Austro-Russian relations, albeit at Serbia's expense. More specifically, he wanted a clear demarcation between Austrian interests in the Balkans and Turkish. He therefore proposed the annexation of Bosnia-Herzogovina. What he had in mind was a foreign policy success sufficient to rally the Habsburg loyalties of the national groupings and especially of the Magyars. In this he picked up the schemes of Stephan Count Burian, who felt that the incorporation of Bosnia within the empire would divide South Slav nationalism between Zagreb and Belgrade, and so weaken its impact that the threat of trialism would be removed. Moreover, if Bosnia-Herzogovina were attached to Hungary rather than to Austria, the expansion of the former would enhance the *Ausgleich* by making it more truly a marriage of equals. For Aehrenthal, the domestic benefits of putting the dual monarchy's Balkan policy back on track went further: by focusing the army's attention elsewhere, it would still the efforts of the general staff to resolve the military budget by demands for preventive war against the empire's ostensible ally, Italy.[68]

The lure for Izvolsky was the prospect of getting something for nothing. By his reckoning Austria-Hungary already exercised control over Bosnia-Herzogovina: formalizing the arrangement would leave Russia no worse off and would further Russia's wider foreign policy objectives after the defeat by Japan. The Balkan settlement imposed by the powers in the Treaty of Berlin, which still rankled in St Petersburg, would have been reopened, but through unilateral action by Austria, not Russia. Izvolsky would then be able to call for an international conference to review the treaty, and could appear as the protector of the Balkan Slavs. Most important, he could use the opportunity to ask that the straits be opened to Russian warships. Aehrenthal had indicated

[67] Bridge, *From Sadowa*, 297–324, provides much detail on the Bosnian crisis; for the Russian perspective, see Lieven, *Russia and the origins*, 33–7; McDonald, *Union government and foreign policy*, 102, 130–51.

[68] Leslie, *Wiener Beiträge*, XX (1993), 314, 326–8; Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 85, 114, 141–2; Hermann, *Arming of Europe*, 108–10.

that he would support such a request, and Izvolsky reasoned that Russia's newfound ally, Britain, might also be expected to back the proposal.

Izvolsky's strategy began to unravel almost immediately. In Sofia Bulgaria declared its independence from Turkey without waiting for Russia's support. In Vienna, on 6 October, Aehrenthal announced the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzogovina earlier than anticipated, and presented Russian acceptance of it as unconditional. And in St Petersburg Stolypin was outraged to discover that the foreign minister had been developing a policy which had not been concerted in the Council of Ministers and was more ambitious than Russia's weakened state would allow. Technically, Stolypin had no cause for complaint: neither the Council of Minsters nor the Duma had responsibility for foreign affairs, which remained a fiefdom of the Tsar, and in this case the Tsar was both informed about and supportive of his foreign minister's policy.[69] But Stolypin and, ironically, Izvolsky himself had promoted the idea that Russia's domestic strength and international status were linked, and that foreign affairs should be subject to wider accountability. This line had been easier to advance after the Tsar's humiliation in the Far East and the rejection of the Björkö agreement. The publication of the details of the Buchlau agreement produced widespread outrage in Russia. Izvolsky received no credit for ingenuity in relation to the straits or the Treaty of Berlin, and earned equal opprobrium for having handled the interests of the Balkan Slavs with so much cynicism. His only hope of salvaging either his domestic position or Russia's external authority resided in his plan that the whole question should go to a European congress.

In this too he was disappointed. Germany had no intention of promoting another conference, with its attendant danger of diplomatic defeat. This is not to say it was particularly pleased by Austria-Hungary's independent line, since it endangered Germany's wooing of Turkey, but by December it had come round to the idea of backing its ally. Bülow recognized that, if Austria-Hungary was to be an effective support in the event of a war in Europe, it must relieve Germany of some of the burden on its eastern front. At the time Austria-Hungary seemed more likely—if it were to make war at all—to do so on Italy rather than Russia, and antagonism towards Italy weakened the Triple Alliance. On 14 December Bülow gave Austria-Hungary Germany's support.[70] In January 1909 Conrad von Hötzendorff, the Austrian chief of the general staff, made contact with Helmuth von Moltke the younger, his German counterpart and Schlieffen's successor, in an effort to establish German operational plans in the event of war with Russia. Moltke warned that Germany's initial concentration would be against France, but assured Conrad of German support against

[69] Fuller, *Strategy and power in Russia*, 419–20; Neilson, *Britain and the last Tsar*, 289, 296–302.
[70] Lambi, *Navy and German power politics*, 304.

Russia if Russia acted with Serbia. Neither Bülow nor Moltke expected the Bosnian crisis to result in war, but their attitudes were decisive in stiffening Austrian resolve. They had simultaneously strengthened the Triple Alliance, relieved Germany's own sense of encirclement, and exposed the weaknesses of the Triple Entente.

Russia, by contrast, was not able to elicit similar backing from its allies. France made it clear that no support against Austria-Hungary would be forthcoming. Britain reverted to a more traditional policy than the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente had suggested likely. Long-established concerns about Russian naval penetration into the Mediterranean, and the defence of the route to India, manifested themselves in a reluctance to underwrite Russia's claim to use of the Black Sea straits. What 1908 offered Britain was a renewed opportunity for a role in Turkey: anxiety not to affront the Young Turks overrode any obligations to Izvolsky.

Thus, the most important consequence of the Bosnian crisis was Russian humiliation. The withdrawal of Turkey from Europe removed any buffer between the Habsburg and Romanov empires. The Russians could only interpret the annexation of Bosnia-Herzogovina as evidence of Austrian expansionism in the Balkans, an expansionism which might eventually take the dual monarchy to the gates of Constantinople and to a landward domination of the straits. Arguably Russo-Austrian collaboration in the Balkans could not have been long sustained independently of the Bosnian crisis. But now latent hostility was unavoidable if Russia was not to forfeit its great power status in the west as well as in the east. The Duma happily approved arms appropriations. Henceforth Russia's policy was to revolve around the creation of an anti-Austrian bloc in south-east Europe.

Nor was Austria-Hungary's own position much improved, despite the apparent gains. Russian involvement in the Balkans, particularly in Bulgaria and Serbia, was not consonant with Austrian objectives in the region. Aehrenthal had hoped to compensate Serbia for Austria's annexation of Bosnia by economic concessions sufficient to draw Serbia back into Austria-Hungary's orbit. Serbia rejected Austria-Hungary's proposals. Aehrenthal's response was to invoke the threat of military action. On 29 March 1909 the mobilization of the Austro-Hungarian army was approved. Two days later Serbia climbed down, promising to be a good neighbour. Aehrenthal had not entered the crisis with any intention of applying coercion, and not until December had he been willing to countenance the Conrad–Moltke exchange of views. But now he was convinced of the value of military pressure in Balkan diplomacy. At one level this change of heart reflected the views of Conrad, who had transferred his advocacy of preventive war from Italy to Serbia, arguing that Russia's weakness gave the dual monarchy a unique opportunity to settle with Serbia. But Conrad wanted war, not the threat of war. He was furious that the opportunity

for the former had been forfeited in favour of the latter. Next time, he warned, Russia would not be so compliant.[71]

Nor did long-term relations with Serbia look much more auspicious. Serb sentiment, both in the population as a whole and in the army specifically, was not in sympathy with its government's actions. When *Narodna Odbrana* (National Defence), a Serb society committed to revolutionary activity in Bosnia, was forced by the government in the light of its undertaking to Austria to modify its position and concentrate on cultural activities, its place was promptly taken by a secret organization, *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* ('Unification or Death' but known to its enemies as 'Black Hand'), committed to Serbia's fulfilment of its self-appointed role as the Piedmont of the South Slavs, and to fighting beyond Serbia's frontiers for the achievement of that goal.[72]

Therefore Austria's relations with Serbia showed little hope of improvement. Furthermore, at home the acquisition of Bosnia-Herzogovina failed to resolve the conflicts generated by the *Ausgleich*. The new province was not incorporated into either Austria or Hungary, but administered jointly. The difficulties of concerting a wider Balkan policy were compounded: the case for a South Slav component within the empire, for trialism, was strengthened by the annexation, and thus Hungary's fears that it would lose its control over Croatia heightened. And finally, the crisis which Austria-Hungary had initiated independently of Germany had had the effect of confirming Austrian subordination to its northern partner. Although Austria-Hungary would try to pursue an independent policy on other occasions before 1914, in the eyes of the Triple Entente—and especially of Britain—Austria was now no more than Germany's stalking-horse in south-eastern Europe.

This analysis was right in so far as the Bosnian crisis did mark the beginnings of a reorientation in German foreign policy. By 1909 the domestic repercussions of *Weltpolitik*—the budgetary consequences of Tirpitz's fleet and the associated problems of managing the Reichstag—had begun to make that particular form of imperialism unsustainable, at least at such a high tempo. The process of disillusionment was completed with what was perceived as humiliation over Morocco in 1911: not only were ships expensive but they did not even guarantee diplomatic success. In place of *Weltpolitik*, the idea of Germany as the dominant continental power gained strength. Blocked by Britain at its western maritime exits, Germany should instead turn east, to central Europe and even, via Austria-Hungary, to south-east Europe and to Turkey. In 1912 Walther Rathenau of the *Allgemeine Elektrizitatsgesellschaft* sketched out to the Kaiser and Bethmann Hollweg a plan for a central European customs union. Germany's volume of trade was the highest in the

[71] Tunstall, *Planning for war*, 60–8; Hermann, *Arming of Europe*, 128–30; Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 114–22.

[72] Dedijer, *Road to Sarajevo*, 371–8.

world, but it was unbalanced: between 1887 and 1912 imports rose 243.8 per cent but exports increased by only 185.4 per cent. Each of its major economic rivals, the United States and Britain, had carved out an area of effective domination, in the Americas and in the British empire respectively; Russia had the potential to do the same in Asia. Germany, not least in order to balance its trade, should become the pivot of a European economic bloc, an enclosed free-trade area, a *Mitteleuropa*.[73]

It is too simplistic to see a direct switch from *Weltpolitik* to *Mitteleuropa* occurring between 1909 and 1912. The German fleet and the now-flourishing expectation of 'a place in the sun' could not simply be put to one side. *Weltpolitik* would continue as a theme of German policy. Nor had *Mitteleuropa* arisen *de novo*. German economic penetration into south-east Europe was, as we have seen, already generating friction with Austria-Hungary. Rathenau's idea was to reinvigorate and give direction to an existing element in Germany's activities. Furthermore, *Weltpolitik* and *Mitteleuropa* were not mutually exclusive. 'Germany', Bethmann Hollweg told the Reichstag in 1911, 'can conduct a strong policy in the sense of *Weltpolitik* only if she maintains her power on the Continent.'[74] Part of *Mitteleuropa*'s attraction was that it provided a land route into Turkey and Asia: it showed once again how European and colonial concerns could no longer be neatly compartmentalized. The nature of Germany's imperialism had received a new emphasis, economic and diplomatic rather than naval and maritime, but in the long run and in its furthest reach it was just as likely to upset the interests of the existing imperial powers, particularly Britain and France, but also Russia.

Mitteleuropa in its proper sense, relating to central Europe, had a strategic justification as well as an economic one. *Weltpolitik* was a German policy; it did not in any way accord with the interests of the Triple Alliance as a whole. Italy as a Mediterranean power was dependent on Anglo-French good will for commercial freedom, and in particular derived almost all its coal (which met 87.6 per cent of its energy needs) from Britain.[75] Nor did Austria-Hungary, as it showed through its lack of support in 1905 and 1911, identify with Germany's Moroccan ventures. By pursuing *Mitteleuropa*, Germany might bring its alliance commitments and its economic imperialism into line, thus integrating its strategy. To give expression to this, the army—which had seen the navy's budget grow to 55 per cent of its own between 1897 and 1911—now began to make up for lost time, and to have increases of 29,000 men in 1912 and 136,000 in 1913. By switching the spotlight back to their land forces many Germans felt—with good reason—that they were affirming their natural strengths

[73] Fritz Fischer's writings are the main source for these points; see *Germany's aims*, 9–11, 28–9; *War of Illusions*, 6–11, 139–40; Fischer, in Koch (ed.), *Origins*.

[74] Herwig, 'Imperial Germany', in E. May (ed.), *Knowing one's enemies*, 82.

[75] Bosworth, *Italy and the approach*, 17.

rather than—as they had been doing with the navy—trying to build from weakness.

If all this had amounted to a consistent policy the events of 1912 to 1914 in the Balkans might not have been as confused as they became, or at least might not have had such wide repercussions. To Austria-Hungary in particular Germany seemed unable to follow a steady course. Partly this was because Germany continued both to affirm the alliance and yet at the same time to undercut Austria-Hungary's economic position in the Balkans. Furthermore, Germany's efforts could as often reflect dynastic sympathies (there were Hohenzollerns on the thrones of Greece and Romania) as Austrian interests. Not least because of its doubts about Romania's loyalty, Austria-Hungary saw Bulgaria, a power without ethnic interests in the population of the empire, as its natural ally in the Balkans: Germany did not. Ironically, too, the very pace of German industrialization confused and weakened Germany's policies in south-east Europe. By 1913 over half Germany's foreign investment in Europe and almost 40 per cent in the world was concentrated in the area between Vienna and Baghdad.[76] But, despite such figures, Germany was disconsolate. German capital was so absorbed by domestic production that the aggregate left over for foreign investment was small; France—as a power that was industrializing more slowly and where capital therefore remained uncommitted—proved a much more attractive money market for the emergent Balkan states. In Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria French capital won out over German, and even in Romania—where Germany made special efforts—Germany's share of state loans and in the oil market fell after 1911. But this was a competition from which Austria-Hungary itself could not derive benefit. Twenty-five per cent of all German foreign loans went to the dual monarchy; the latter imported more from the former than it exported; and yet Austria-Hungary could not diminish its dependence by raising loans on the French Bourse, as the French (with Russian support) would not allow them to do so. Thus Austria-Hungary's dependence on Germany increased, but its ability to influence German policy declined.[77]

Austria-Hungary's loss of control in the Balkans was not simply the result of German activities. The substitution in the region of Austro-Russian antagonism for their erstwhile détente created opportunities for the newly emergent Balkan states. The latter could exploit great-power rivalry for their own ends in a way that great-power collaborative action had in the past made impossible. Thus, while superficially the Balkans appeared to be the focus of Austro-Russian hostility, the inner dynamism of the situation was provided by the opposition of the Balkan states to Turkey. This put Austria-Hungary at a yet

[76] Herwig, in May (ed.), *Knowing one's enemies*, 86.
[77] Fischer, *War of Illusions*, 291–8; Fischer, in Koch (ed.), *Origins*, 141–8.

greater disadvantage, for the dual monarchy had strapped itself to a losing policy, the maintenance of a Turkish presence in Europe. It hoped thereby to keep the Slav states on its frontiers, and particularly Serbia, in a state of dependence.

The next stage in Ottoman decline was not, however, initiated by the Balkan states themselves, but by the third member of the Triple Alliance, Italy. Despite its humiliation at Abyssinian hands at Adowa in 1896, Italy had not abandoned its colonial aspirations. Growing French strength in the Mediterranean and in Morocco fuelled Italian jealousy, born of the conviction that Italy too was a Mediterranean power. Floated by the patriotic rhetoric celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Risorgimento, and anxious to exploit a favourable constellation on the international scene, Italy declared war on Turkey on 29 September 1911 and launched an expedition to seize Libya. Proof was once again to be provided that colonial interests could not be pursued without European consequences.

The threat to Turkey increased Russian sensitivities over the future of the Black Sea straits. Between 1903 and 1912 37 per cent of Russian exports and three-quarters of Russia's grain shipments passed through the straits.[78] Russia's anxiety that no other state should control such a vital waterway was second only to its desire to control the straits itself. The presence of the Italian navy in the Dodecanese and its bombardment of the Dardanelles in April 1912 gave as concrete expressions to Russian fears as had Austria-Hungary's behaviour in the Bosnian crisis. Good relations with Bulgaria seemed to be the first step in neutralizing the landward approaches to the straits. Russia's task was made more easy by Austria-Hungary's support of Turkey, a policy with little appeal in Sofia. But, alongside this defensive motivation on Russia's part, there flourished in some quarters a more virulently pan-Slav and anti-Austrian sentiment. N. V. Hartwig, the Romanovs' representative in Belgrade, was fired by such considerations and played a key role in effecting, on 13 March 1912, a most unlikely rapprochement, an alliance between Serbia and Bulgaria.

Hartwig's policy was not necessarily the same as that of Sazonov, Izvolsky's successor as foreign minister. In 1910 and 1911 Russo-German relations improved. The Kaiser and the Tsar met; Sazonov's visit to Berlin produced an agreement over the Baghdad railway in exchange for German willingness to restrain Austria-Hungary in the Balkans; and the following year Russia—in revenge for its allies' failure to support it in 1909—stood aloof over Morocco. Even a thawing in Austro-Russian relations was not beyond the bounds of possibility: Franz Ferdinand, somewhat far-fetchedly, found his enthusiasm for the monarchical principle favouring a resuscitation of Bismarck's *Dreikaiserbund*, an alliance of Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. In 1910 Russia

[78] Lieven, *Russia and the origins*, 45–6.

began a redeployment of its forces to the east, so threatening a weakening of its commitment to France and a reawakening of its antagonism for Japan.[79]

Therefore Poincaré's visit to Russia in August 1912 had a dual aim: he wished to restrain Russia in the Balkans, but he also had to reaffirm the Triple Entente.[80] However, Poincaré's efforts to achieve the latter could only undermine the former: France's repeated affirmation of the Entente in 1912 encouraged Russia to feel confident that, if its Balkan manoeuvres led to a clash with Austria-Hungary and then Germany, France would back it up. Such expectations, once formed, were not undermined by other signals from Paris. In a memorandum prepared for Poincaré on 2 September 1912 the French general staff welcomed war in the Balkans as likely to weaken Austria-Hungary, so freeing Russia to take on Germany: 'Under these conditions, the Triple Entente ... could achieve a victory permitting it to remake the map of Europe.'[81] Delcassé, appointed as France's ambassador to St Petersburg in 1913, affirmed France's support of Russia's grievances against the Austrians. With France standing by Russia just as surely as Germany stood by Austria-Hungary, the alliance blocs of the great powers were ranged against each other in the Balkans. Their problem was that none of them was a prime mover in Balkan politics.

Russia's policy, whether embodied by Sazonov or Hartwig, was not at bottom that of Serbia and Bulgaria. The aim of the Serb–Bulgar treaty was to complete the Ottoman ejection from Europe by the conquest and partition of the one surviving piece of Balkan Turkey, Macedonia; the terms contained a secret clause concerning possible attack against Austria-Hungary only if the dual monarchy itself intervened. The policy of Turkey in Macedonia was zealously repressive. In the course of 1912 Greece and Montenegro fell in behind Serbia and Bulgaria. While Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary spoke piously of restraint, the Balkan League—conscious of the opportunity created by the Italian attack on Libya—prepared for hostilities. On 8 October Montenegro declared war on Turkey. On 15 October Turkey came to terms with Italy, forfeiting Libya in its bid to concentrate on the danger closer to home. On 17 October Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece joined Montenegro. The rapidity and scale of the Balkan League's success took the great powers by surprise. A high growth rate in the population, without any accompanying industrialization to soak up the available labour, had permitted the Balkan states to form huge peasant armies.[82] The Turks, outnumbered by almost two to one, spurned the counsel of their German military advisers and opted for

[79] Fuller, *Strategy and power in Russia*, 396, 427–30, 433.
[80] See p. 29.
[81] Hermann, *Arming of Europe*, 178.
[82] Zeman, 'The Balkans and the coming of war', in Evans and Pogge von Strandmann (eds.), *The coming*, 31.

encounter battles rather than defensive ones. By mid-November the Turks had been driven out of Thrace and Macedonia, and stood with their backs to Constantinople.

Turkey's defeat was a major setback for Germany and for Austria-Hungary. A strong Turkey, putting pressure on Russia in the Black Sea and the Caucasus, and on Britain in Egypt and Persia, relieved the burden on Germany.[83] For Austria-Hungary such stunning Slav triumphs could only foster irridentism within the empire. In the immediate term, Serbia's expansion—and claim to head a South Slav state outside Austria-Hungary—continued. To baulk Serbia, to continue its dependence on other powers, Berchtold, Aehrenthal's successor as Austria's foreign minister, insisted on the creation of Albania. His purpose was to prevent Serbia acquiring a Mediterranean port, but on 15 November the Serbs reached the Adriatic. The Austrian army, which had increased its annual intake of conscripts by 42,000 men in October, called up 200,000 reservists in Bosnia-Herzogovina. In Russia the Council of Ministers was divided. Both its chairman, Kokovtsov, and Sazonov feared another humiliation to put alongside the Bosnian crisis, and privately urged Serbia to compromise. Publicly Russia sprang to Serbia's support. The victories of the Balkan states boosted pan-Slav sentiment, and this found expression in a more bellicose grouping headed by the minister of agriculture, Krivoshein. Russia conducted a trial mobilization in Poland during October and November, and on 22 November (although the order was cancelled the following day) the Tsar succumbed to the war party's advocacy of a partial mobilization in response to Austrian concentrations in Galicia.[84] On 12 December Conrad von Hötzendorff, the advocate of a preventive war against Serbia in 1909, who had been dismissed for his continued espousal of a similar line against Italy, was recalled as chief of the general staff. As in 1909 Austria was using military signals to beef up its diplomacy. Germany had so far seen its task as restraining its ally: neither Wilhelm nor Moltke felt war with Russia could be justified by a dispute over Albania. But alliance obligations could not be totally denied. On 2 December 1912 Bethmann Hollweg declared in the Reichstag that, if Austria-Hungary was attacked by a third party while pursuing its interests, Germany would support Austria-Hungary and would fight to maintain its own position in Europe.[85] On 5 December the Triple Alliance was renewed: the danger of Serbia, a possible proxy for a great power, having possession of an Adriatic port alarmed Italy as much as Austria-Hungary. Meanwhile, on 3 December Britain threatened to abandon its erstwhile policy of restraining Russia and France. Haldane

[83] Schulte, *Europäische Krise*, 295–6; also *Vor dem Kriegsausbruch*, 14–15, 39–46.

[84] Bridge, *From Sadowa*, 348; Williamson, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XVIII (1988), 800; L. C. F. Turner, 'The Russian mobilisation in 1914', in Kennedy (ed.), *War plans*, 252–6; McDonald, *United government*, 180–6.

[85] Jarausch, *Enigmatic chancellor*, 133–4.

warned the German ambassador in London that Britain would not accept a French defeat if a Russo-Austrian war led to a German attack on France. For both powers alliance loyalties outweighed the Concert of Europe.

Wilhelm was outraged by Haldane's statement. He had been persuaded that the First Balkan War was a war that Russia had fought by proxy, and that presented real dangers for the dual monarchy. Austria-Hungary was therefore in the right and the British reaction revealed the futility of Bethmann Hollweg's efforts to neutralize them. On 8 December he summoned a meeting at his palace. In attendance were Moltke, Tirpitz, August von Heeringen (the chief of the naval staff), and Georg Alexander von Müller (chief of the Kaiser's naval cabinet). Austria-Hungary, the Kaiser said, should be encouraged to persist in a strong line with the Serbs. If Russia came to Serbia's aid, Germany would fight. Wilhelm assumed that, in such a war, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Turkey would stand with the Triple Alliance. Therefore Austria-Hungary would be freed from its Balkan commitments to concentrate against Russia, and Germany in turn could face west, with its full strength against France. Moltke greeted this scenario by saying that war was inevitable, and that the sooner it came the better for Germany. Tirpitz, on the other hand, reported that the fleet could not be ready for another twelve to eighteen months, by which time the Heligoland fortifications and the widening of the Kaiser Wilhelm canal to allow the passage of Dreadnoughts between the Baltic and the North Sea would be completed. Moltke remarked, not without justice, that the navy would never be ready.

Fritz Fischer has dubbed the meeting of 8 December 1912 a war council, and has seen a direct link between it and the outbreak of war in 1914.[86] The meeting ended with only one resolution, that a press campaign should prepare the German public for war with Russia. There is no evidence that the press chief of the Foreign Ministry attempted to orchestrate such a campaign, or that the newspapers could have been so manipulated if he had.[87] Fischer reckons two further conclusions were implied—that the army should be increased and that food stocks should be amassed. The 1913 law did give the army an increase of 136,000 men. In itself, however, the law does not prove Fischer's point. The navy was over-represented at the meeting, naturally enough as its immediate cause was the attitude of Britain. The minister for war, the man charged with implementing any increase to the army, was not present. In reality the new army law was already in preparation before the meeting of 8 December and its target was an additional three corps, to enter the order of battle in 1916 (and not 1914). Moreover, the bill was less a bid for strategic supremacy than a reflection of military weakness. Turkey's defeat cast doubts on the wisdom of

[86] Fischer, *War of illusions*, 160–203; Röhl, *Historical Journal*, XII (1969), 651–73; Röhl, *Kaiser and his court*, 162–89. A constructive critique is Lambi, *Navy and German power politics*, 382–4.

[87] Rosenberger, *Zeitungen als Kriegstreiber?*, 213.

German tactical doctrine and simultaneously removed an Asiatic counterweight to the Russian army. Both the latter and the French army, by the virtue of the three-year service law, were being increased.

What is more supportive of Fischer's position is the change in the law's priorities and the tempo of its implementation. The general staff's worries about manpower in relation to Germany's external threats had had to compete with the Ministry of War's concerns for the army's internal order. At one level these were a demand for quality rather than quantity: ideally, growth should have been gradual, to allow first for the expansion of the army's training cadres, its officers and NCOs, and secondly to provide for the army's infrastructure, its equipment and accommodation. In the event, however, the measured growth towards 1916 was discarded in favour of an immediate increase in numbers. The army's field training, already compromised in part by its role as an agent of domestic order, was put second to its size. Heinz Pothoff, writing in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on 3 April 1913, thought such measures could only be justified if war occurred within a year: it 'is no longer a peacetime measure, but simply a mobilization'.[88]

On the second point, that of food stocks, nothing was done in relation to the population as a whole—although preparations were put in hand for feeding the army. Germany's high tariffs limited its ability to stockpile grain. This omission did not indicate that Germany was not planning a war from December 1912 if it assumed that such a war would be short: but it did not follow that it definitely was preparing for war (albeit a short one), and such discussion as did occur on the food question suggests a distinct lack of urgency.

In addition to countering Fischer's claims for the so-called 'war council', two further points need to be made. First, the meeting's most logical consequence would have been a large navy bill. The Kaiser's ire was directed at Britain, and it was the navy that said it was not ready for war. But, although the Kaiser endorsed the three ships-a-year tempo which Tirpitz had been advocating, Bethmann Hollweg was able to head off a new naval law. An increase in the navy would have cut across the needs of the army, and it was to those that the enthusiasms of the Reichstag could now be directed. The High Seas Fleet continued to plan for war against France and Russia, despite Wilhelm's injunction that it concentrate on Britain. Moltke's expectation was proved right: the navy was not ready in July 1914 and probably would not have been in 1920. Tirpitz's fleet was a weapon forged for cold war only. Secondly, Bethmann Hollweg was not present at the meeting and did not endorse its conclusions. The close relationship between the Kaiser and his service chiefs would probably permit a gathering that excluded the political leadership nonetheless

[88] Quoted in Hecker, *Rathenau*, 148. The fullest discussion of the needs of training and civil order is in the writings of Schulte, *Die Deutsche Armee*; *Vor dem Kriegsausbruch*; *Europäische Krise*. See also Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 295–6.

being called a 'war council'. But Bethmann Hollweg, not the service chiefs, took centre stage in the crisis that did lead to war. The policy which he—and Germany—followed between December 1912 and July 1914 is not marked by the consistency which would endorse Fischer's argument. It is even hard to sustain the case for an increase in anti-Russian propaganda in 1913.

What remains striking about the meeting on 8 December is that the decision for peace or war was made conditional not on the objectives of policy but on the state of military readiness.[89] The shift in attitudes to which this points was not confined to Germany, although it is probably true to say that the land arms race which it reflects was primarily a consequence of the 1912 German army law. Until 1910 the high-profile arms races had been between navies; in armies the modernization of equipment, and in particular the acquisition of quick-firing artillery, had acted as a brake on expansion. But after the second Moroccan crisis quantity not quality stoked the competition in land armaments. Very often the targets which the general staffs set were long term: in 1914 none of the current programmes of Germany, France, or Russia had been fully implemented. But the arguments which ministers of war used in order to secure the necessary appropriations revolved around present crises. Thus the Balkan wars sustained the momentum which Agadir had initiated. The trial mobilizations which became a feature of the diplomacy of those wars confirmed the emphasis on immediate readiness. Two independent but convergent consequences followed. First, external threats played key roles in parliamentary debates on finance, and the linking of public rhetoric to diplomacy narrowed the options open to foreign minstries. Secondly, foreign policy itself became militarized. This in turn gave general staffs greater political leverage in the formation of state strategy. As windows of opportunity seemed to close, so the idea of preventive war gained a hold.

This, then, is the real significance of the 'war council' meeting—the fact that Moltke advocated a preventive war. Nor was this the first time: he had done so in his exchanges with Conrad during the 1909 Bosnian crisis. For Moltke and the German general staff, war was endemic in international relations. Such a view was not the personal property of the Prussian soldiery: social Darwinism, the belief that states were rising and declining and would fight for position, was a prevailing orthodoxy that was just as capable of being embraced by liberal circles in more democratic states. The soldier's duty was to prepare for that war, and so fight it on the best possible terms. Preventive war was therefore the acceptance of an inevitable war at the right time. Moltke's predecessors in office had canvassed the idea—Alfred Graf von Waldersee against Russia in the 1880s,[90] and on some interpretations Schlieffen

[89] Geyer, *Deutsche Rüstungspolitik*, 88; the discussion which follows rests on Hermann, *Arming of Europe*, and Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*.

[90] Kitchen, *German officer corps*, 65–6, 72.

in 1905[91]—and it is to be found incorporated in the popular military literature of the day, most notoriously in Friedrich von Bernhardi's *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg* (*Germany and the next war*) (1912). But none of these advocates of preventive war saw it as Fritz Fischer sees it, as a deliberate step to resolve an impending domestic crisis. Nor did Moltke approach the subject with the same calculation that previous chiefs of the general staff had brought to its consideration. Moltke talked in general terms of a coming struggle between Slav and Teuton: he was both pessimistic and fatalistic. He did not then combine these world views with the more specific military picture. As chief of the general staff he concentrated on operational plans for war against France, but did little to co-ordinate those plans with those of Conrad, and he did not attempt to formulate what we would now call a grand strategy, integrating operations with the overall picture in a specific way. Moltke's attitude accustomed both Bethmann Hollweg and the Kaiser to the possibility of war, but it did not affect policy in any immediate sense.[92]

At its most negative, the December 1912 meeting made clear what Germany did not want—a European war at that juncture. Thus Germany resumed its original policy, that of an alliance leader co-operating with the British in managing the situation. Superficially at any rate, the Concert of Europe was resuscitated. A conference of ambassadors in London rapidly agreed that an independent Albania stretching from Montenegro to Greece should be created. However, it then proceeded to emasculate the new state by allocating large chunks of its interior to Serbia and Montenegro, so depriving it of its original *raison d'être*, to be an effective barrier against the Serbs. Berchtold, caught between Conrad advocating war with Serbia and a finance minister predicting that war would entail economic collapse, gave in to his German ally and accepted the enlargement of Serbia. In February 1913 Turkey renewed hostilities against the Balkan states, and Conrad again pressed the opportunity for preemptive action. But Bulgaria's rapid success against the Turks, bringing it to Adrianople, led Russia to fear that Bulgaria would control the Black Sea straits: for the moment Russia tried to restrain the bellicosity of the Balkan states. Thus, when Montenegro seized Scutari, the port which the powers had allocated to Albania, Austria-Hungary's renewed threat of military action was backed up by an international naval demonstration, and Montenegro withdrew.

By May 1913 Conrad's demands for preventive war seemed to have been as ineffectual as those of Moltke. In reality the civilian front against military action was cracking. Aehrenthal's death removed its cement. Although expansionist in his policies, the former foreign minister rejected war as an option

[91] Ritter, *Sword and the sceptre*, ii. 106–7, 194, denies this; but see Lambi, *Navy and German power politics*, 242–4, 259–60.

[92] Hull, *Wilhelm II*, 239–42, 255–9, 262–5; see also Groener, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 136.

and curbed Conrad. His successors were less resolute in their brinkmanship. Repeated mobilization was expensive: the December 1912 crisis had cost almost 200 million crowns. The common finance minister, Bilinski, argued that war might be cheaper than recurrent mobilizations. Bilinski was a Pole, and for him the fact that the case for war, which had hitherto assumed Russian neutrality, might now embrace Russia enhanced its attractions.[93] The competition between the two states for influence in Galicia made Poland and the Ukraine almost as inflammatory elements in their relationship as Serbia. At the same time those civilians who favoured rapprochement with Russia—Magyars, like Tisza and Burian—did not therefore oppose a forward policy. They argued that two large, dynastic, multinational states should not allow themselves to be the puppets of the Balkan powers. For them the corollary of détente in the north was assertiveness in the south-east, building on Bulgaria and forcing Romania to declare its hand.[94]

For the time being the new foreign minister, Berchtold, who favoured better relations with Russia, held the line against war, but he was as aware as anyone of the dividends that Austria had reaped by its threat. Furthermore he headed a ministry that drew three further major and interrelated lessons from the events of the preceding six months. First, the Concert system was no longer the external buttress to Austro-Hungarian integrity that it had been in the past. Secondly, unilateral action, not conferences, had achieved Austrian objectives. Thirdly, the Austro-German alliance, although vital to both parties, was nonetheless not supported with consistency by Germany: it paid Austria-Hungary to lead the way.

Austrian distrust of its northern partner was only confirmed by the events of the summer of 1913. In May the Serbs and Bulgars fell out over the division of Macedonia. On 1 June the Serbs and Greeks formed a defensive alliance, partitioning Macedonia and limiting Bulgaria to the line of the River Vardar. The Bulgarians, seething with indignation since they claimed that they had borne the burden of the fighting, declared war on the Serbs. The Russians were unable to check the Bulgarians, and saw their Balkan policy—and the Balkan League—disintegrate as the Second Balkan War took hold. The Greeks came to Serbia's support, and the Romanians—fearful of Bulgarian preponderance in the region and covetous of Silistria (which the Bulgarians were willing to let them have) and the southern Dobrudja (which they were not)—entered the war on 10 July. The Turks seized the moment to retake Adrianople. Further Serb victories were unacceptable to Austria-Hungary, and once again the dual monarchy prepared for war in the Balkans, this time to support Bulgaria. But

[93] März, *Austrian banking*, 103.

[94] Leslie, *Wiener Beiträge*, XX (1993), 315–17, 333–40, 360–9, 377–9; Leslie, 'Österreich-Ungarn vor dem Kriegsausbruch', 667–70; Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 253–5, 267–75; Rauchensteiner, *Tod des Doppeladlers*, 20–1.

Germany aligned itself with the opposition. Wilhelm backed Romania and Greece, and hence also Serbia. Italy pointed out to the Austrians that any action they might take in the Balkans would be offensive, not defensive, and consequently the Triple Alliance could not be invoked. Therefore Bulgaria stood alone, and on 10 August 1913 signed the Treaty of Bucharest. Greece got southern Macedonia, Serbia northern Macedonia, and Romania southern Dobrudja. Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary had hoped that the great powers would subsequently revise these concessions. But Germany, anxious to curry favour with the victorious Balkan states, blocked any such proposal. Therefore Austria-Hungary's conclusions from May were reinforced in August—any passivity on its part was exploited; German support was capricious and therefore to be utilized when it was available; and the Concert system had irretrievably broken down. Four minor Balkan nations had flagrantly breached the Treaty of London and had not been called to order. As a result, Serbia had virtually doubled its territory and increased its population from 2.9 million to 4.4 million, to the point where its claim to head a South Slav state outside the empire had gained validity as well as shrillness. Romania, fired by its easy success in the Dobrudja, now fostered irridentism among its fellow-nationals in Hungarian Transylvania. And, even more significantly, Russia had learned that restraint in the Balkans simply resulted in the loss of influence. With Bulgaria a broken reed, Russia transferred its attentions to the waxing power of Serbia.

Those, like Fischer, who seek to trace a straight line from the December 1912 meeting to the events of July 1914 argue that Gemany's support for Austria-Hungary never wavered in 1913.[95] Furthermore, its desire to restrain the dual monarchy in the Balkans derived not from any rejection of war per se, but from the fear that it might break out prematurely. Part of the problem with the pursuit of such consistency is that its fountainhead must be the Kaiser. In that case the consistency lies in the respect for dynastic loyalties, whether in his support for the Hohenzollerns of Romania and Greece in the summer of 1913, or his affirmation of the Habsburgs that same autumn.

Both Germany and Austria-Hungary were sufficiently aware of the fractured state of their relations to make efforts to mend the bridges in October 1913. Serbia, continuing its forward policy, and justifying its actions by the revolts against Serb rule, occupied towns in northern Albania, thus clearly contravening the peace settlement. Austria-Hungary, anxious to use any opportunity to reverse the Treaty of Bucharest and even more anxious to curb Serbia, determined on a hard line. This time Germany stood by its ally: there was little risk in doing so since neither Russia nor France was prepared to condone Serb

[95] Fischer, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II und der deutschen Politik vor 1914', in Röhl (ed.), *Der Ort Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 264–8.

behaviour. Berchtold dispatched an ultimatum to Serbia, and Serbia gave way. In late October Wilhelm followed up Germany's affirmation of the alliance by a visit to Franz Ferdinand. The Kaiser charmed the archduke by his courteous treatment of the latter's wife Sophie, who as a Czech countess was treated as a commoner at the Austrian court. Most importantly, Wilhelm insisted that Serbia should be a client of Austria-Hungary; if Austria-Hungary had to fight to achieve this, then Germany would back the empire.[96] The centenary of the battle of Leipzig, when Habsburg and Hohenzollern had combined to overthrow Napoleon, helped bathe the Austro-German alliance—at least for the moment—in a warm light.

Neither power saw fit to remember that a third dynasty, that of the Romanovs, had also participated in the victory of 1813. In practice the Romanovs' attention was focused on another anniversary that fell in the same year. The tercentenary of Romanov rule persuaded Tsar Nicholas II that a revival of his autocracy could be rooted in popular sentiment. In due course a stronger foreign policy would emerge as a means for the achievement of that end.[97] What marked the winter of 1913–14 and the following spring was an end to the ambivalence which had characterized Russo-German relations for so long (despite their membership of opposing alliances) and its replacement with categorical hostility.

Antagonistic commercial relations between the two countries meant that the Russian right, many of whom were naturally inclined to favour an alliance with autocratic, monarchical Germany rather than liberal, republican France, found its position increasingly hard to sustain. East Elbian landowners, as a reward for their agreement to Tirpitz's naval appropriations, had secured a tariff that effectively excluded the import of Russian grain into Germany. The effect was not reciprocal: by 1914 German rye had found its way into Finland and Russian agriculture was threatened with the loss of Scandinavian markets. Russia responded in the summer of 1914 by imposing a heavy tariff on imported grains, and the prospects for the renewal of the Russo-German commercial agreements of 1904—due in 1917—did not look good. Thus, Russian farmers found their views on foreign policy coinciding—albeit for different reasons—with those of industry. For German commercial policy cut two ways. German heavy industry wanted the reverse of German agriculture: it was anxious to lower tariff barriers between the two countries, thus opening the Russian market to German goods. Russian industry for its part needed—in its fledgling, if burgeoning state—the protection of high tariffs. Both agriculture and industry were therefore united in identifying national interests with economic policy, and both sectors saw themselves as exploited by Germany.

[96] Dedijer, *Road to Sarajevo*, 155–8; Fischer, *War of Illusions*, 221–3.
[97] McDonald, *United government*, 187.

In 1910–11 sections of the Russian press were advocating rapid industrialization as a foundation for waging war.[98]

In these circumstances foreign policy could become the unifying and soothing balm which the fractured state of Russian society so urgently needed. In the wake of the 1905 revolution the Tsar had accepted the establishment of a legislative assembly, the Duma, based on a wide, if indirect, franchise. But Nicholas was unhappy with the concession which he had made. The army, the navy, and the raising of foreign loans were all excluded from the Duma's competence. Under article 87 of the constitution the government was free to legislate while the Duma was not sitting provided the law was confirmed by the Duma within two months of its next sitting. Thus the Tsar had available the means to re-establish his authority, to assert that Russia's ministers were his servants and were not answerable to the Duma. In 1906 he dissolved the first Duma, an assembly that contained the flower of the Russian intelligentsia. The leaders of the Kadets—a liberal party representing the professional middle classes—decamped to Viborg in Finland, where they issued a manifesto rejecting the dissolution and called for civil disobedience until the Duma was restored. The Viborg manifesto produced little response: its effect was to divide and weaken the Kadets, since those who signed the appeal were disqualified from re-election to the Duma. The Tsar's efforts to limit the Duma were carried forward a stage further with the appointment of Stolypin as prime minister. He got the weakened second Duma to accept a revised electoral law, which favoured the countryside in preference to the towns and boosted Russian representation at the expense of the other nationalities. After 1907 the cycle of revolution and terrorism abated. Good harvests aided Stolypin's efforts to re-establish domestic order. However, the Duma—although more compliant than in 1905—was still a legislative forum where open and uncensored debate was permitted. Nationalism expressed within Russia was potentially almost as domestically divisive as it was within Austria-Hungary. But used externally, cloaked in pan-Slavism and embracing state support for the Orthodox church, it became a means to rally and manage the Duma. Liberal imperialism found powerful advocates among some of the Kadets: P. B. Struve argued that such a policy could reconcile the people and the state, and V. A. Maklakov supported Serb unification at Austria-Hungary's expense. Within the administration this sort of thinking found expression with the appointment in 1912 of the Slavophil liberal, Prince G. N. Trubetskoy, as head of the foreign ministry department concerned with the Balkans and Turkey. For Trubetskoy, and for many Russians before 1914, Austro-Hungarian policy in the Balkans was only rendered effective by virtue of German support.

[98] Siegelbaum, *Politics of industrial mobilization*, 13–14; also Linke, *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 32 (1982), 11; D. Geyer, *Russian imperialism*, 307–9.

Furthermore, Trubetskoy—like other liberals—derived strength and encouragement from the alliance with France and Britain.[99]

Thus anti-Germanism had, by the end of 1913, come to characterize the views of Russian farmers and industrialists, had the support of many of the intelligentsia, and had become a means by which domestic politics seemed capable of regulation and management. The penetration of German influence through the Balkans and into Turkey, the presence of German commercial interests in the Ottoman empire, symbolized most clearly by the Baghdad railway, triggered Russian anxiety with regard to the future control of the Black Sea straits. In 1912 the Turks had briefly to close the straits during the Italian war, and the Russian grain trade had lost 30 million roubles a month, with the adverse effects on the Russian balance of trade causing the state bank to raise its discount rate half a per cent in 1913.[100]

In October 1913 all these currents found their focus with the appointment of a German general, Liman von Sanders, to command I Corps of the Ottoman army at Constantinople. A German military mission, designed to train and upgrade the Turkish army, was not in itself a legitimate cause for objection. Liman was not the first German officer to undertake such a task in Turkey, and the British were performing a similar function in relation to the Turkish navy. But the Turks appointed Liman to a command, not to an advisory post. Furthermore, Wilhelm—in his usual bombastic way, and far exceeding the brief favoured by the German foreign ministry—had instructed Liman to Germanize the Turkish army and to make Turkey an instrument of German foreign policy and a counterweight to Russia.[101] Given the strength of Russia's reaction, the diplomats' more cautious approach prevailed over Wilhelm's instructions, military objectives were subordinated to political, and Liman von Sanders became inspector-general of the Turkish army instead. But the consequences of the affair stretched beyond its apparent solution. It consolidated Sazonov's desire that Russia control the straits, and by February 1914 he was clear that this would be a Russian war aim if war came. Even more importantly, it confirmed his fears of German ambitions, and revealed his preference for war rather than to have the Triple Alliance regard Russian interests as of no consequence. A conference convened by Sazonov in the middle of the crisis, and attended by the ministers for the services as well as by the chief of the general staff, revoked the renunciation of war that had guided Russian policy since 1905. Instead, war was deemed to be 'fully permissible', and the conference set out a series of escalatory steps designed to get Germany to comply with Russia's wishes. Sazonov was not so foolhardy as to

[99] Lieven, *Russia and the origins*, 90–100, 126–32; on Russia generally in this period, see Pares, *Fall of the Russian monarchy*.

[100] C. Jay Smith, *Russian struggle for power*, 63–5.

[101] Fischer, *War of illusions*, 330–54.

imagine that Russia was suddenly able to take on Germany and Austria-Hungary unaided. Thus, a necessary corollary of this shift was a much firmer allegiance to the Entente, and a determination to convert it into a fully-fledged alliance. Indeed, Sazonov had overreacted to Liman's appointment not least to test the Entente.[102]

France, through Poincaré, duly expressed to Izvolsky—now the Russian ambassador in France and working tirelessly for the promotion of the Triple Entente—its support for Russia. Such expressions were seen as inadequate by Sazonov, but they were more than sufficient to reveal the limitations of Bethmann's foreign policy. By emphasizing joint Franco-German interests in the Middle East, Bethmann had in 1913 achieved a measure of détente. Caillaux's return to office as minister of finance, the acrimony generated by the debate on the three-year service law, and the apparent waning of Poincaré's influence had all been good omens for Germany. But the Liman affair showed that, when driven to make a choice, the first priority in French foreign policy remained the Franco-Russian alliance. And, to add insult to injury, in 1914 once again French capital won out over German, with Turkey increasing its borrowings so that the level of French investment was three times greater than that of Germany.

By early 1914, therefore, the sole remaining plank in Bethmann Hollweg's foreign policy was the hope that Britain might yet be neutralized. In playing the Turkish card, Bethmann Hollweg had at least exploited the underlying and traditional weakness in Anglo-Russian relations. If Russia was unhappy about Germany's involvement with the Turkish army, it could hardly be ecstatic about the Royal Navy's comparable role with the Turkish navy—especially as the imminent arrival of two British-built Dreadnoughts would give the Turks supremacy in the Black Sea. Furthermore, other British Asian interests, particularly in Persia but also in Afghanistan, Tibet, and China, helped foster tension between the two powers. Bethmann Hollweg could console himself with the thought that, given time, the Anglo-Russian alliance showed every likelihood of collapsing from within.

Bethmann Hollweg's hopes were the stuff of Entente nightmares. Although Grey remained determined that Britain should retain a free hand, France could only endorse Sazonov's appeal in February 1914 that the Entente become a formal defensive alliance designed to deter Germany and Austria-Hungary. In April 1914 Grey agreed to the French suggestion that Russo-British naval conversations should take place, a proposal to which the cabinet gave remarkably ready approval. The naval talks were of course secret, but a German agent in the Russian embassy in London passed on their details to Berlin. On 22 May the *Berliner Tageblatt* published the details, and on 11 June questions were

[102] McDonald, *United government*, 190–5.

asked in the House of Commons. Grey denied that Britain was under any obligations and denied that any negotiations were in progress—a technical truth in terms of treaty commitments, but a strategic fiction.[103]

Grey had feared that, if known, the naval conversations would confirm German fears of Russia and strengthen the hand of what he saw as the war party in Germany against that of Bethmann Hollweg. His worries were realized. Grey saw the German ambassador on 6 and 9 July, and insisted that, although staff talks had taken place, the governments of the Entente were not politically committed to one another. But such artfulness, 'seeking a compromise between isolationism and a policy of alliance in order to gain the advantage of both at the same time',[104] smacked of deceit. Grey hoped to appeal to liberalism in Germany and yet betrayed his own sense of democratic accountability by misleading parliament—or at least so it seemed to Bethmann Hollweg. For Bethmann the possibility of a German–British rapprochement as a basis for German overseas expansion was now gone; threatened too was the idea that each could manage its own alliance in the event of a crisis, as it had in November–December 1912.

Far more important, however, than these diplomatic setbacks was Germany's conviction that its encirclement was now complete. The fear which had accompanied German assertiveness gained the upper hand: the bull in the china-shop of European diplomacy began to see itself as a resigned sacrificial victim. For the Anglo-Russian naval talks gave the cue to the latent but pervasive Russophobia that gripped not only Bethmann Hollweg but also Moltke. The press and popular feeling played on the inevitability of a clash between Teuton and Slav. This emotive vocabulary did not seem inappropriate given the reality of the position. The Russian army's budget—independently of extraordinary capital grants—had grown from 406 million roubles in 1907/8 to 581 million in 1913/14. Spending on the navy nearly tripled over the same period, and in 1914 exceeded that of Germany. In 1913 the Russians introduced the 'grand programme', enacted in 1914, which aimed to increase the annual contingent of recruits for the army from 455,000 to 585,000, and to expand the total number of divisions from 114.5 to 122.5.[105] The Russian war minister accompanied these enlargements with statements calculated to stoke German anxieties. The German and Austro-Hungarian armies were already inferior to those of France and Russia by over a million men in the summer of 1914;[106] by 1917 the Russian army alone would be three times the size of Germany's. The

[103] Williamson, *Politics of grand strategy*, 335–8.

[104] Egmont Zechlin, 'Cabinet versus economic warfare in Germany' in Koch (ed.), *Origins*, 199.

[105] David Jones, 'Imperial Russia's forces at war', in Millett and Murray, *Military effectiveness*, i. 265–6; Stone, *European society*, 334–5; Knox, *With the Russian army*, vol. i. p. xviii; D. Geyer, *Russian imperialism*, 200–1.

[106] Schmidt-Richberg, *Der Regierungszeit Wilhelms II*, 38.

argument that, objectively, there was no chance of a Russian challenge in economic terms did not figure in the calculations on the military balance. By 1914 French loans had enabled the construction of strategic railways so that Russia's mobilization could be accelerated, and the first troops be into battle within fifteen days. German plans drawn up in 1905 rested on the then-valid assumption that Germany would have six weeks in which to deal with France before turning east: the very existence of that planning assumption, which by 1913 was demonstrably wrong, added to Germany's sense of panic. In May 1914, therefore, Moltke's advocacy of preventive war took on greater urgency, if no more precision: 'we must wage a preventive war', he told Gottlieb von Jagow, the foreign minister, 'to conquer our opponents as long as we still have a reasonable chance in this struggle.'[107]

Both Jagow and Bethmann Hollweg resisted Moltke's suggestion.[108] But the case for doing so seemed, in the self-absorbed atmosphere of Wilhelmine politics, to be growing weaker. As early as December 1912 Bethmann—who had visited Russia in that year—confessed: 'One must have a good deal of trust in God and count on the Russian revolution as an ally in order to be able to sleep at all.'[109] The increases in the army necessary to meet the Russian threat exposed the delicacy of his own ability to manage the Reichstag. In 1913 90 per cent of central government spending was devoted to the armed forces, and the national debt had increased 125 per cent in 1898.[110] The conservatives still opposed property taxes, and the introduction of direct Reich taxation threatened the balance between Prussia and Germany as well as increasing Bethmann's reliance on liberal support. In addition, it was not clear that spending at such levels could be maintained. By the end of 1913, the German economy was in recession, 5 per cent of the labour force was out of work, and fears of depression followed.[111] Bethmann's ability to manage the domestic situation seemed as doubtful as his competence to overcome Germany's succession of diplomatic setbacks. Bethmann himself increasingly gave way to fatalism: the death of his wife on 11 May 1914 can only have confirmed his sense of resignation.

Optimists in 1914 took comfort from the fact that the great powers had successfully surmounted a succession of crises since 1905. On the surface, it seemed that the international system could regulate itself. But none of those crises had resolved the underlying problems which had given them birth. Above all, nobody saw the Treaty of Bucharest and the end of the Second

[107] Jarausch, *Central European History*, II (1969), 59.

[108] Mommsen, 'The topos of inevitable war in Germany in the decade before 1914', in Berghahn and Kitchen (eds.), *Germany in the age of total war*, 40; also Jarausch, *Enigmatic chancellor*, 146–7.

[109] Jarausch, *Enigmatic chancellor*, 96.

[110] Herwig, *Luxury fleet*, 78; Kennedy, *Anglo-German antagonism*, 357–8, gives slightly different figures.

[111] Berghahn, *Germany and the approach of war*, 156–60; Fischer, *War of illusions*, 355–68.

Balkan War as more than an armistice. Austro-Serb relations remained locked in rivalry. Germany's own ability to manage another confrontation was diminished by its need to support its ally, a dependence made more pressing by Russia's military and economic growth. The fact of direct Russo-German antagonism would change the dimensions of the next Balkan crisis. And the remoteness of Balkan politics, the fratricidal nature of their warfare, did not diminish their importance for Europe as a whole. In the Balkans imperial rivalries intersected and overlapped with the cold war of the alliances. The Balkans were also the point where three empires—the Russian, the Ottoman, and the Austro-Hungarian—came face to face with the imminent prospect of their own decline as great powers.

THE JULY CRISIS

In 1914 the annual summer manoeuvres of the Austro-Hungarian army were centred on XV and XVI corps in Bosnia.[112] In March it was announced that the Archduke Franz Ferdinand would attend the manoeuvres and would visit Sarajevo. Franz Ferdinand himself was somewhat apprehensive about the trip. On one level the Austrian occupation of Bosnia-Herzogovina had been enlightened: the road mileage of the province had increased over seven times since 1878, the railways had arrived, and new coal- and iron mines had been opened. But the administration of the crown-lands smacked of colonialism. Divide and rule was the Austrian path, retaining Moslem feudal landlords and so setting them against the Christian population. The army, increasingly frustrated by what it saw as lax government in Austria and Hungary, determined that its administration of Bosnia-Herzogovina should be a model of effectiveness. Franz Ferdinand himself advocated repression and active Germanization. He was also a staunch Catholic: in Bosnia Catholics were the minority (18 per cent) and 42 per cent of the population were Orthodox. Many Bosnians looked wistfully to Serbia. They were impressed not only by Serbia's growth in 1912 and 1913 but also by its schooling: young Bosnians crossed the border to Belgrade for further education. Franz Ferdinand's apprehension had good grounds. Five assassination attempts had been made against representatives of the Habsburg administration in the previous four years. In the circum-

[112] In addition to the works listed in nn. 1 and 59 above, the following have been of general assistance throughout this section: Evans and Pogge von Strandmann (eds.), *Coming of the first world war*; Geiss, *July 1914*; id., *Journal of Contemporary History*, I (1966), 75–91; Jarausch, *Central European History*, II (1969), 48–76; Kennedy (ed.), *War plans*; Stone, *Journal of Contemporary History*, I (1966), 153–70; Langdon, *July 1914*; Thompson, *In the eye of the storm*; Trumpener, *Central European History*, IX (1976), 58–85; Williamson, 'Vienna and July 1914', in Williamson and Pastor (eds.), *War and Society in East Central Europe*, v. 9–36; K. Wilson, *Policy of the Entente*; id. (ed.), *Decisions for war*.

stances, and even without the benefit of hindsight, the early announcement of the visit of the heir-apparent, and the extraordinarily lax security associated with it, were inexcusable.

On Sunday, 28 June, the archduke and his wife were driven from the station at Sarajevo to the town hall, along the Appel quay. No soldiers lined the route. Nedeljko Cabrinovic, a Bosnian youth, threw a bomb, which bounced off the archduke's car, and then exploded, wounding two officers in the following car and a number of bystanders. The archduke went on to the town hall. He then decided to visit the wounded officers. At the junction of Franzjosefstrasse and the Appel quay confusion arose as to the route to be followed. The driver began to back the car. An associate of Cabrinovic, Gavrilo Princip, was at the corner, having failed earlier in the day to take his opportunity on the Appel quay. He stepped forward and shot both the archduke and his consort. Franz Ferdinand, whose unattractive character was at least redeemed by his affection for his family, called on his wife to live for the sake of their children. But by the time the car had conveyed their bodies to the governor's residence both husband and consort were dead. It was their wedding anniversary. It was also the day of the battle of Kosovo: in 1389 a single Serb, after defeat at the hands of the Turks, had penetrated the Ottoman ranks and killed the Sultan. For the Serbs and the Bosnians tyrannicide had retained a pedigree which no longer seemed so appropriate to the revolutionaries of industrialized societies.

The assassination led directly to the outbreak of the First World War. And yet, for all the subsequent efforts to trace its authorship to one of the great powers, it remains true that the prime responsibility rested with none of the major belligerents but with an amateurish student revolutionary body, Young Bosnia, whose success owed far more to luck than to a sophisticated conspiracy.

Princip—'a character from a Chekhov play except that when he fired he did not miss'[113]—was born in 1894, the son of a Bosnian Christian peasant family, had received his early education in Sarajevo but had completed it in Serbia, and had aspirations to being a poet. His brief life therefore embraced not only the Bosnian tradition of resistance to foreign, and specifically Ottoman, rule, which had been so easily transferred into opposition to Austria-Hungary, but also the fusion of romanticism and revolution characteristic of his hero Mazzini. Young Bosnia did not reflect a broad current of opinion but was one of a number of small student groups. The aims of these groups were diverse, but certainly Princip and his colleagues embraced the idea of a Yugoslavia, of a South Slav independent state, and rejected gradualism and reformism as means to achieve that end. Violence, they reckoned, would

[113] Taylor, *Politics in wartime*, 68; for a full account of the circumstances of the assassination, see Dedijer, *Road to Sarajevo*. Also, on Young Bosnia, see Wayne S. Vucinich, 'Mlada Bosna and the First World War', in Kann *et al.* (eds.), *The Habsburg empire*.

provoke Austro-Hungarian repression and so increase South Slav hatred of Habsburg government. Terrorism, tyrannicide, direct action, the decisive role of the individual in history—all these themes appealed to the Young Bosnians.

It is therefore hard to see how an assassination attempt would not have taken place even without support from outside. But the assassins did not operate alone. Two members of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*, acting under the cover of *Narodna Odbrana* and so eluding the detection of Austrian intelligence, played key roles. Major Vojin Tankosic of the Serb army provided the four revolvers and six bombs with which the conspirators were equipped; Captain Rade Popovic commanded the Serb guards on the Bosnian frontier and had seen Princip and his associates safely into Bosnia from Serbia some four weeks before. The key figure behind both officers, and the driving force in *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*, was Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijovic, known as Apis. Apis was chief of intelligence in the Serb general staff: he had used his position to help *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* penetrate the army, and also to create the frontier organization which Popovic represented and which allowed *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* to carry its activities into Austria-Hungary. His objective, and that of his organization, was not the federal Yugoslavia favoured by the Young Bosnians but a Greater Serbia, with the implication that the Serbs would dominate the Croats and Slovenes in the new state. Apis was in contact with Artamanov, the Russian military attaché in Belgrade, but it does not follow that Russia was privy to the assassination. Apis's stock in trade, regicide, was not congenial to the Romanovs. Apis, for his part, wanted the achievement of a Greater Serbia to be that of Serbia itself, not that of Russia.[114]

Serb subjects were therefore implicated in Franz Ferdinand's assassination. Austria-Hungary's assumption, and indeed determination, that this was so was shared by most of the other great powers. But the involvement of the Serb government specifically remains a moot point. Although the tariff war of 1906 with Austria-Hungary (the so called 'Pig War', because the border was closed to Serbian livestock) had given Serbia a sharp push towards independent industrialization, this was a recent development and Serbia was predominantly a society of self-sufficient peasants.[115] In such circumstances the army, with its provision of professional education and its possession of sophisticated equipment and weaponry, enjoyed considerable political influence. In 1903 a group of officers, Apis among them, had effected a particularly brutal coup in which King Alexander and his wife had been murdered and the pro-Russian, albeit westernizing and liberal, Petar Karageorgevich, installed in his stead. Petar translated J. S. Mill into Serbo-Croat, and the constitution of 1903 contained all the trappings of democracy, including equality before the law, a free press, and

[114] In addition to the works already cited, see Zeman, *Break-up*, 24–34.
[115] Petrovich, *Modern Serbia*.

an independent judiciary. But the cabinets which followed the coup were short-lived, and the conspirators themselves continued in the army, their authority and influence increased by their king's indebtedness to them. The army was frustrated by the realistic stand taken by Serbia's ministers during the Bosnian crisis, but it was the aftermath of that affair which gave status and reality to the army's pretensions for Serbia as the Piedmont of the South Slavs. The gains of the Balkan wars hallowed the Serb army with the aura of victory. Re-equipped with French artillery (the cause and the fruit of the 'Pig War'), its peacetime strength standing at 200,000 men, it saw Serbia as an independent political actor.

Pasic, the prime minister, was more cautious, using the backing of Russia to hold the army in check, and seeking a modus vivendi with Austria-Hungary. Although he too was supportive of Serbia's expansion and of its inclusion of Serbs currently within the dual monarchy, he accepted that the achievement of that aim would be more gradual and piecemeal than did *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*. The administration of the newly acquired areas of Macedonia brought the clash between Pasic and Apis, between the civilian government and the army, into the open. In December 1913 civilians were given priority over soldiers at public functions in Macedonia. Pasic's response to the outrage of Serb officers was to oust the minister of war. Apis and the opposition parties then rallied to oppose Pasic, and through Putnik, the chief of the general staff, put pressure on the king to dismiss Pasic's government. On 2 June 1914 Pasic resigned, and on 24 June elections were announced for 1 August. However, Apis's position was weak. King Petar abdicated, and his son Alexander backed Pasic against Apis. Both Alexander and Pasic looked to Russia for support; Apis turned to the army, but when he ordered a coup on 7 June it would not follow him. It has been suggested that so desperate had Apis's position become within Serbia that his motivation in backing Princip and his accomplices was to try to force a confrontation between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, in which the latter would be humiliated and the overthrow of the government thus become possible.[116]

In the circumstances of June 1914, therefore, Pasic could gain little from the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. But his responses were inevitably dilatory. It seems that he was informed that students armed with bombs and revolvers had crossed into Bosnia: it required little imagination to guess their likely target. Pasic therefore ordered an inquiry into the arrangements at the border, into the illegal traffic of weapons, and into Apis himself. But he did not dispatch a specific warning to the government of Austria-Hungary. An attempt does appear to have been made to halt the conspirators, but its author was probably Apis himself after the central committee of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* had belatedly been informed and had opposed his and Tankosic's actions. Although Pasic

[116] Geiss, in Koch (ed.), *Origins*, 83.

may not have approved of the assassination, domestically he was not in a sufficiently strong position to check it. He could not overtly antagonize the army any further, and anti-Austrian feeling and Greater Serb sentiment were genuinely popular in Belgrade. When the news of the assassination broke, his policy was to treat the matter as an incident internal to Austria-Hungary: it had occurred within the empire and had been carried out by its own subjects. But neither Serbia's ambassadors nor Serbia's press reacted with the same restraint; the enthusiasm of their responses to Franz Ferdinand's death did much to confirm Vienna's presumption of Serbia's guilt. Whatever Pasic's more sensible reflections suggested, the Serbian government after the assassination was not in a position forcefully to condemn it.

Whether an unequivocal and early response by Serbia to the assassination would have made any difference to Austria-Hungary's behaviour must be doubtful. Franz Ferdinand was not the sort of personality who commanded popularity, and his demise in itself did not cast the empire into deepest mourning: indeed, in Vienna the Prater continued its jollifications without interruption. But as the Serb press crowed, so the Austrian and even Hungarian newspapers retaliated, and indignation that the heir-apparent should have been eliminated—apparently—by a foreign power took on a totally justifiable note of grievance.

Well before this mood was common the minds of all but one of Franz Joseph's ministers were firmly set. In the preceding Balkan crises the strongest voice for restraint had been that of Franz Ferdinand himself. He had appreciated that, for all his advocacy of Germanization, the majority of the empire's population was Slav and that war against the Slavs outside the empire was not a sensible way to cement the loyalty of those within it. Furthermore, he recognized that such a war could not be restricted to Austria-Hungary and Serbia, but would draw in Russia. Not only would Austria-Hungary find a two-front war difficult to sustain, it would also automatically sacrifice his own foreign-policy objective of a renewed *Dreikaiserbund*. By his own death the archduke had made war possible in more ways than one.

The opinion that the archduke's moderation had had most frequently to counter in the previous eight years was that of his own nominee as chief of the general staff, Conrad von Hötzendorff. Conrad was a social Darwinist. He believed that a recognition that the struggle for existence was 'the basic principle behind all the events on this earth' was 'the only real and rational basis for policy making'.[117] Conrad regarded it as self-evident that Austria-Hungary would at some stage have to fight to preserve its status as a great power. For much of the early part of his tenure of office his focus had been on a preventive war against Italy, but from 1909 he came to see Serbia as the more

[117] Peball (ed.), *Conrad*, 148.

important issue. The irridentism of both powers threatened the southern belt of the empire, and war against one could provoke the other. Two cardinal points therefore followed. First, Serbia and Italy were both as much domestic as foreign problems, and their resolution was an essential preliminary to greater Austrian strength at home as well as abroad. Secondly, it was important to fight each power separately and independently rather than to face both simultaneously. War should therefore be undertaken logically or preventively: 'politics', he averred, 'consists precisely of applying war as a method.'[118] Conrad first advocated preventive war against Serbia in 1906, and he did so again in 1908–9, in 1912–13, in October 1913, and May 1914: between 1 January 1913 and 1 January 1914 he proposed a Serbian war twenty-five times.[119]

Ironically, by the summer of 1914, although his enthusiasm for war had not diminished, it resided less on the calculation of previous years and more on the resigned fatalism which characterized so much of German thought at the same time. The Hungarian parliament's opposition to the army's reforms had delayed the new service law's introduction until 1912, and the consequent reorganization would not be complete until 1915.[120] In conjunction, the Balkan states (without Russian support) could outnumber the Austro-Hungarian army, and the Serbs alone—Conrad was wont to reckon—could field 500,000 men (although only 200,000 would be available on mobilization, the balance being made up of reserves). Conrad saw the Balkan League as an Entente-sponsored organization which threatened the dual monarchy with encirclement.

Thus he added to his frustration with the Magyars the expectation of a life-and-death struggle between Teuton and Slav. But in so revealing his own Austro-Germanism, he placed himself at odds with the multinationalism of the army's Hapsburg loyalties. During the course of 1913 he had become increasingly distant from Franz Ferdinand, and in September, stung by the latter's acerbic (if warranted) criticisms of the army and its general staff, he had sought permission to retire. Cut off from his royal patron and distant from the key government ministers, he was becoming politically isolated once more.[121] Then the assassination and its consequences put him back at the fulcrum. His pessimism caught the apocalyptic mood prevalent in Vienna, suggesting that Austria-Hungary was already the victim of Conrad's Darwinian contest. War, he said on 29 June, would be 'a hopeless struggle, but even so, it must be because such an ancient monarchy and such an ancient army cannot perish ingloriously'.[122]

[118] Ritter, *Sword and the sceptre*, ii. 229; see also Peball (ed.), *Conrad*, 128, 148, 152.
[119] Dedijer, *Road to Sarajevo*, 145.
[120] Stone, *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), 103–11.
[121] Jerabek, *Potiorek*, 76–9; Leslie, 'Antecedents of Austria-Hungary's war aims', 310–13; Deak, *Beyond nationalism*, 72–4.
[122] Rothenberg, 'Habsburg army in the first world war', in Kann *et al.* (eds.), *The Habsburg empire*, 75.

He was determined, too, that this time the outcome would not just be more sabre-rattling: a repetition of the mobilizations used in earlier crises without actual fighting would, he warned, be bad for the army's morale. Nobody in Vienna on 29 and 30 June could misinterpret his resolve, even if its basis was no longer rational calculation but, in his own words, 'va banque'.[123] And the fact that he was listened to was itself in part a result of that previous enthusiasm for preventive war. By that enthusiasm, he had won Moltke's undertaking in 1909 that, if Russia mobilized to support Serbia against Austria, Germany too would mobilize: in other words, he was confident that he could turn against Serbia, with Germany either deterring or fighting Russia. He seems to have been remarkably slow to consider what France would do. That enthusiasm, too, had enabled him to accustom Franz Joseph's ministers to the idea and expectation of war. The domination of the chief of the general staff over the minister of war had been accomplished by 1900. Conrad's efforts to achieve comparable sway over the foreign minister had been thwarted by Aehrenthal, and indeed it was Aehrenthal's pacific line which had headed Conrad off in 1909.[124] But Berchtold was made of weaker stuff.

The foreign minister was not under pressure just from Conrad. His ministry was staffed by a group of younger diplomats, protégés of Aehrenthal, who were committed to the fulfilment of Aehrenthal's programme for an Austrian domination of the Balkans. Berchtold's conciliar style meant that he listened to their views. Each day during the July crisis he held meetings with his principal subordinates, and mapped his tactics on the basis of their advice. It was these men who shaped Berchtold's Balkan strategy before the assassination, and kept the foreign minister to his resolve as the crisis unfolded.[125]

Like Conrad, Berchtold was keen to frustrate an Entente-sponsored Balkan League. Late in June his ministry was considering a diplomatic offensive designed to create an alternative Balkan structure. Ideally its pivot would be Romania. This would please the Germans and it would give Conrad sixteen extra divisions and a secure flank in Hungary. But Austrian negotiations begun in November 1913 had foundered, in part on the Hungarians' refusal to make concessions over Transylvania. Realistically, therefore, Austria's hopes were pinned on Bulgaria, and possibly Turkey. The aim was to isolate Serbia and to block Russia. In a memorandum of 24 June Franz von Matscheko portrayed Belgrade as manipulating Russian aggressiveness in the Balkans for its own ends. Matscheko's tone was deliberately alarmist: he hoped thereby to rally both the Germans and the Magyars in support of Austrian diplomacy.

[123] Herrmann, *Arming of Europe*, 218.

[124] Rothenberg, *Army of Francis Joseph*, 125; Regele, *Conrad*, 60–4.

[125] Leslie, 'Österreich-Ungarn vor dem Kriegsaubruch', 662–6; id. *Wiener Beiträge*, XX (1993), 378–81; Fritz Fellner, 'Austria-Hungary', in Wilson (ed.), *Decisions for war*, 11–12.

The Sarajevo assassination presented this long-term policy with an immediate crisis. Matscheko's memorandum became the blueprint, not for forceful negotiation but for the negotiation of force. It seemed that Serb terrorism would lead to a Balkan League sponsored not by the Triple Alliance but by Russia. Swift military action—and it should be emphasized that Berchtold envisaged a war without the issue of an ultimatum and without the mobilization of Austrian resources—should eliminate Serbia's power in the Balkans, and so pre-empt a new league and destroy Russian influence. Potiorek, the governor of Bosnia-Herzogovina, no doubt anxious to cover over his inadequate security arrangements, exaggerated the unrest in Bosnia and pressed on Vienna the need for decisive and early steps against Belgrade. Berchtold and his colleagues were convinced of Serbia's culpability, and that inaction would be tantamount to diplomatic humiliation and would lead to a further decline in Austria-Hungary's status in the Balkans. By 30 June Berchtold was already proposing a 'final and fundamental reckoning' with Serbia. He told the royal household that the Entente heads of state should not be invited to Franz Ferdinand's funeral.[126] Franz Joseph did not demur, and on 2 July he reworked the Matscheko memorandum in a letter to Kaiser Wilhelm seeking his support. Count Alexander Hoyos, Berchtold's *chef de cabinet*, a protégé of Aehrenthal and a noted hawk, was chosen to bear the imperial letter to Berlin.[127]

Austria-Hungary had received no formal expression of Germany's views before Hoyos boarded his train. Hoyos had met the German journalist Victor Naumannn on 1 July, and Naumann, an acquaintance of Bethmann Hollweg and of Jagow, had assured him that the Kaiser would support the dual monarchy, even to the point of war.[128] But Germany's ambassador in Vienna, Heinrich von Tschirschky, had kept silent. Austria-Hungary's decision to fight Serbia was its own.

Firmness had worked in 1908 and 1913; on other occasions a willingness to negotiate had led the empire into restraint and loss of face. The interaction between domestic and foreign policy was not simply a contrivance, as has to be argued in the German case, but an iron law. As Conrad had remarked to Franz Ferdinand in December 1912, South Slav unification was inevitable. It could be achieved within Austria-Hungary or at Austria-Hungary's expense. If the former, given the power and strength Serbia had acquired, a showdown with Serbia could not be avoided. It was the Austrian general staff, not the German, for whom war was a strategic necessity.

[126] Herwig, *First World War*, 12; Rauchensteiner, *Tod des Doppeladlers*, 68.

[127] Bridge, *From Sadowa*, 368–74, 448–9; Williamson, *Austria-Hungary*, 165–89; id., in Williamson and Pastor (eds.), *War and society*, v. 9–36; id., *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XVIII (1988), 806–8; A. J. May, *Hapsburg monarchy*, 22–50, 55–8.

[128] Rauchensteiner, *Tod des Doppeladlers*, 70.

Franz Joseph's letter to Wilhelm was delivered by Hoyos to Count Szögeny, Austria-Hungary's aged and somewhat ineffectual ambassador in Berlin. The Kaiser had visited Franz Ferdinand and Sophie at their home as recently as 2 June, and his sense of personal loss gave him uncharacteristic decisiveness. He invited Szögeny to Potsdam on Sunday, 5 July, and over lunch—while stressing that he had yet to consult Bethmann Hollweg—expressed his conviction that Austria-Hungary should deal rapidly and firmly with Serbia, and that such action would have Germany's support. This typical display of apparent determination and swift resolve was effectively endorsed by the Kaiser's advisers. That same afternoon Wilhelm held a crown council at which Bethmann Hollweg, Zimmermann (standing in for Jagow, the foreign secretary being away on his honeymoon), Erich von Falkenhayn (the minister of war), Moritz von Lyncker (the chief of the military cabinet), and Hans von Plessen (the adjutant-general) were present; significantly neither Moltke, who was taking the waters at Karlsbad, nor any naval representative was in attendance. The meeting agreed to support the Austro-Hungarian desire to reconstruct a Bulgaria-centred Balkan League favourable to the Triple Alliance; as for Serbia, the dual monarchy's action was its own affair, but it was assured of German support in the event of Russian intervention. The following morning, 6 July, Bethmann Hollweg conveyed the council's views to Szögeny and Hoyos. Equipped with this 'blank cheque', Hoyos returned to Vienna.

What is striking about the 'blank cheque' is not that it was issued but that it was indeed blank. The council had made little effort to discuss the implications of what it was doing. Its decisions followed from previous events rather than from a projection as to the future. Falkenhayn wrote to Moltke expressing the view that neither he nor Bethmann Hollweg believed that Austria-Hungary would follow through the forceful language which it had so far employed.[129] But Bethmann Hollweg had done little to inform himself on precisely this point. When on 9 July he told the minister of the interior, Clemens von Delbrück, of the impending Austrian ultimatum he confessed that he had no idea of its contents; furthermore, so little was he disturbed by his own ignorance that he used it as a device to still Delbrück's alarm.[130] The fatalism which had increasingly gripped the chancellor had become a device to ease him of responsibility for his actions. Later in the same month he was to express the view that 'a fate greater than human power hangs over the situation in Europe and over the German people'.[131] The Kaiser too felt that the affairs of nations were beyond individual control and were subject to the inscrutable will of

[129] Quoted in Fay, *Origins*, ii. 212–13.
[130] Delbrück, *Der wirtschaftliche Mobilmachung*, 96.
[131] Diary entry for 27 July 1914, Riezler, *Tagebücher*, 192.

God.[132] Thus, nobody in Germany attempted to guide and manage events in July 1914.

Such an extraordinary abdication of responsibility is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that Bethmann Hollweg's calculations did not exclude the possibility of a major European war. The key question was the Russian response to an Austro-Hungarian invasion of Serbia. Assuming that Russia would intervene, Zimmermann told Hoyos that there was a 90 per-cent probability of a European war. But such realism—or pessimism—does not seem to have been widespread. By 11 July Zimmermann—whose reputation rested on his forthright but not necessarily consistent views—was confident that there would not be war because Austria and Serbia would come to terms. More widespread was the expectation that there would be war, but that it would be localized because Russia would stay out. That had been Plessen's view at the meeting of 5 July, and it was the line taken by Zimmermann's superior, Jagow.[133] Germany's ambassador in Russia, Pourtalès, continued to insist that the dangers of domestic revolution in the event of a major war would inhibit Russia. After all, Russia had backed down during the Bosnian crisis, and as recently as 1913 had endeavoured to restrain the Balkan states. Furthermore, its rearmament programme was not completed. If such calculations proved ill-founded, a second line of argument suggested that Britain and France would hold their eastern ally back from precipitate action. The Kaiser took comfort in the notion that his imperial cousin could not afford to condone the assassination of royalty. Outrage at the murders of the archduke and his wife seemed to have created a mood in Europe sympathetic to the Habsburgs. Bethmann Hollweg did not, therefore, embrace the probability of general war, but he was indubitably using its threat as an instrument in foreign policy, to isolate Russia both from its Entente partners and from its Balkan friends. His intentions were to strengthen the Triple Alliance by endorsing the Austro-German pact, and then, assuming the Austrians moved fast enough, to repeat the moderating role of 1912–13. The culmination of this process, according to Kurt Riezler, who was as close to Bethmann Hollweg as anyone in the July crisis, would be both a satisfied Austria and, eventually, a Russo-German agreement.[134] However, alongside the ideas of deterrence Bethmann Hollweg, and also Jagow, placed the calculations of preventive war. Serbia would be a good test as to how justified German Russophobia was: if Bethmann's bluff was called, and Russia did want war, then it was better for the two powers to fight it out in 1914, before Russia completed its rearmament programme in 1917. Furthermore, a war

[132] Moses, *War & Society*, V (1987), 31.

[133] Pogge von Strandmann, 'Germany and the coming of the war', in Evans and Pogge von Strandmann (eds.), *The Coming*, 115; Johannes Hürter, 'Die Staatssekretäre des Auswartigen Amtes im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Michalka (ed.), *Erste Weltkrieg*, 223–4; Epkenhans, *Wilhelminische Flottenrüstung*, 404.

[134] Röhl, *1914*, 22.

triggered by Serbia would ensure Austro-Hungarian support for Germany, and the fact that imperial Russia would have to initiate hostilities promised that within Germany the socialists would rally to the defence of the Reich. If European war was genuinely inevitable, the circumstances of July 1914 seemed as propitious for Germany as could be reasonably expected.

Bethmann Hollweg was playing fast and loose with the possibility, however remote he thought it, of a European war. He could only do so because his image of such a war—although widely held—was confused. The victories of 1866 and 1870 had achieved in short order and with minimal complications the political objectives for which they had been fought: Bethmann Hollweg's mental image of war in July 1914—at least as it related to an Austrian attack on Serbia—was of Königgrätz and Sedan, not of Verdun and the Somme. But also present in his mind was the idea of a long war with its concomitants, economic strain and social and political disruption. He saw a Russo-German war in such terms, for the possibility of war leading to revolution was a consequence he could envisage for Germany as well as Russia, and such a picture had to be present if he imagined that Russia might be deterred from intervention. Bethmann's policy in July was therefore made even more obscure by its ambivalence as to what war would be like—simultaneously it was a reasonable way to achieve policy objectives and the agent of total upheaval. The former implied that war could be an appropriate means to conduct policy, the latter that only its threat could so operate.

The chancellor himself made no attempt to resolve this dilemma, although his actions suggest that his hopes continued to be shaped by the prospect of a Bismarckian campaign. No preparations for a long war were made in July, and even on the 24th the Treasury rebuffed the general staff's suggestion that Germany build up its food stocks with wheat purchases in Rotterdam. Falkenhayn had assured the crown council on 5 July that the army was ready, but the authority with which he spoke was that of the minister of war, not of the chief of the general staff. He may have been buoyed up by the comparative success with which the 1913 army law had been rushed into effect, especially compared with the disruption which the three-year law was reported as having created in France. But the argument that the army was using this window of opportunity to exploit the idea of preventive war is hard to sustain. Falkenhayn thought that any conflict would remain localized, and promptly went on leave; he did not return until 27 July. Moltke, who was actually responsible for war plans, was not recalled until 25 July. Four days later the chief of the general staff was predicting 'a war which will annihilate the civilisation of almost the whole of Europe for decades to come'.[135] Bethmann had made no attempt to consult

[135] Quoted in Turner, *Origins*, 105; see also Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn*, 149–53; for an opposing view, see Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 298, 303, 407.

the service chiefs earlier in July, in the first half of the month, when Germany might still have been able to fashion the progress of events. Not the least of the ambiguities that such a discussion could have clarified was Germany's support of Austrian operations against Serbia when Germany's war plans required the Austrians to turn against Russia. If, as has been claimed,[136] the 'blank cheque' was designed to get Austria-Hungary to pin down Russia, so leaving Germany free to knock out Belgium and France, then its strategic and operational assumptions were remarkably ill-thought-out.

The focus of much recent historiography with regard to the 'blank cheque' has been on Berlin. But although Berlin issued the cheque, it was Vienna that had requested it and it was Vienna that cashed it. After 6 July, and until 23 July, decisions were taken not by Germany but by Austria-Hungary. The Kaiser departed on a cruise. Jagow returned to the foreign office, but Nicolai, the head of espionage and counter-intelligence on the general staff, only came back to work on the same day as Moltke, 25 July, and Groener, the head of the railway department, not until the following day.[137] On 11 July Berlin informed its ambassadors of the possibility of Austrian action against Serbia, and in Rome the German ambassador inadvisedly told San Giuliano, the Italian foreign minister. Habsburg distrust of Italy, and in particular fears that Italy could exercise its claim to compensation in the Balkans (embodied in article 8 of the Triple Alliance), caused Berchtold to look on his northern ally with almost as much suspicion as a result of this leak as he did on his Mediterranean ally. Communications from Vienna to Berlin were therefore kept to a minimum.[138] The Germans had no direct share in drafting the ultimatum which Austria-Hungary planned to send to Serbia, although they were aware of its main points and knew that its contents were designed to be unacceptable to the Serbs. Germany's immediate purpose remained relatively consistent: an Austrian coup against Serbia, while Germany worked to localize and limit the repercussions.

On 7 July Hoyos, having returned to Vienna, attended a ministerial council summoned by Berchtold. It was the third time in twenty months that the common council had confronted the issue of war: diplomacy which carried the threat of war came naturally to it. The task which confronted Hoyos was the corollary of that which he had already fulfilled in Potsdam: having displayed Austria's resolve in order to be sure of German backing, he now had to emphasize Geman determination to forestall any backsliding in Vienna. He presented Germany's support in unequivocal terms, and as a result the Austrian prime minister, Sturgkh, shuffled off his customary ineffectiveness with a

[136] Pogge von Strandmann, in Evans and Pogge von Strandmann, *The Coming*, 116.
[137] Trumpener, *Central European History*, IX (1976), 62–6; Groener, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 141.
[138] Williamson, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XVIII (1988), 809.

'firm intention of concluding the whole affair with war'.[139] Sturgkh knew how fickle Germany's support for Austria-Hungary had been in the last couple of years: it was necessary to seize the moment before Berlin changed direction, rely on Germany to deter Russia, and so shore up the empire by resolving the Balkan question once and for all. Speed was as essential to the calculations of Berchtold as to those of Bethmann Hollweg: any debate should follow a *fait accompli*, not precede it. He used Germany's support to shelve any worries about Russia and to narrow the council's focus on to Serbia alone. Self-deception led to simplification. That same day instructions went out to the Austrian ambassador in Belgrade which were unequivocal: 'However the Serbs react to the ultimatum, you must break off relations and it must come to war.'[140] But from 7 July delay set in, and with delay came loss of control.

Part of the delay was attributable to diplomatic calculation. Poincaré and the French prime minister, Viviani, were due to visit Russia from 20 to 23 July. Given the Austrian desire to limit the crisis, it made sense to postpone delivering the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia until the French leaders had quitted St Petersburg, and so avoid a co-ordinated Franco-Russian response which—on the evidence of 1912—would egg on the Russians. Much attention has been devoted to the other factors explaining Vienna's slowness in mid-July. But in the event the Austrian ultimatum was delivered as early as this reckoning would allow.

It also made sense to accompany the ultimatum with evidence of Serb complicity in the assassination. Many in Europe saw the Serbs as brigands, and were predisposed, given the 1903 regicides, to accept Austrian accusations on the basis of circumstantial evidence alone. In the event that was as much as they got. The Young Bosnians themselves were at pains to insist that the assassination was all their own work. Furthermore, even if they had Belgrade links, they—like the authors of the earlier assassination attempts—were Habsburg subjects. On 13 July the foreign ministry's investigator reported that he could find no evidence that the Serbian government had played a direct role, and by October, and the trial of Princip and his associates, the Austrian case against Serbia rested on the argument that the Young Bosnians had been the dupes of Serb propaganda. The Austrian investigation was not helped by its continuing ignorance of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*, and its consequent determination to pin the blame on the relatively innocent *Narodna Odbrana*.

However, the efforts to establish Serbia's guilt may not have been entirely fruitless, for Tisza, the Hungarian prime minister, maintained that they convinced him of the need to support the Austrian ultimatum. Franz Ferdinand's death had left Tisza as the single most important figure in the politics of the

[139] Leslie, 'Österreich-Ungarn vor dem Kriegsausbruch', 666; Stone, *Journal of Contemporary History*, I (1966), 164.
[140] Fellner, 'Austria-Hungary', in Wilson (ed.), *Decisions for war*, 15.

empire. He had been the only minister to oppose the strong line advocated at the ministerial meeting of 7 July. Indeed, his position was clear from 30 June. He saw Russia's entry in the event of an Austrian attack on Serbia as inevitable, and argued that Austria-Hungary should first engage in a diplomatic offensive to restructure a Balkan League embracing Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey, which would support the Triple Alliance and leave Serbia isolated. Fundamental to Tisza's opposition was the issue of Magyar supremacy in Hungary. If Austria-Hungary successfully overran Serbia and then tried to digest it within the empire, the consequences would be a trialist restructuring of the empire, and a reduction in status and size for Hungary. Far more worrying to Tisza than the threat of Serbia was that of Romania. Romania, in the ascendant after its gains in 1913, was fostering irridentism among its fellow-nationals in Hungarian Transylvania. Magyar satisfaction with the *Ausgleich* as it currently stood combined with awareness of its vulnerability to produce caution. Furthermore, Tisza was well aware of the economic strains which war would impose on the empire, and which the 1912 mobilization had made manifest.

In the event, Tisza's opposition did no more than put down a marker for some of the dual monarchy's future problems. By 14 July he had been convinced by his fellow Magyar, Stephan Burian, who was effectively deputy foreign minister, that he should change his position. He was now prepared to accept an ultimatum designed for Serbia to reject. Politically, his earlier stance had become unsustainable. Popular passions against the Serbs had been roused in Budapest as well as in Vienna. The corollary of not crushing Serbia was a recognition of South Slav demands whose ramifications would impinge on Magyar interests in Croatia and southern Hungary no less than on other interests within the empire. In the shorter term Romania clearly intended to remain neutral, but its loss, Burian contended, could be compensated for by the acquisition of Bulgaria as an ally. In the longer term Romanian aspirations in Transylvania might well be influenced by the success of Serb irridentism if the latter was not crushed.[141] Finally, Tisza was fearful of forfeiting German support, not so much for the empire as a whole but for the *Ausgleich* specifically, and therefore for Magyar predominance. Berchtold was able to use the blank cheque to reinforce that fear. Tisza's earlier objections now found expression, not in opposition to going to war but in the aims of that war: on 19 July, the day on which the empire's ministers finalized the ultimatum to Serbia, they agreed in deference to Magyar concerns that Austria-Hungary would not annex any part of Serbia, but that chunks would be allocated to Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania, and the rump would be treated as a Habsburg client.

[141] Leslie, *Wiener Beiträge*, XX (1993), 341–7, 381.

Therefore, it was not Hungary that produced the major domestic hiccough in the dual monarchy's timetable for war; surprisingly, that was a role reserved for Conrad von Hötzendorff. On previous occasions Conrad had demanded mobilization with an initial urgency that had then given way to calls for delay. In July 1914 he repeated the pattern. Much of the army was on leave to help bring in the harvest. Conrad argued that to cancel the leave would alert other powers to Austrian intentions. Most soldiers were due to return from leave on 21 and 22 July, and therefore 23 July—in addition to being the earliest date compatible with Poincaré's and Viviani's departure from Russia—was also the first that would suit the Austro-Hungarian army. Conrad dragged his feet even beyond 23 July. He reckoned that 12 August was the first day by which he could attack Serbia, and so was opposed to any declaration of war before then. Conrad's fatalism of 1914 was a product not simply of the realities of Austria-Hungary's position, but also of an inner mood. A shrewd observer, Josef Redlich, commented at the end of August: Conrad 'lacks greater inner verve. Inwardly, he does not believe in his historical calling as Austrian commander-in-chief.'[142] Preoccupied with his long-standing love for Gina von Reininghaus, the wife of an industrialist, his thoughts were of a married life with her rather than of Austria-Hungary.

Conrad's fantasies were not very different from the reality for many in Europe in mid-July. Llewellyn Woodward, the British historian, heard the news of the archduke's murder while staying in a hotel in the Black Forest, but considered it 'nothing more than another political assassination in the Balkans'.[143] Some saw its implications, but for the majority in western Europe Bosnia and Serbia were too remote and too primitive to be of direct consequence in their lives. Previous Balkan crises had been surmounted without a general war. It was a hot summer. July was a month of relaxation. The affluent, reflecting the increasingly cosmopolitan atmosphere of the continent's capitals, were taking their holidays abroad. General Brusilov and his wife were among a group of Russians undergoing cures at Kissingen in Germany. The Serb chief of the general staff, Putnik, was in Budapest (where he was interned, but on 28 July released). Wilhelm Groener, head of the railways section of the German general staff, was in Switzerland. Such international contacts made the danger of war seem particularly inappropriate. Commerce, education, and culture were drawing the nations together, not driving them apart. Five of the seven honorary graduands of Oxford University in June 1914 had been German;[144] Tirpitz's daughters had an English governess and were educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College. For those who had stayed at home, domestic crises grabbed the

[142] Wank, *Austrian History Yearbook*, I (1965), 86; also 82–3.

[143] L. Woodward, *Great Britain and the war*, p. xiii.

[144] Michael Howard, 'Europe on the eve of the first world war', in Evans and Pogge von Strandmann (eds.), *The coming*, 1.

headlines. In Britain, Grey and Lloyd George emphasized the calm of the international scene: the real issue was Irish home rule and the possibility of Ulster loyalist opposition. French readers were engrossed in much more salacious fare. On 20 July the trial began of the wife of Joseph Caillaux. Madame Caillaux had shot the editor of *Le Figaro* in his office after he had published her love-letters to Caillaux. The affair did have serious diplomatic consequences, since *Le Figaro* was said to be in possession of deciphered German telegrams, and foreign embassies in Paris therefore changed their codes in July, thus shutting French cryptographers out from a most important intelligence source. But the Caillaux trial's popular appeal was of course as a *crime passionelle.*

The silence which Vienna had sought was thus relatively easily won. It was broken at 6 p.m. on 23 July with the delivery of the ultimatum to Serbia. Austria-Hungary cited Serbia's failure to suppress the terrorism emanating from within its borders as evidence that Serbia had failed to honour its undertaking of 31 March 1909 to sustain good relations with Austria-Hungary. It asked the Serbian government to condemn anti-Austrian propaganda, to dissolve *Narodna Odbrana*, to take action against those Serbians implicated in the plot, and to include Austro-Hungarian representation in the suppression of anti-Austrian activities within Serbia. Serbia was granted forty-eight hours within which to reply. In the capitals of the great powers German ambassadors had been instructed on 21 July to be ready to give full support to the ultimatum on 24 July and to work to keep the efforts of the Austro-Serb quarrel localized. On the face of it the ultimatum, though severe, was not unreasonable, and the initial reactions received by the Germans were reassuring.

The ultimatum was hardly a surprise to Serbia. Probably alerted to Habsburg machinations by the Rome leak as early as 7 July, Pasic had confirmation of Austro-Hungarian troop movements by 18 July.[145] Outwardly Serbia seemed self-confident and cocky. The tensions with the army and the imminence of elections meant that nobody could afford not to be nationalist, especially in a domestic context. Hartwig, Russia's ambassador to Belgrade, who had died on 10 July had been accorded a state funeral, which Pasic had turned into a paean for pan-Slavism. But militarily there was every reason for caution. The Balkan wars had left the army exhausted. Austria-Hungary's military attaché in Belgrade was of the opinion that it would take four years to recover (in itself an argument in favour of a quick Austrian strike while the opportunity offered), and the Serb ministry of war was planning a ten-year programme of reconstruction. In June Pasic had rejected a Greek request for an alliance against Turkey on the grounds that the army was not fit for another war. The assimilation of the new territories was far from complete, their

[145] For what follows, see esp. Mark Cornwall, 'Serbia', in Wilson (ed.), *Decisions for war.* This revises the earlier literature which gives a more bellicose twist to Belgrade's position.

populations proving resistant to military service. Revolt had resulted in the army being deployed overwhelmingly in the south, away from the axes of its mobilization in the event of war in the north.[146] Moreover, there were few obvious signs of support from Serbia's possible military allies. Above all, Russia—although it had promised military aid—had counselled restraint on 3 July, and had given no reassurances by 23 July.

On the evening of 23 July Pasic was electioneering in the south of the country. Prince Alexander immediately contacted the Tsar, expressing Serb willingness to go as far in meeting the Austro-Hungarian demands as was 'in keeping with the position of an independent country'.[147] This became the essence of the Serb reply to Vienna. Pasic returned to Belgrade on the following day. Despite his awareness of Serbia's vulnerability, he could not cave in to the Austrians without forfeiting his political position—in relation to both the electorate and the army. His aim, therefore, was to moderate the reactions of his colleagues, while playing for time in the hope that international responses, and particularly Russia's position, would become more emphatic. In the circumstances, the Serb reply was brilliant. By accepting most of the terms but not all—Pasic refused to allow Austro-Hungarian representation in Serbia's internal investigations—Serbia appeared the injured party and won widespread support. The European climate, so apparently favourable to Austria-Hungary up to 23 July, turned distinctly frosty after 25 July.

By then the Serb cabinet had given the order for mobilization. This can be seen as a show of bravado, an indication that Belgrade was confident of Russian support, and a response to the fear that its reply to Vienna would otherwise be seen as too weak by the Serb army. In practice, it was an act of desperation. Although the decision was taken on the afternoon of 25 July, before the Serb note was in Austrian hands, it was not put into effect until midnight. Even then Serbia had received only vague indications as to Russia's position: at least for the moment Serbia seemed to be on its own. It mobilized because it reckoned that Austria-Hungary would resort to military action the moment the ultimatum expired.

Its judgement was sound. The diplomatic solution, to which Belgrade had at least technically opened the path, was of no interest in Vienna. Within fifteen minutes of receiving the Serb reply the Austrian ambassador in Belgrade announced that it was unsatisfactory and that diplomatic relations between the two states were at an end. On the following day the Austro-Hungarian army began to mobilize against Serbia, and on 28 July Berchtold—still trying to push Conrad into a speedier response—secured Austria-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia.

[146] Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 276–7, 353–5; Lyon, *Journal of Military History*, LXI (1997), 481–502.

[147] Petrovich, *Modern Serbia*, 615.

Sazonov received the news of the Austrian démarche in the morning of 24 July. The Tsar summoned a meeting of the Council of Ministers that afternoon. Bethmann Hollweg and Berchtold rested any hopes they entertained that Russia would stand back on three assumptions: that the Austro-Serb quarrel could be isolated, that the Tsar's fear that war would lead to revolution would keep Russia out, and that—with Poincaré and Viviani at sea on their return to France—French support for Russia would not be forthcoming. On all three counts they were proved wrong.

Austro-Hungarian action against Serbia could not be localized because nobody in the Triple Entente, and certainly neither Sazonov nor Grey, saw Austria-Hungary as an independent actor. The irony of Vienna's position was that uncertainty about the strength of German support had prompted a firm line, when to the opposition that very firmness seemed indicative of Austro-German solidarity. Austria-Hungary was therefore saddled with the bellicose image of Germany. By July 1914 Germany, in the light of the 1911 Moroccan crisis and, for Russia in particular, of the Liman von Sanders affair, was judged as moving progressively towards war. Neither crisis was interpreted as a self-contained attempt to use the threat of war as a diplomatic instrument. The German attitude to preventive war, the German fear that by 1917 Russia would be too strong and would be able to mobilize too fast, had been faithfully reported by the Russian military attaché in Berlin. 'Germany', he opined in 1912, 'is strenuously preparing for war in the immediate future.'[148] Although contact between the Foreign Ministry and the War Ministry was minimal, Sazonov's immediate reaction on 24 July was to link the Austrian ultimatum to this wider, preconceived view. Germany, he was convinced, was behind Austria-Hungary; he was also sure that Germany wished to use the crisis to launch a preventive war.

Tsar Nicholas was more cautious, not least because—as Bethmann Hollweg rightly judged—he did fear that war would lead to revolution. In February 1914 P. N. Durnovo, the minister of the interior responsible for suppressing the 1905 revolution, had written a memorandum for Nicholas in which he anticipated that a future European war would be long, that it would therefore generate great economic and domestic political strain, and that the efforts to compensate for Russian industrial backwardness would lead to a social crisis and to revolution.[149] Nicholas brought this insight to his deliberations on 24 July: 'war', he said, 'would be disastrous for the world and once it had broken out it would be difficult to stop.'[150]

In 1910 it might have been possible to argue that Durnovo's prognostications owed too much to the past, to the memory of 1905; in 1914 they looked more

[148] William C. Fuller, 'Russian empire', in E. May (ed.), *Knowing one's enemies*, 109–10; also 122–3.
[149] Lieven, *Russia and the origins*, 77–80.
[150] Ibid. 66.

far-seeing. Russia suffered only 222 strikes in 1910, and the police reckoned all but eight of these were prompted by economic rather than political factors. In 1913 2,404 strikes took place, and 1,034 were classified as political; in 1914, of 3,534 strikes fully 2,565 were deemed political. Furthermore, workers' discontent had reached a peak during the French state visit in July.[151] However, a year previously the police, looking back over a decade of domestic strife, had been confident that the position was improving: they reported that the general mood of the population was calm, expressing the view that there was no danger of revolution in the near future, and that they could control such problems as did arise without the aid of the army.[152] Since the bulk of the population still worked on the land the police were probably justified in these opinions: urban strikes were not representative of society as a whole; the situation was not revolutionary in the sense that 1905 had been. In July 1914 N. A. Maklakov, the minister of the interior, reflected the police view. War, he thought, would rally the nation, and mobilization specifically would pre-empt industrial disturbance.

In discounting the fears of revolution, in seeing war as a unifying, not a divisive, agent in Russian society, ministers were also embracing the liberal imperialists' support for the Entente. Much of the weakness of Durnovo's case resided not in the arguments themselves, which were not simply perspicacious but also accurate reflections of recent Russian experience, but in his conviction that Russia's main concerns were Asiatic, that its principal rival was therefore Britain, and that by engaging in a European war against Germany Russia would be fighting as Britain's proxy. Such arguments were *passé* in St Petersburg in July 1914. Crucially, they were not ones which the Tsar was prepared to endorse. The naval talks with France and Britain had convinced Sazonov that the Entente was close to becoming a formal alliance. Poincaré's and Viviani's visit had brought Franco-Russian relations to a new high. More specifically, there are grounds for believing that during the French visit—despite Vienna's precautions—the Russians and French did know of Austria-Hungary's intentions with regard to Serbia. Again the German leak in Rome was the culprit, as the Russians had broken the Italian codes.[153] Even without this specific opportunity to concert their responses to the ultimatum, the Franco-Russian alliance was in little danger of fracturing under German pressure in late July. Izvolsky, as Russia's ambassador in Paris, and Paléologue, his French counterpart in St Petersburg, were firmly committed to the Entente and were not loath to exploit, or even exceed, the powers vouchsafed them.

[151] Siegelbaum, *Politics of industrial mobilization*, 17–18; Linke, *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 32 (1982), 15.

[152] William C. Fuller, *Civil–military conflict in Imperial Russia*, 256–7.

[153] Williamson, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XVIII (1988), 811–12; Keiger, *France and the origins*, 150.

Therefore, given that all three Austro-German assumptions about the Russian response proved to be wishful thinking, the conclusions of the Council of Ministers at their meeting on 24 July become less surprising.[154] Its chairman, I. L. Goremykin, was a nonentity by comparison with his predecessor V. N. Kokovtsov, who had acted as a restraining influence in both the November 1912 and January 1914 crises. The important voices were those of Sazonov, whose views have already been outlined, A. V. Krivoshein, the minister of agriculture, and the two ministers for the armed forces, V. A. Sukhomlinov for the army and I. K. Grigorovich for the navy. Krivoshein, like Sazonov, was a man of more liberal disposition than many in the council, and recognized the need to co-operate with the Duma in order to achieve some measure of popular participation in government. The key factor for Krivoshein was not just, as it was for many Russians in the wake of the Bosnian crisis, Russia's status as a great power. It was the relationship between humiliation abroad and the loss of governmental authority at home. In Krivoshein's hands the fear of revolution, which had constrained Russia since 1905, was no longer a justification for international inaction, but a reason for assertiveness and an answer to the increasing manifestations of workers' discontent.[155] War was not a prospect to be relished, given Russia's relative backwardness, but a threat sufficiently strong to suggest its use was the only way out of Russia's dilemma. Neither Sukhomlinov nor Grigorovich was prepared to say that such a policy was mistaken. The rearmament programme of neither the army nor the navy was complete, but both armed forces were in better shape than they had been for a decade. It is easy, and perhaps right, to see Sukhomlinov's assertion that the army was ready as a braggart's self-defence, a reluctance to be deemed cowardly. However, the army was no longer so weak that it was unable to support Russia's foreign policy, as had happened in 1909, and Germany's fears of its potential were mirrored by the high estimates formed by French and British observers. The council concluded by agreeing to ask Vienna to postpone its deadline by forty-eight hours, by urging Belgrade to be conciliatory, and by giving permission for four military districts, Kiev, Odessa, Moscow, and Kazan, to prepare for mobilization. The Tsar ratified these decisions at a further meeting of the council on 25 July. Thus, from the very outset Russia included a military element in its response to the crisis. On 26 July Russia began to recall its reservists, in a phase preliminary to mobilization itself. On 28 July, in response to Austria-Hungary's mobilization against Serbia, the four districts already alerted were ordered to mobilize.

Sazonov saw the steps taken up to 28 July as a buttress to his diplomacy, not as an inevitable progression to war itself. Partial mobilization had not, in

[154] D. W. Spring, 'Russia and the coming of the war', in Evans and Pogge von Strandmann (eds.), *The Coming*, 57–86, provides a full and instructive account.

[155] McDonald, *United government*, 204–6, 218; Leslie, *Wiener Beiträge*, XX (1993), 341–7, 381.

November 1912, led to hostilities. The delay between the order for the Russian army's mobilization and its ability to commence hostilities would be a minimum of fifteen days at the very best, and full Russian mobilization would take nearer a month. Thus, there was ample opportunity for further negotiation. But such calculations were naive. First, the Russian decision preceded the Serb reply to Austria-Hungary: it had the effect of giving Serbia a 'blank cheque' of its own, and it generated a pressure for acceleration comparable to that for which Austria-Hungary and Germany were striving from the other side. To be effective in aiding Serbia, and to seize the advantage of operating against the Austrians' rear while they were embroiled to the south-east, Russia had to mobilize fast. But Germany's own war plan, aiming first to concentrate against France and then turn against Russia, rested on that very delay in Russian mobilization which the decisions of 24 and 25 July were calculated to eliminate. If the Germans allowed the Russians time to mobilize without themselves doing so, and without actually beginning operations against France, they would risk defeat in the east before they had won in the west.

Sazonov was sufficiently sensitive to this last consideration to insist on partial, not general, Russian mobilization. In particular, the Council of Ministers' decision did not include the pivotal military district in Russia's western defences, whether the enemy was Austria-Hungary or Germany or both—that of Warsaw. The Russian chief of the general staff, Yanushkevitch, was a weak character, both newly appointed and unfamiliar with the details of Russia's military plans. But Dobrovsky, the head of the mobilization division, immediately objected, and on 26 July received strong support from the quartermaster-general, Yuri Danilov, on his return from manoeuvres in the Caucasus. Danilov was convinced that the main threat to Russia came from Germany, not Austria-Hungary. In any case, from a technical point of view partial mobilization was a nonsense. Active units were stationed in peacetime in the regions from where they drew their reserves, not in their concentration areas, so as to minimize the number of train movements. Thus, each corps area drew on resources and reserves from adjacent districts, and the railway movements which mobilization involved embraced all Russia. Partial mobilization would throw the army into chaos. Operationally, the exclusion of Warsaw meant that Russia would forfeit the opportunity to envelop Austria-Hungary—should that power indeed fight alone—and would fight with unnecessarily limited forces.[156] Danilov's concerns over partial mobilization were shared by the French. Sufficiently aware of the German plan to know that they would be the initial target, the French had been pressing the Russians to increase the speed of their mobilization so that the latter could commence operations in

[156] L. C. F. Turner, 'Russian mobilisation in 1914', in Kennedy (ed.), *War plans*, 252–68, takes a different view; Lieven, *Russia and the origins*, 148–50, has some effective criticisms of Turner. See also Danilov, *Russie dans la guerre mondiale*, 30–8.

East Prussia within fifteen days and thus provide indirect support in the crucial opening stages of the battle in the west. Neither partial mobilization nor operations against Austria-Hungary would assist the French cause: what the alliance required was a rapid Russian advance on East Prussia—a point which Joseph Joffre, the French chief of the general staff, did not hesitate to make to the Russians on 27 July.

Thus the step taken on 28 July, to mobilize four districts only, was of a piece with the mobilizations in earlier Balkan crises—it was designed as an instrument of diplomatic utility. Militarily it was unsustainable. The idea that mobilization was not a peaceful act but 'the most decisive act of war' had been present in the thought of Russian officers since 1892. In 1912 the European military districts were told to regard mobilization as the opening of hostilities.[157] On the morning of 29 July Sazonov responded to military advice and pressed the Tsar into approving general mobilization. The Russian decision for general mobilization therefore preceded any reaction from Germany. Indeed, the developments of that day—the opening of Austrian hostilities against Serbia with the bombardment of Belgrade, and a warning from Bethmann Hollweg that Russian mobilization would force German mobilization and that for Germany mobilization meant war—although they confirmed Sazonov in his decision, produced an apparent weakening, rather than a strengthening, of Russian resolve. The Tsar, prompted by a cousinly telegram from the Kaiser, reverted to partial mobilization at midnight on 29 July. The Russian general staff was appalled, and by 30 July knew that Germany had begun its military preparations. Sazonov believed that a secret German mobilization was possible; he was also aware of German pressure for preventive action. Therefore he renewed his advocacy of general mobilization. On the afternoon of 30 July the Tsar capitulated. On 31 July Russia began general mobilization. The German ultimatum arrived the same day.

In retrospect Russian prevarication over the pattern of its mobilization had little effect on the outcome of the July crisis. The crucial decisions, given the nature of Germany's war plan, were taken on 24 July. Any military preparations by Russia, even if designed to counter Austria-Hungary alone, would have been sufficient to prompt German mobilization. This is obviously true if Germany is seen as an aggressive power, already committed to European war, and certainly not disposed to pass up the opportunity of having its eastern frontier protected by Austrian operations against the Russians and so being freed to concentrate in the west. But it is also applicable in the context of a more reactive interpretation, of Germany's self-imposed image as the tragic victim: the sense of being in a corner, the preoccupation with time which not only the mobilization timetable but also the political management of the crisis

[157] Fuller, *Strategy and power*, 355; Suchomlinow, *Erinnerungen*, 343; Tunstall, *Planning for war*, 113.

generated, combined with the fear of Russia and the obligation to Austria-Hungary to make Russia's partial mobilization as intolerable to Germany as general mobilization.

Bethmann Hollweg was nonetheless slow to realize the gravity of the crisis which confronted him. On 25 July Germany's ambassador in St Petersburg had reported that Russia was not likely to be held back by fear of domestic disorder. Despite this clear indication that the strategy of a short, sharp Austro-Serbian war would misfire, the German chancellor continued to pursue that objective. His policy up until 28 July was guided, as it had been before the Austrian ultimatum, by the desire to limit and to localize. On 26 July Grey, buoyed up by the apparent success of the conference system in 1913, proposed an international conference, again casting Britain and Germany as the restraining influences within their respective alliance systems. But Germany's experience of such conferences, after the two Moroccan crises, was—as it had been for its ally—one of humiliation. On 27 July the Germans rejected the British proposal, on the grounds that the affair was Austria-Hungary's alone. And by the time that Bethmann Hollweg had apprised Austria-Hungary of Britain's view (which he took pains to point out he did not share)—that the Serb reply was acceptable—Vienna had already rebuffed the Serbs and was preparing for war. From 24 July onwards Grey warned Germany's ambassador in London that war, if it came, would not be localized. But for Bethmann, politically isolated at home and with his foreign policy apparently bankrupt abroad, the lure of a quick Balkan coup was not yet gainsaid. Sazonov's policy up until 28 July could be seen as conciliatory; France—with Poincaré and Viviani not returned until 29 July—was in no position to give clear signals; even Grey's conference proposal betokened a preference for negotiation rather than belligerence. The determination to stick by the policy of 5 and 6 July put blinkers on Bethmann Hollweg and at the same time hardened the reactions of the other participants in the crisis. By the time he was alerted to the certainty of Russian involvement, and to the implications for German policy of Russian mobilization, he had lost the opportunity to manage events. Before 28 July the message from Britain above all, but also from France and Russia, was clear: the local war must be avoided in order to prevent a major war. Bethmann Hollweg did not attempt to avoid a major war until after the local war had been initiated.

The first indication of a change of tack came on 28 July. Wilhelm had returned from his cruise the preceding day. When he read the Serb reply to the Austrian ultimatum, its moderation convinced him that war was now no longer required; instead, the Austrians should halt in Belgrade and occupy it until terms were agreed. Bethmann Hollweg passed the proposal on to Vienna, but specifically disavowed any wish to hold Austria-Hungary back from the task of achieving its aims in relation to Serbia. Berchtold postponed replying. The messages being received from Berlin were contradictory; only the day

before British proposals of mediation had been passed on without German endorsement, and by the night of 28/9 July Berchtold might reasonably argue that Austria's dwindling prestige in the Balkans would not survive any retraction from the military solution now under way. Speed and decisiveness were still Berchtold's objectives, as they had hitherto been those of Bethmann Hollweg.

On 29 July the alteration in Bethmann's approach became more evident. Grey must be held responsible for completing the change. Fritz Fischer, Imanuel Geiss, and others have seen Germany's policy in July as the denouement and continuation of its previous foreign policy.[158] Both Fischer and Geiss contend that the German chancellor accepted the possibility of a European war from the outset of the crisis but hoped that Britain would remain neutral. Therefore, for them, the Anglo-German naval negotiations of 1912 had had as their objective not détente per se, but the neutralization of Britain in the event of war. Undeniably Bethmann Hollweg worked for the maintenance of Anglo-German diplomatic links during July. But this, rather than evidence of continuity, is yet again an indication of Bethmann's wishful thinking and self-delusion in the three weeks up until 28 July. Over the previous decade the German general staff had entertained little doubt that, in the event of war in the west, the British would stand by the French. Clear statements to that effect had been made to Germany by Haldane in 1911 and by Grey in 1912: the implications were there in the Anglo-French staff talks and in Lloyd George's Mansion House speech. Bethmann had not shared the Anglophobia of Tirpitz, but the British naval talks with the Russians had convinced him of the rightness of the assumption that Britain would not be neutral in the event of a European war. Bethmann's hopes for Britain in July 1914 were therefore a reflection of his desire for a localized war. Obviously, if the local war became a general war it would serve Germany's interests if Britain espoused neutrality, but Bethmann Hollweg appreciated that in reality such an outcome was improbable. Where realism failed Bethmann was in his slowness to interpret Grey's warnings that an Austro-Serb war could not be localized as evidence that Britain would not long sustain the position of international arbitrator. On the afternoon of 29 July Grey made clear to the German ambassador that Britain would not remain neutral in the event of a continental war. Talk of mediation had given way to an explicit threat. Bethmann Hollweg's despair arose from the final realization that the policy of localization had failed.

By 30 July, therefore, the change in the chancellor's policy was complete. At 2.55 in the morning he dispatched an urgent telegram to the German ambassador in Vienna, calling on the Austrians to attempt mediation on the basis of

[158] Geiss, *Journal of Contemporary History*, I (1966), 82; see also Geiss, *July 1914*.

'the halt in Belgrade'. Faced with the immediate prospect of European war, neither the Kaiser nor Bethmann Hollweg wanted it.

The Austrian reaction was, predictably, one of confusion and frustration. The withdrawal of German support, feared and anticipated from the outset, had now come to pass. However, hostilities with Serbia had already commenced. The advice of Conrad von Hötzendorff from the beginning was that war could not be fought with limited means and limited objectives: given the size of the Serb army by 1914, Austria-Hungary would have to undergo a general mobilization to commence hostilities. A quick *coup de main* against Belgrade was therefore impossible, as well as being inappropriate. When Austria-Hungary's ministers discussed Bethmann's proposal on 31 July they could only endorse on political grounds the position adopted by Conrad on military: the last London conference was described as 'a frightful memory', and it made little sense for Vienna now to desist without a guarantee from Russia.[159]

The desire in Austria-Hungary to settle the Serb problem once and for all was supported by the attitude of Moltke. By 30/1 July the pressure from Berlin for swift Austrian action had not diminished; it simply came from a different quarter. Although Jagow had indicated to the Russians that partial mobilization would not trigger German mobilization, Moltke was of a different view. If the Austro-Hungarian army was fully committed to the war with Serbia, it would be unable to take an active role in operations against Russia, and yet this was the premiss upon which the German war plan rested. Unless a reasonable proportion of Franz Joseph's army tied down comparable Russian forces, Germany would not be able to deal with the dangers of a two-front war by concentrating the bulk of its divisions first against France. Time therefore pressed on Moltke in two ways. First, he could not afford to let the German mobilization fall behind that of Russia. But secondly, and more immediately, he could not allow the general war to follow so long after the outset of Austro-Serb hostilities that the Habsburg army could not concentrate against Russia rather than Serbia. Thus, on the afternoon of 30 July Moltke bypassed Bethmann Hollweg and urged Conrad to mobilize against Russia, not Serbia, and assured him that Germany would follow suit. Berchtold's response to Moltke's intervention was to ask, rhetorically, who ruled in Berlin: Moltke's message in itself did little more than confirm to Vienna the wisdom of its own continuing resolve.

The pressure Moltke put on Vienna, although seemingly fraught in its implications for civil–military relations, was no more than a response—and a somewhat belated one at that—to the circumstances in which Germany now found itself. German military intelligence had picked up an exchange of signals

[159] Regele, *Conrad*, 242–5, also 122.

between Russia and France concerning mobilization on 24 and 25 July, but as late as 26 July was still anticipating a crisis that would carry on for several weeks.[160] Not until Falkenhayn's return to work on the 27th had the army's somewhat dilatory approach been challenged. Falkenhayn was appalled by the lack of resolution displayed by both the Kaiser and by Moltke. He was clear that the responsibility for policy was Bethmann Hollweg's, but argued that the chancellor's obligation to put to one side military advice for political reasons no longer held good when 'a crucial military interest was at stake'. On 29 July Falkenhayn felt that that point had been reached. He called for the declaration, *Zustandes drohender Kriegsgefahr*, the preliminary steps to mobilization. Moltke, aware that for Germany mobilization meant war, and fearful of its implications for Europe as a whole, would not endorse the minister of war's request, and Bethmann Hollweg took his cue from the chief of the general staff.[161] The chancellor emphasized his wish to leave the initiation of hostilities to Russia. But at the same time his acknowledgement that, if European war came it would include a German attack on Belgium and France, was contained in his request for British neutrality in exchange for German respect for Belgian and French territorial integrity, and confirmed by the preparation of an ultimatum to Belgium demanding its acceptance of the transit of German troops through its territory: the former in particular was a diplomatic gaffe that made the possibility of restraint yet more remote, but which reflected the pressure that Bethmann Hollweg was now under from the army. On 30 July Moltke's respect for Bethmann's wish to await the Russian response had—as his message to Conrad testified—evaporated. That evening he got the chancellor to agree that a decision on general mobilization would be made by noon on 31 July. Moltke was quite clear that the Tsar's equivocation over general or partial mobilization could make no difference to the German decision. Five minutes before their self-imposed deadline, Moltke and Bethmann Hollweg heard that the Russians had finally decided on general mobilization. Germany issued the declaration of *Kriegsgefahr* that day, and ordered general mobilization on 1 August. Ultimatums were dispatched to St Petersburg and Paris on the night of 31 July; on the following morning Germany declared war on Russia.

The lack of either continuity or clarity in German policy was in itself a reflection of the absence of a guiding authority. Supreme command was in name vested in the Kaiser, but by 1914 Wilhelm no longer commanded the respect which his titles demanded: the monarchy was venerated as an institution rather than in the personality of its incumbent. Technically, the reconciliation of the views of the chancellor and of the chief of the general staff in late

[160] Showalter, *Tannenberg*, 95; Stevenson, *Armaments and the coming of war*, 400.
[161] Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn*, 153–9; see more generally Trachtenberg, *History and strategy*, 88–92.

July was Wilhelm's responsibility. In practice, the management of the crisis reflected the dominance of first one personality, Bethmann Hollweg, and then another, Moltke. Bethmann had guided events up until 28 July by acting in isolation: he had encouraged the Kaiser to put to sea and Moltke to continue his cure. When the Kaiser returned, the belligerence he had expressed to Hoyos on 5 July had softened. Wilhelm, however, was caught by his own self-image, that of the steely warrior, and thus his reluctance to fight was compromised by his relationship with his military entourage and, above all, with Moltke. Wilhelm saw himself as the victim of an Entente conspiracy, initiated by his despised English uncle Edward VII, and the latter's Francophile ways. His capacity so to reduce the crisis of late July 1914 to the level of his own personal animosities cut across any possibility of drawing out the full implications of each step which Germany took.

The most striking illustration of the consequent absence of any German grand design was the confusion between German diplomacy, which aimed to limit war as far as possible, and German war plans, which rested on a worst-case analysis, that of a two-front war against France and Russia simultaneously. After the December 1912 Balkan crisis Moltke had concluded that the Franco-Russian alliance was sufficiently strong to mean that Germany could not fight one without having to reckon with the other. Therefore the plans for war against Russia alone, which in the normal course of events were updated by the general staff each year, were abandoned in April 1913. The army thus committed itself to a two-front war. However, the timing of the Austrian ultimatum in July 1914 was dictated by the wish to minimize the chances of a two-front war, to increase the possibility that if Russia acted in support of Serbia it would do so without France's aid. Of course, neither Bethmann Hollweg nor the Kaiser was blind to the realization that war with Russia would probably lead to war with the Entente as a whole: hence Bethmann's crassly provocative communication to Britain on 29 July. But they had not appreciated that in the general staff's view war in the east had inevitably to be preceded by war in the west. On the afternoon of 1 August Germany's ambassador in London reported that Grey had guaranteed that France would not fight Germany if Germany did not attack France. The report was false, and the elation which it produced in the Kaiser and in Bethmann Hollweg short-lived. But their jubilation was in marked contrast to the despair the report engendered in Moltke. 'If His Majesty', the latter recounted himself as saying, 'were to insist on directing the whole army to the east, he would not have an army prepared for the attack but a barren heap of armed men disorganised and without supplies.'[162]

The confusion in Germany as to how France would react was in considerable measure a self-inflicted wound. On 27 and 28 July the Germans jammed

[162] Quoted in Barnett, *Swordbearers*, 18.

wireless transmissions between France and Russia, and between both places and the presidential cruiser. Thereafter the two allies routed their signals traffic through Scandinavia, so generating further delays in communication. Poincaré and Viviani did not return to Paris until 29 July. By deliberately trying to silence France's leaders, the Central Powers were left free to project on to France their own hopes. In practice French policy was remarkably consistent and predictable: more than that of any other great power, it reflected the developments of 1911–14 rather than the pressures and confusion of the July crisis itself.[163]

The doggedness of Poincaré's efforts to cement the Triple Entente had by 1914 achieved a momentum of their own. The original objective of his visit to St Petersburg was to promote better relations between Russia and Britain, and the crisis in the Balkans did not in itself bulk large. This was in part a reflection of ignorance: the French ambassador in Belgrade was ill, and the Quai d'Orsay received no information from Serbia between 14 and 25 July. Intelligence from Berlin was not much better, not least because Jules Cambon was home on leave until 23 July. But the comparative neglect of the Balkans in the St Petersburg talks was also an indication that, once the situation did become clear, the French would not be disposed to see the crisis in isolation. In Paris only the caretaker foreign minister, Bienvenu-Martin, sustained the hope that an Austro-Serb war could be localized. He was rapidly disabused of this notion by the ministry's senior officials, convinced that behind Austria-Hungary stood Germany, and determined that the preservation of the Entente was a more important objective in French foreign policy than the avoidance of war.

The principal problem confronting Poincaré was how to achieve the former without appearing so uncaring about the latter that France prejudiced either its international credibility or its domestic unity. The memory of France's entry to the war of 1870, when it had forfeited both, loomed large in his calculations. Military considerations were therefore consistently subordinated to diplomatic in order that France's defensive posture should be unmistakable. The war minister, Messimy, was kept in ignorance for much of July; the distinction between mobilization and a declaration of war was emphasized; and as late as 1 August the order for the army to keep 10 kilometres back from the Franco-Belgian frontier—thus making clear France's respect for Belgian neutrality—was reaffirmed. But Poincaré knew as well as Messimy and Joffre that France's security was bound to that of Russia, and that if Russia mobilized so would Germany. Thus, the tension created by affirming the Entente while asserting French defensiveness was played out in the relationship with Russia.

[163] The discussion that follows draws on John Keiger, 'France', in Wilson (ed.), *Decisions for war*, esp. 121–30, and Hayne, *French foreign office*, esp. 269–301.

Pivotal to this dialogue, particularly during the periods of enforced silence and delayed communication, was France's ambassador in St Petersburg, Maurice Paléologue. Paléologue's early career had left him well versed in the Franco-Russian relationship, and particularly in its military dimensions. Furthermore, he had been at school with Poincaré, and shared the president's belief in the centrality of the Entente. Lunching with Sazonov on 24 July, he responded to Sazonov's conviction that the Austrian ultimatum required a robust response by averring that the Entente should stand up to the Central Powers. As a result of this exchange and, more explicitly, of delays in his reporting the steps taken by Russia on its route to general mobilization, Paléologue has been accused of deliberately stoking Russian aggression while at the same time endorsing Paris's conviction that Sazonov's policy was essentially pacific. Consequently Paris saw Germany's decision to mobilize as unprovoked, and felt its task to be the stiffening of Russian resolve. This interpretation, quite apart from its discounting of the practical difficulties in St Petersburg–Paris communications, elevates Paléologue's role while downgrading those of Sazonov and Poincaré. It overlooks the striking fact that Russian decision-making was remarkably little influenced by France. It also neglects the similarity between the policy which Paléologue pursued and that which Poincaré would have espoused had he been free to do so. To that extent Paléologue was a more than adequate stopgap when communications were broken. Once they were restored the delays in transmission on 30 and 31 July, whether contrived or not, buttressed Poincaré's position by stilling any suggestion that Russia had initiated hostilities and had thus invalidated the defensive basis of the alliance.

As a result, even if obscured from Germany, and overshadowed in the French press by Madame Caillaux's trial (the all-male jury gallantly acquitted her on 28 July), Poincaré's affirmation of the alliance continued unimpeded by its author's enforced silence. Indeed, it is worth remembering that on board ship with Poincaré was Viviani, who as a radical prime minister was much more disposed to soften France's support for Russia. By the time that he was able to do so, advising the Russians not to offer Germany a pretext for general mobilization, it was effectively too late.

Viviani's views, and the need to muzzle them, were a reflection of the domestic imperatives under which Poincaré increasingly felt himself to be operating. The elections of April/May 1914, and the shift to the left which they had produced, although in practice no block to nationalist sentiment, did point to a continuing threat to the three-year military service law. During July itself Messimy was working on a revision of the law, and Poincaré expected its amendment in autumn 1914. The military strength of the Franco-Russian alliance was thus likely to be challenged from within France, as well as by Austro-Germany policy without. The improvements in the French army since

1911, combined with growing evidence of Russian military strength, contributed by 1914 to greater optimism within the French general staff about its prospects in a war with Germany. As in the latter, therefore, so in the former: there was a sense that if war was to come to Europe, better now, with the French army profiting from the three-year law, and with Russian support guaranteed by a Balkan crisis, than later.[164]

The French president's resolve was heightened by the ecstatic welcome which he and Viviani were accorded on their arrival in Paris on 29 July. Four days previously the *Echo de Paris* had published an account of the visit of Germany's ambassador to the Quai d'Orsay: he had been seeking France's co-operation in localizing the conflict, but the version leaked by the foreign ministry to the French press carried a somewhat different spin. The call confirmed that Germany was prodding Austria-Hungary, and that its purpose was to carry on the policy of the second Moroccan crisis and split the Entente. Furthermore, the implications of such a policy were not simply diplomatic. The three-year-law agitation, and its centrality to recent domestic politics, had accustomed the French public to the idea of a surprise German attack. The fact that among the cries of 'Vive la France' Poincaré could also hear 'Vive l'armée' left him in no doubt of the prevailing mood.[165]

France's sense of now or never was contributed to by an inflated expectation of the likely British response. Paul Cambon, France's ambassador in London, had listened to those British friendly to the Entente rather than those who were not: his dispatches reflected the expectation generated by the Anglo-French naval agreement of 1912, that in the event of war with Germany the Entente would become a definitive alliance. On 1 August the mobilization orders to the French fleet assumed that the joint Anglo-French operational plans would be put into effect: in practice Britain had neither committed itself on this point nor yet sent an ultimatum to Germany.

It is tempting to see Britain's strategic imperative, the need to prevent any great power dominating the further coast of the English Channel and so providing a direct threat to Britain's sea-power, as creating an inevitability about Britain's entry to the First World War. Grey's foreign policy, combined with both naval and military staff talks, had established—so this argument would add—a continental commitment. A minority of the cabinet, as well as general-staff officers like Henry Wilson, did think like this in July 1914. But they did not represent the sort of widespread consensus which would justify hostilities. Britain was the only great power to debate its entry to the war in parliament; it was also the only state that did not see its own territorial integrity under direct threat. The decision to fight, therefore, had to be

[164] Krumeich, *Armaments*, 214–29; also C. M. Andrew, 'France and the German menace', in E. May (ed.), *Knowing one's enemies*, 146–8.

[165] Raithel, *Das 'Wunder' der inneren Einheit*, 192–9, 252–5.

justified to more people than was the case in other countries, but itself rested on a more indirect danger. The reluctance of the Foreign Office to treat foreign policy in an open way, Grey's own tendency to keep diplomacy from the cabinet—both these factors meant that British opinion had to be educated, coaxed, given time to develop, in late July.[166]

Indeed, as has already been seen, until 29 July Grey's approach to the crisis was one of caution. Liberalism's affection for the rights of small nations did not extend to Serbia. The *Manchester Guardian* was of the view that, 'if it were physically possible for Serbia to be towed out to sea and sunk there, the air of Europe would at once seem cleaner'.[167] Grey told the Austro-Hungarian ambassador that, if his country could fight Serbia without provoking Russia, he could 'take a holiday tomorrow'.[168] On 24 July Asquith, the prime minister, recognized the implications of the Austrian ultimatum for European relations and the possibility of a 'real Armageddon', but still reckoned that the British could be 'spectators'.[169] He could not at first see why a German victory would upset the balance of power in Europe, on the grounds that it had not done so in 1871, and as much as a week later he told the archbishop of Canterbury that the Serbs deserved a 'thorough thrashing'.[170] His major concern in July was Irish home rule. If his government did not carry a bill it would lose the support of the Irish members of parliament on whom it depended for an overall majority; if it did, Ulster loyalists threatened civil war. In the event the problems of yet a third small nation, Belgium, subsumed those of Serbia and allowed the Liberals to shelve those of Ireland.

Grey's self-appointed role as mediator between 24 and 29 July was not, therefore, adopted for the benefit of Germany. Domestically, he both had to create time for a public awareness of the crisis to grow and had to have tried a diplomatic solution before he could hope to argue for the commencement of hostilities. Abroad, his purpose was to restrain Russia and France: he feared that by openly affirming the solidarity of the Entente he would encourage both powers to precipitate action. His allies, on the other hand, contended that a united front could have deterred Germany. Certainly the consequence of Grey's ambivalence was apparent failure: his efforts at negotiation did not moderate Austro-German behaviour, but they did alarm the Russians and the French. Grey could not afford to follow an independent line indefinitely. He had recognized in 1911 that Britain's own interests were too closely intertwined with those of the Entente for neutrality to be a genuinely viable option. By

[166] On Britain in the July crisis, see Michael Brock, 'Britain enters the war', in Evans and Pogge von Strandmann (eds.), *The coming*, 145–78; Hazlehurst, *Politicians at war*, 1–116; Wilson, *Policy of the entente*, esp. 135–47.

[167] A. May, *Hapsburg monarchy*, 52.

[168] Bridge, *From Sadowa*, 381.

[169] Brock and Brock (eds.), *Asquith*, 124–5.

[170] Cassar, *Asquith*, 13–15, 18–19.

allying with France, Britain was better able to manage its own relationship with Germany, and to give itself the sort of continental military clout which its diminutive army could not. Even more important was the link with Russia: Russia's membership of the Entente committed it to rivalry with Germany, gave its policy a European twist, and so relieved the British of the challenge of its main rival in Central Asia. If Britain had failed to support France and Russia in 1914, its links with them would have been forfeit, and the reopening and deepening of those old and more traditional rivalries would have driven Britain into the only alternative, an Anglo-German alliance. For all Asquith's hope, isolation from Europe was no longer possible, not least because of its imperial consequences.

The events of late July went faster than Grey's diplomatic machinations. For some sections of the press, notably *The Times*, the Foreign Office's reactions were dilatory. But this did not mean that it had lost its sense of direction. As early as 26 July Grey used the decision of the First Sea Lord, Prince Louis of Battenberg, to keep the naval reserve at its stations as a signal to Germany. On 27 July the army and the navy were put on precautionary alert. The cabinet approved these steps on 29 July. On 31 July Eyre Crowe, head of the eastern and western departments at the Foreign Office and a well-established harbinger of the German menace, wrote that 'if England cannot engage in a big war [it] means her abdication as an independent State'.[171]

But the British government was still not in a situation where it could adopt an unequivocal position. Grey made his commitment to the Entente clear to Germany, and was justified in doing so by Germany's own confirmation that it intended to march through France and Belgium. Yet at the same time he had to tell Paul Cambon that a clash between Austria-Hungary and Serbia did not constitute a direct threat to France, and that Britain was therefore free from any engagement. He had no other choice: on 31 July the cabinet continued to emphasize Britain's free hand, and as late as 1 August two of its members wanted a declaration that Britain would in no circumstances fight Germany.

The possibility of a split within the cabinet was the single most compelling argument for not forcing the pace of Britain's internal debate. In 1911 the radicals within British Liberalism had been weakened by the willingness of Lloyd George and Churchill to support Grey. But in 1914 Lloyd George wavered, responding to the anti-war sentiments of the Liberal press more than to the blandishments of Churchill.[172] The chancellor of the exchequer could be confident that a principled stand against entry to the war would be assured of major backbench support. Even on 2 August Asquith thought three-quarters of the Liberal party's members were opposed to war. If Asquith's

[171] Neilson, *Britian and the last Tsar*, 35.

[172] Keith Wilson, 'Britain', in Wilson (ed.), *Decisions for war*, 176–8; David (ed.), *Inside Asquith's cabinet*, 179.

cabinet did split over entry to the war, the Conservatives would gain power. The dread of such an outcome was a force for Liberal unity, even for the radicals. But its importance did not lie only in its ramifications for a single political party: a united Liberal government would be able to lead a united Britain into war, a divided party would betoken a divided country. The Labour party had discussed the possibility of a general strike in the event of war. Such a danger was real enough for a nation where the railwaymen, the dockers, and the seamen had all staged national strikes since 1911, and where trade-union membership had almost doubled since 1909. The possibility of social upheaval as a result of the economic strains of war was as threatening to Grey, who referred to the 1848 revolutions, as to other European leaders. In the City of London commercial opinion warned that war would lead to the collapse of credit. In such circumstances a Conservative-led entry to war would make the war itself a party issue; the Liberals, on the other hand, not least by virtue of the electoral pact which they had struck with the Labour party in 1903, had a greater claim to represent the national interest.

Such arguments were not lost on the Conservatives themselves. The fear of Grey's replacement as foreign secretary by somebody of a more radical disposition was their corollary to the radicals' fear of a Conservative government. Although no nearer consensus on the issue than the rest of the country in late July, on 2 August the Conservatives' leader, Bonar Law, was able to write to Asquith pledging his party's support for the war. The issues for which the Conservatives were prepared to fight were Britain's status as a great power and the balance of power in Europe: Law was affirming Grey's commitment to the Entente.

Henceforth the attentions of Asquith and Grey could be focused firmly on the need to convince the radicals, and they could back up their blandishments with the implicit threat of being able to form a coalition government with the Conservatives should the radicals not follow Grey in his determination that Britain must support France. Nonetheless, the outcome of the cabinet held on the morning of 2 August was ambiguous. Grey informed the meeting of the French naval mobilization the previous day, and of France's dependence on Britain for the defence of its northern coast. The direct danger to British maritime interests posed by a German naval presence in the Channel and the North Sea was not a divisive issue. For some in the cabinet the decision to affirm Britain's naval obligations was therefore a step to deter Germany, not a step towards war itself. Their interpretation was confirmed when Germany promptly offered to remain out of the Channel.

Nonetheless, the cabinet's decision affirmed the 1912 Anglo-French naval talks. It had, at least in small degree, recognized that Britain could not enjoy a 'free hand' *sine die*. Furthermore, Germany's willingness to limit its naval activity was not matched in regard to its army. During the course of Sunday

2 August the key question became less Britain's support for France and more Britain's commitment to the maintenance of Belgian neutrality. Although the German threat to Belgium was not a new element in British calculations, it had been assumed that the Germans would advance south of the River Meuse, and might thus avoid a major irruption through Belgium, so encouraging the Belgian army itself to stand aside. In these circumstances Britain, although a guarantor of Belgium under the terms of the 1839 treaty, might reasonably regard itself as freed of any obligation to act. However, on 1 August the Belgian government stated its intention to defend its neutrality. Indications of German violation of that neutrality were evident the following day, and on the evening of 2 August the Germans delivered to Britain an ultimatum, demanding unimpeded passage through all Belgium. In reality the obligation to defend Belgian neutrality was incumbent on all the signatories to the 1839 treaty acting collectively, and this had been the view adopted by the cabinet only a few days previously. But now Britain presented itself as Belgium's sole guarantor. Its neutrality became the symbol around which Asquith could rally the majority of his cabinet, including Lloyd George. Gladstonian liberalism might abhor the instincts of Grey and Haldane, but it was committed to the defence of small nations: that commitment became the bridge which allowed *Realpolitik* and liberalism to join forces.

By the morning of 3 August the cabinet and the country were at last effectively united. The cabinet approved the mobilization of the army and the navy. On the same day Germany declared war on France, and on 4 August Britain—its ultimatum to Germany having expired—declared war on Germany. In the event only two ministers resigned: Britain's wavering may have muddied the European scene, but it clarified the domestic position. In the afternoon of 3 August Grey spoke in the House of Commons. It was a long speech, delivered in a conversational style, but its effect was extraordinarily powerful. Its appeal was to Britain's moral obligation; its attention was to the left; it eschewed specifically strategic arguments.

The war in which Britain thought it was about to engage was above all a war for British interests. Grey argued that, as a sea-power and as a trading nation, Britain would be almost as directly affected by the war if it remained neutral. The fact that Britain was a sea-power meant that the war would be limited because it would be naval; he told the House of Commons on 4 August that, by engaging in war, 'we shall suffer but little more than we shall suffer if we stand aside'.[173] If any pre-war commitments had effected British entry to the war, it had been the 1912 Anglo-French naval talks. The staff conversations, and the 1911 resolution of the Committee of Imperial Defence to send an expeditionary force to the continent, formed no part of Britain's decision to fight. One of the

[173] Steiner, *Britain and the origins*, 210.

reasons why the cabinet had been able to accept British belligerence had been its implicit assumption that the country was engaging in a naval war. Neither it nor the House of Commons made a specific decision in favour of a continental strategy; on 2 August the prime minister himself saw the dispatch of an expeditionary force to France as serving no purpose.

Thus, Britain's thinking on the sort of war in which it was embarking was as muddled as that of the other belligerents. Naval pressure on Germany would be of value only over the long term. The needs of France and Belgium were more immediate; there was a danger that Germany would be master of both long before British sea-power would be effective. Furthermore, the navy's strategy would itself become vulnerable if the European coastline was dominated by a hostile power. The 'moral' obligation therefore carried with it a continental commitment. In addition, Grey's public presentation of the war as limited did not conform to his gloomier prognostications with regard to the economic and social consequences; this contradiction was present even if the war did remain purely maritime, because the application of sea-power and of commercial pressure implied a war that would achieve its objects slowly and by directing its efforts against the German nation as a whole, rather than exclusively against its armed forces.

Insufficient clarity about the nature of the war on which they were embarking is a feature common to all the belligerents in 1914. Such a criticism, moreover, is not simply the product of hindsight. Between 1871 and 1914 the serious study of war was transformed; the success of the German general staff in the planning and execution of the wars of unification, and the need to respond tactically to the technological transformation wrought on the battlefield by quick-firing, long-range weaponry, prompted four decades of reform and analysis. Many professional soldiers recognized, in their plans for future war, individual elements which would prove characteristic of the battlefield of 1914–18. But, perhaps partly because of the increasingly demanding nature of their own specialist concerns, their overall outlook was narrowed. Specialist and technical concerns could prompt political lobbying in order to advance specifically military interests. Generals, however, were not on the whole involved in politics per se. The army may have been the focus of much attention from the radical right in France before 1914; soldiers themselves, however, identified with the nation as a whole and tended to accept republicanism as a general concept. The Dreyfus affair was a product, not of a politicized army, but of a professional army, over-zealous in the protection of its own identity from outside intervention. In Germany, Schlieffen might advise whether or not the opportunity was right for war in 1905, but he did not see it as his task to direct foreign policy by actively and vociferously advocating preventive war; in 1914 Moltke had no role at all in the management of the bulk of the July crisis. Ironically, therefore, for all the suspicions harboured by the

left, soldiers were in some respects insufficiently political. Many of them did anticipate tactical conditions in which stalemate and attrition would come to dominate warfare. But they too readily accepted, because it was the received wisdom in an area outside their specialist knowledge, that such conditions could not be long sustained because domestic economic and social collapse would follow.

The soldiers' narrow political vision was matched by the remarkable military ignorance of the civilian leaders. A century previously the tasks of military and political leadership were only just ceasing to be combined in a single individual; the First World War itself would prompt the creation of collective bodies designed to fuse the wisdom of soldiers, sailors, and politicians. But in July 1914 either there were no such committees, or where they did exist, as in Britain and France, they were not consulted. Thus, statesmen like Bethmann Hollweg and Berchtold could evoke an image of war that implied quick and decisive battlefield success, when even a limited acquaintance with the changes in warfare since 1870 might have suggested a somewhat different scenario. Furthermore, the notion of war as a major catastrophe for Europe was a common one in July 1914, and yet it was not one which was necessarily related to military conditions in themselves, but was derived from assumptions about economic factors. The year 1870 once again provided a historical but superficial analogy. The Franco-Prussian War had prompted revolution in France; yet the revolution was seen as a phenomenon separate from the conditions of the war itself.

Military factors did, therefore, play a role in the origins of the war, but more in the shaping of general assumptions than in the mechanics of the crisis of late July. This is not to deny that the war plans of the powers affected the tempo of events in late July. Mobilization for Germany did mean war; less directly it probably also meant war for France—at least that was what General Boisdeffre had told the Russians on behalf of France in 1892.[174] But the staff plans were not called into operation until events had already made the implementation of military measures probable. In the Bosnian and Balkan crises mobilizations had been effected without war. At a much earlier stage in the July crisis images of war were being employed in the manipulation of events. Bethmann Hollweg relied on an apocalyptic view of European war and on the assumption (which was widely shared) that war would bring domestic political change, and even revolution, to persuade the powers not to fight. He saw the possibility of a limited war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, reckoning that the other states would (in the language of contemporary strategic studies) be self-deterred. He was wrong: war was preferable to diplomatic defeat. The popular image of war proved insufficiently awful for deterrence to operate.

[174] D. Jones, *Military–naval encyclopaedia*, i. 3.

Furthermore, other powers applied deterrence in different ways. Poincaré reckoned that strong alliance blocs, backed up by military preparations and firm agreements, would keep the peace. The plans which the general staffs prepared, therefore, confirmed the alliances rather than ran counter to them. Poincaré and Sazonov both argued that, if Grey had been able to pledge British support earlier, the threat of a united Entente would have forced Germany to climb down. If they were right, theirs is an argument for clarity of intention—not uncertainty—as a keynote in deterrence. However, Britain, whose uncertainty was prompted not by the needs of foreign policy, nor by the argument that the creation of doubt as to its intentions in the mind of its opponent made for more effective deterrence, but by genuine domestic division, could defend its position by replying that the likelihood of its intervention was at least sufficient to have deterred Germany if Germany had had a mind to be deterred. Germany and Austria-Hungary calculated that the alliances would encourage the Entente powers to restrain each other from intervention, but for some reason would not have the same effect on the Triple Alliance.

The accusation levelled against the alliance system before 1914 is, however, more serious than that it failed to prevent war; it is that it actually provoked war. Kurt Riezler, writing before the outbreak of war, reckoned that one ally would restrain another; a vital interest for one would not be a vital interest for another. The military context was in part responsible for transforming a system of great-power management that was designed to be defensive into one of offence. The emphasis on speed of mobilization, the interaction of war plans, and Germany's central geographical position meant that a chain reaction became possible. But the interlocking sequence of mobilizations can be exaggerated; Serbia decided to mobilize ahead of Austria-Hungary; Austria-Hungary settled for general mobilization before Russia's position was known; Russia's move to mobilization preceded Germany's and yet Germany's decision was made before it was aware of the Russian position; Britain responded to Germany before it had decided to honour any commitment to France. The imperative of the alliance system was not one of altruism, but of brutal self-interest: Germany needed Austria-Hungary; France's military position was dependent on Russian support; British diplomacy was unsustainable if it allowed the Entente to shatter.

By 1914, therefore, the alliances had become a major vehicle for the expression of a great power's status. This was the context into which Germany's *Weltpolitik* fitted. By 1914 Germany simultaneously sought affirmation as a world power and as a continental power. Furthermore, it did so in a way calculated to infuriate. Bethmann Hollweg put a large share of the blame for the war on his own country: 'the earlier errors of a Turkish policy against Russia, a Moroccan against France, fleet against England, irritating everyone,

blocking everybody's way and yet not really weakening anyone.'[175] By July 1914 each power, conscious in a self-absorbed way of its own potential weaknesses, felt it was on its mettle, that its status as a great power would be forfeit if it failed to act.

Such a view, however nebulous and unsatisfactory, helps to explain why the July crisis cannot stand in isolation. To a certain extent, and particularly in the final week of that month, the crisis did generate its own momentum. The speed of events outstripped the speed of communications. Insufficient time elapsed for reflection and calculation. But the postures which the powers adopted in that week were themselves reflections of the previous crises, and the decisions taken earlier narrowed the options available later. Russia had to support Serbia because it had not done so in 1909; Germany had to support Austria-Hungary because it had backed down in 1913; France had to honour the commitments to Russia Poincaré had repeated since 1912; Britain's apparent success in mediation in 1913 encouraged a renewed effort in 1914. Thus, too, the fluidity which had characterized the international scene in the first of the major crises, that over Morocco in 1905, and which had particularly revolved around the attitudes of Britain, Russia, and Italy, had given way to considerable rigidity.

Such explanations are unfashionably political and diplomatic. Economic and imperial rivalries, the longer-range factors, help explain the growth of international tension in the decade before 1914. Economic depression encouraged the promotion of economic competition in nationalist terms. But trade was international in its orientation; economic interpenetration was a potent commercial argument against war. Imperialism, as Bethmann Hollweg tried to show in his pursuit of détente, could be made to cut across the alliance blocs. Furthermore, even if economic factors are helpful in explaining the long-range causes, it is hard to see how they fit into the precise mechanics of the July crisis itself. Commercial circles in July were appalled at the prospect of war and anticipated the collapse of credit; Bethmann Hollweg, the Tsar, and Grey envisaged economic dislocation and social collapse. In the short term, the Leninist interpretation of the war as a final stage in the decline of capitalism and imperialism, of war as a way of regulating external economic imbalance and of resolving internal crises, cannot be appropriate as an explanation of the causes of the First World War.

Indeed, what remains striking about those hot July weeks is the role, not of collective forces nor of long-range factors, but of the individual. Negatively put, such an argument concludes that the statesmen of 1914 were pygmies, that Bethmann Hollweg was no Bismarck. Nobody, with the possible exception—and for a few days only—of Grey, was prepared to fight wholeheartedly for peace as an end in itself. Domestically Berchtold, Sazonov, and Bethmann

[175] Herwig, 'Imperial Germany', in E. May (ed.), *Knowing one's enemies*, 93.

Hollweg had acquired reputations for diplomatic weakness, which they now felt the need to counter by appearing strong. But even this interpretation fuses the individual with wider national pressures. More bizarre is the conjunction of the individual with accident—the wrong turn of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's driver, and the fortuitous positioning of Princip who had already assumed that his assassination attempt had failed. If Bethmann Hollweg's wife had not died in May would he—it seems reasonable to ask—have been less fatalistic, less resigned in his mood in July? And Conrad von Hötzendorff, whose advocacy of preventive war proved so important to Austrian calculations at the beginning of July—were his motives patriotic or personal? He calculated that, as a war hero, he would be free to marry his beloved Gina von Reininghaus, already the wife of another.[176] Conrad's infatuation cannot, obviously, explain the outbreak of the First World War. But it remains a reminder that the most banal and maudlin emotions, as well as the most deeply felt, interacted with the wider context.

[176] Williamson, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XVIII (1988), 816.