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SUUM CUIQUE:
TWO BLACK EAGLES AND THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY

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AMERICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Charles Town, West Virginia

SUUM CUIQUE:
TWO BLACK EAGLES AND THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of MASTER OF
ARTS
in EUROPEAN
HISTORY By
Noah S. Hutto

Submission Date:
January 17, 2016

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Stan and Gayle, who always supported me in my endeavors, and encouraged me to write and embrace my love of history.

To my wife, Sadee, who I will never do justice in expressing my thanks for—not only encouraging me to finish this thesis, but for keeping me focused on completing this degree while I was undergoing both a medical and my 20 Years Active Duty Retirement from the United States Army. I could not have stayed “in the fight,” both literally and figuratively, working on this my degree while deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan or when “recovering” fully upon my return home without your support.

Last, and most important, I dedicate everything I am to the two people closest to my heart but furthest from my embrace—My Life and My Pride:
Für mein “Bug,” Anakin Alexander, und meine Prinzessin, Hailey Annessa,

Ich liebe dich sowohl zum Mond und zurück.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have always been fascinated by history, but I would be remiss if I did not mention four grade school teachers that impacted both my continued pursuit “to become” a historian and gave me the foundations for writing and interpretation that are so crucial:

Ms. Becker, my American History teacher from 7th grade. Despite my starting every day with “my name on the board,” my grades in her class showed her I was actually enjoying learning. There was nothing better than being told we would have a substitute teacher the next day and arriving to class to see Ms. Becker completely decked out in costume to represent a historical figure.

Mr. Morris, my English teacher from 7th and 8th grades. His method of learning new words and strengthening vocabulary still resonates with me. His encouragement to continue interpreting the classics in my own way, so long as I could support my arguments through strong writing, allowed my growth as a person and a writer. Although now, I understand and appreciate, that George Orwell’s Animal Farm is about Communism and the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Mr. Dunn, my American History and Government teacher from my freshman year. He challenged me consistently to go beyond acceptance of mediocre work and combine my writing with my passion for history. In the end, just as this thesis process has proved, he was right: I was never promised a rose garden.

Ms. Cohen, my English Literature teacher from my senior year. Despite my controversial term papers and in-class presentations, she consistently applauded my unique approach in showing my understanding and appreciation for the material combined with my creative urge to walk my own path. What other teacher would have allowed me to play Iron Maiden’s complete 13 minute song “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” to the class before beginning my presentation on Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s same-titled poem?

I must also acknowledge Dr. Steve Kreis. It just so happened he was appointed my Content Advisor for this work, but prior to that, he served as my professor for two other courses. One of those was the History of the Enlightenment, a period, up until that course, I never cared for. His words of encouragement as I experienced some troubling times outside my academic pursuits allowed me to finish those courses with my personal standard of educational commitment in tact. I took a little more than a year off before heading into my final course, and what follows is the result. I only hope I have lived up to the potential he saw in me.

And finally, to The Breakfast Club, for demonstrating that being “different” is really just the everyday struggle of trying to find yourself and how that person fits into its surroundings. I spent many an hour in detention or internal suspension—often treated as a criminal, instead of anyone trying to really know who I was. I was then as I am now, regardless of how anyone wanted to see me:

In the simplest terms, the most convenient definitions, I found out that each one of us is a brain... and an athlete... and a basket case... a princess... and a criminal.
This thesis will examine the role of Frederick II, known as Frederick the Great, in the unification of Germany. After a review of existing historiography, the thesis will show that Frederick’s actions as the King of Prussia were instrumental in establishing the very foundation for a unified Germany. Unfortunately, his achievements, as applied to this end, are outshined by the historiography that paints Otto von Bismarck as the true unifier of the individual German states. This thesis will concentrate on the timelines of war and peace of both men, and then more specifically on the actions they took domestically and diplomatically. During this compare and contrast of Frederick and Bismarck, their actions as captured in their own hand, their contemporaries, and modern historians will all serve in answering the following: Outside of military prowess, what exactly were their domestic and foreign policies? Within the context of these policies, where does Frederick serve as the greater visionary for Prussia’s role in Central Europe? How does shifting credit for unification of Germany under Frederick’s ideals and policies impact modern German historiography? This thesis will argue that Frederick’s policies were the true baseline of a unified Germany, and that its progressive thinking established roots that Bismarck either completed or perverted, ultimately forcing Germany’s complete transformation to Frederick’s initial ideals.
PREFACE

Although not required for the task of this thesis, I felt a short preface to my work was warranted. It is here that I wanted to address more of the “why” behind the subject matter outside of the academic “why?”—or, what is the significance to your field. I cannot explain exactly where or when my passion for European History surfaced, and more specifically, German history. I normally chalk it up to my initial passion for military history and my service in the United States Army for 23 years. But, why Germany? Why Prussia? Again, there is no exact moment to reference, but I was married to a German woman, Katja, and she is the mother of my children, and they all three live in a small town outside Wiesbaden, Germany. Again through military history pathways, I found Clausewitz, and later, realizing Katja was born in Burg von Magdeburg, we went and visited Clausewitz’s grave.

Katja had no idea who he was, thinking she might have heard the name before. I cannot say I was surprised, as she grew up in the German Democratic Republic (GDR or DDR, or East Germany) and was more attuned to the Soviet-influenced German History. However, once we had children and they began school, I realized that even in the early 2000s, a unified, strong Germany in the European Union still did not embrace German History—the good or the bad. It seemed to me as if Nazi Germany still weighed so heavily upon Germans and Germany that, at least in their approach to historiography for the mainstream student, and the country in general, was established to curtail any overt German patriotism or pride in what those great Germans of yesteryear did for their country.

I lived in Germany when they served as the host for the World Cup in 2006, and it was maybe a month before the beginning of the soccer tournament that the Black, Red, and Yellow bands of the German flag appeared as decorations in store windows, on cars, in private gardens, or hanging from both public buildings and private dwellings. It was unheard of before the Cup, at least in the almost eight years I had lived there prior to the event. But I quickly noticed how novice the patriotism was, when I estimated at least 5% of all the flags now flying were actually
displayed accidentally upside down (see photo on previous page, and accompanying footnote below).* It was not my country, but it saddened me. Fast forward to 2014, the year Germany won the World Cup. My children came to visit, then ages 12 and 8.5, and I casually asked them what the German National Anthem was—not only did they not know the name, the tone, or the words, my youngest saw my shock and offered what she said was now the German anthem—and she began with the “Olay, Olay, Olay, Olay” chant so famous from soccer tournaments.

Again, I could not really fault them; they are products of their environment. This year, 2015, I was on the phone helping my son with his homework and this thesis paper came up. He said he “thought” he “heard of Frederick the Great before,” but was “not sure what he did or who he is,” and he had never heard the name Bismarck before. I started thinking about how extremely odd it would be for American kids to not know something similar. I began asking elementary school-aged family members about George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and the American National Anthem. Even the youngest had at least heard of the presidents and knew the name “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

It was through this lens that I approached this work—not trying to justify actions, but just understanding the actions and thoughts behind two men so influential in creating the first state of Germany. I can only hope that at least one of my children inherit my passion for history and will one day study Germany from the true German perspective. Until then, I can only humbly offer this work as a budding American historian trying to connect to some part of his children’s ancestry.

-Noah S. Hutto, October 2015

* The author took this photo in 02 July 2006. The flag pictured is the German flag, flown upside down, in a private garden on the outskirts of Wiesbaden, Germany. Other German flags surrounded it, all but one of those were correctly displayed.
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INTRODUCTION

There is a scene in *The Breakfast Club*, starring the now famous “Brat Pack,” where the kids in detention are sitting in a circle and discussing what infractions they committed that landed them this particular Saturday Detention. Brian, the caricature of the stereotypical “brainy” smart kid, admits that he was failing Shop Class because he failed the task of correctly making an elephant light that turned on when you pulled the elephant’s trunk. Before they can completely finish, Bender, the “criminal,” cuts him off and declares him an “idiot.” Brian, not wanting to look unintelligent, quickly replies, “Well did you know without trigonometry, there'd be no engineering?” Bender, always getting the last word, simply retorts, “Without lamps, there'd be no light.”¹

On the surface, Bender’s counterpoint seems nonsensical, or even out of place in a discussion on a European king from the 18th Century. Yet, there is a simplistic approach under the surface that makes this a profound argument. Without Bismarck leading Prussia, there would be no Germany. Without Frederick, there would be no Prussia. This is the basis for this work: wading through the existing historiography that paints Bismarck as the “hero” behind German unification, and intentionally setting out on the incongruous path to show Frederick did more for a Prussian hegemony that provided progress towards both German nationalism and a strong unified Germany.

Frederick is affirmed for making Prussia “great,” but his policies fall to the shadows when discussion turns to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and German unification. Frederick was essential in placing Prussia in a position to finalize any unification efforts. Bismarck followed

Frederick’s outline, to a point, and along those lines, Germany was officially unified as a nation while he served as the Prussian Minister-President. Conversely, some of his policies conflicted with Frederick’s vision, and tainted the unification, creating a Germany that endured decades of hardship and war before emerging as the Mitteleuropa hegemony envisioned by Frederick the Great. It is the acknowledgement of the greater role in which Frederick the Great played in German unification that accounts for a better understanding of the Prussification that permeates even today in Germany.

Why Frederick?

Following World War II, the Allied Council officially abolished the country of Prussia in 1947. After 75 years, German unification replaced the splintered policies of the individual German states, all states now belonging cogs in the Imperial Germany wheel. Despite its leading role, this included Prussia. At the close of World War II, Germany bore the blame of starting two world wars that devastated Europe. It also suffered the penalties extracted for losing those same wars. Germany fought and lost those wars—yet, almost seven decades since Prussia’s last battle, Prussian militarism topped the list of Allied reasons for Hitler so easily rallying Germans into starting a second world war.² It was clear then, and it is now, that Hitler and his sadistic henchmen permeated all levels of German government via the National Socialists. Still, it was Prussia, a state already all but defunct by 1947, which found its way into the annals of history as a nation specifically targeted by a victorious alliance for abolishment. The main Allied grievance

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with Prussia was the historical record capturing its predilection for militarism.\(^3\)

The last battle waged by Prussia, the state, was the Siege of Paris, ending in January 1871. The siege served as the culminating event of the Franco-Prussian War, in which Prussia led the North German Confederation and other German states in victory over Napoleon III’s France. The Treaty of Frankfurt ultimately established Germany as a nation-state, with Wilhelm I of Prussia crowned German Emperor. With France defeated, Wilhelm was dual-crowned, both King of Prussia and Emperor of a unified Germany, but the latter consumed the former through the demand any new nation places on its leadership. The hardship of serving in both capacities was exactly why King Wilhelm prophesized that the title of Emperor and serving this new Mitteleuropa hegemony equated to Prussia’s own demise.

Although Wilhelm’s implication was the end of Prussia as the sole-ruling state within this hegemony, less than a century later, Prussia was specifically targeted and officially abolished as a state. After all this time, was Prussian militarism really the cause for the Nazification of Germany? Undoubtedly there was another cause for the Allied Council’s knee-jerk reaction, and one needs to look no further than Hitler himself for an answer. Hitler idolized Frederick the Great, at times claiming he was Frederick II reincarnate, and kept an original portrait of Frederick in his bunker.\(^4\) In his infamous Mein Kampf, Hitler invokes the name of Frederick the Great, Otto von Bismarck, and/or Prussia over 110 times, and does so almost exclusively in a

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flattering manner.\(^5\) He uses these links to Prussian “greatness” as a rallying cry for further action as a continuance of the great Mitteleuropa power they started. His obsession with the Prussian king was so strong that many Germans believed that, even as late as 1945, Hitler could somehow recreate something akin to Frederick’s own “Miracle of the House of Brandenburg” and will a victory even at the door of defeat.

This, in and of itself, still does not besmirch the Prussian Empire. Hitler and the Nazis may have left a stain on German history, but the link from madman to a Prussian king, whose rule ended a hundred years before his birth, should not doom an entire state for removal from the atlas. Because of the Nazis, the Sanskrit symbol of the swastika—for thousands of years meaning, “hope” and “well-being” for Hindu, Buddhists and other eastern religions—became synonymous with evil and death.\(^6\) Surely, those holding that symbol dear as an integral part of their religion took offense, and still take offense, to this perversion of a holy symbol. It is ludicrous then, that Prussia bore the brunt of blame, post-World War II, because of a misguided connection between its historical Machtpolitik and the all-out aggression and racism of the Nazis.

Upon first glance, comparing a thousand-year-old religious symbol to a state may also seem ludicrous. It is, however, important to note that in the eyes of the Prussian nobility, they too were “religious symbols.” As such, the forbearers of Germany would take offense to their connection to the absolute evil and genocide invoked by the Nazis in the name of German and Prussian lineage. At its core, and before Prussian emergence as a power in its own right, the Prussian monarch answered to the Holy Roman Emperor, even after it was established as a kingdom in its own right. It was not until Frederick the Great that the crown was referred to as “King of Prussia,” instead of “King in Prussia.”

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This is key to understanding the rise of Prussia as a great power—from its King serving the Holy Roman Emperor, as did Frederick’s father, to Frederick shunning the ties to the Emperor and setting course for a Prussian-led hegemony with the monarch in the role as the “first servant of the state.” The Hohenzollern family, the royal line of Prussian heirs, felt their royalty was preordained by God, and that they were chosen to execute His will in the best interest of their subjects. Frederick interpreted “the best interest” as more than a secondary role to the Hapsburgs and an Austrian-influenced Germany. Serving as the crux of this work, more discussion on this topic follows, but the mention here occurs as a defense that despite the correlation Hitler and Nazi propagandists portrayed, Frederick the Great stands innocent of pursuing policies that link the Kingdom of Prussia to the militarized German Empire that existed through the first half of the Twentieth Century.

Hitler idolized Frederick the Great; he placed him upon a pedestal as a German patron saint, and the Nazis invoked the name of Frederick as a rallying theme for the common Volk to embrace the “greatness” that was German destiny. Hitler may have even believed he was the reincarnation of Frederick himself—but one thing remains certain: Hitler despised the Prussian aristocracy, further blaming the Hohenzollern family for its role in “allowing” the “Stab in the Back” that came from the Weimar Republic suing for peace to end World War I. This famous Nazi propaganda also served as motivation for Germany and a key recruitment tool for the Nazi Party, with Hitler expropriating the 1918 sentiment that the German people and its military suffered from the this purposeful “Stab in the Back.” His need for fabricated enemies and forces working against himself and Germany was in contradiction to his idolization of Frederick the Great.

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7 This is found in numerous works on Frederick the Great or those works dealing with Prussia pre-Frederician period.

8 Hitler, Mein Kampf, Location 11097, Amazon Kindle edition.
Kaiser Wilhelm II was still living in exile in the Netherlands after abdicating the throne in 1918 when German defeat in World War I was obvious. He reached out to Hitler when he came to power. He sent a message including the extension of congratulatory remarks, best wishes, and a bid for the reestablishment of the German monarchy within the Third Reich. The last Prussian King of the German Empire, a relative of Frederick the Great, contacted Hitler in 1940, shortly before France would fall. Hitler, showing his obsession with Prussia began and ended only with invoking Frederick the Great when convenient, tipped his hand. When he received Wilhelm’s communication, he declined a reply, declaring only, “What an idiot!”

Hitler’s true motivation remained absolute power for himself and the Nazis, even at the expense of the Prussian monarchy. Prussia, as an individual state, basically evolved into the “capital state” of the German Empire upon German unification in 1871. It was also in that same year, that the prized Prussian military became the foundation for the Deutsches Heer, the Imperial German Army, ending the long, proud tradition of the Prussian Army. Admittedly, peacetime armies were still formed under the four main German kingdoms of Prussia, Bavaria, Saxon, and Württemberg, but it was no longer a “Prussian” Army. Considering the Franco-Prussian War was technically fought by the joint forces of the North German Constitution Confederation, a purely Prussian force had not taken the field of battle since August 1866.

Despite Hitler, the Nazi Party, and the Germans themselves all being held accountable,

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10 Note: The name of the German Army and its sister services undergoes many name changes in its relatively short history. This stems from its categorization as the army, the military, a defense force, or its service to either the Reich (kingdom) or the Bund (federation). When first introduced as the military force for the unified Germany in 1871, it was called the Deutsches Heer, or simply the “German Army.” Some resources will refer to it at this time as the Reichswehr, or the Army of the (German) Empire, but this term was predominately used between 1935-1945 and was subsequently tainted by affiliation to the Nazis. Between the world wars, under the Weimar Republic, the term Reichsheer was used, but again declined in use of historiography due to the affiliation of the word Reich under the Nazis. Following World War II, there were additional changes to the defense force organized under Allied Powers scrutiny, until 1955, the German military was combined into one component and named the Bundeswehr. Under this heading, it enjoyed its 60th year anniversary in 2015.
the Allied Council decided that Prussia, and Prussia Militarism was a root cause of Germany’s
decision. This perversion of Prussia pushed Frederick’s accomplishments towards a unified
Germany even further into the shadows.

The Control Council Law Number 46 provides an overarching condemnation of Prussia,
“The Prussian State which from early days has been a bearer of militarism and reaction in
Germany has de facto ceased to exist.” The 13-page document contains brief steps that outline
the foundation for establishing a democratic Germany including demilitarization and de-
Nazification, followed by democratization, addressing of economic problems as well as
reparations, central organizations, population transfers, territorial reorganization, and finally,
“liquidation of the state of Prussia.” What Law Number 46 does not do, however, is provide
documentation or further description as to what “bearer of militarism” meant, nor does it outline
elements of Prussian coloring outside the lines of an already determined and ongoing de-
Nazification effort.

The Germany that Hitler led into World War II was not a Germany Frederick the Great
would recognize; nor is it possible that he would have understood the rise and power-hunger that
ultimately doomed The Third Reich. A “working class” German became the supreme
dictatorship, “der Führer,” holding absolute power over Germans—especially once the “Night of
the Long Knives” revealed that his power grab was purely for his own personal agendas, and at
the expense of the very Volk he pretended to care about. Even before becoming the King in
Prussia, Frederick wrote Anti-Machiavel, his chapter-by-chapter retort to Machiavelli’s Prince.
Although published anonymously, his Anti-Machiavel attacks the core and principles
Machiavelli outlines are the divine rights and paths of royalty in charge of states.

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12 Ibid., 33-34.
Frederick offers a moral argument that kings are charged with the well-being of their state and their subjects, and that a state assumes the characteristics of its leader.\(^\text{13}\) In the Introduction to his work *Anti-Machiavel*, Frederick outlines how embracing the *Prince* could corrupt the leader, the state and the people:

> I always have regarded *The Prince* as one of the most dangerous works which were spread in the world; it is a book which falls naturally into the hands of princes, and of those who have a taste for policy. It is all too easy for an ambitious young man, whose heart and judgment are not formed enough to accurately distinguish good from bad, to be corrupted by maxims which inflame his hunger for power. If it is bad to debase the innocence of a private individual, whose influence on the affairs of the world is minimal, it is much more to pervert some prince who must control his people, administer justice, and set an example for their subjects; and must, by their kindness, magnanimity and mercy, be someone to be looked up to.\(^\text{14}\)

With hindsight, the danger he mentioned could serve as a prophecy of Hitler. Though, it is the latter portion of the quote that served as the exacting standard for which Frederick strived. He saw this as the guiding principle for himself and weighed every decision he made for Prussia against it.

He did lead Prussia into wars, but he also worked feverishly to overcome domestic issues and to raise Prussia above just “another” German state serving at the beck and call of the Hapsburgs of Austria-Hungary. This, he hoped, would lead to a Prussian hegemony over the German states, and with the resources he inherited, mixed with the situation in Europe, he used the Prussian Autonomy to embrace the doctrine of force. This *Machtpolitik* became his primary diplomatic means, through which he also developed and filtered his domestic policies to reach the end state.

*Why Prussia?*

How, then, did the Allied Council decide Prussia was the last residual issue in German

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\(^{13}\) Frederick the Great, *Anti-machiavel* (1870; repr., [Newark?]: Newark Press, 2013), Locations 60-70, Amazon Kindle edition.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., Locations 64-70, Amazon Kindle Edition.
militarism? Was the condemnation of Prussian monarchs still lingering from the Allies because of Kaiser William’s role in World War I—that is, plunging Germany into war with Austria and igniting a global conflict? Or, was it more deeply rooted? Perhaps, remembering lives and territory lost to past generations, France, Poland, and the Low Countries saw an opportunity to persuade the Council for some revenge on the Hohenzollerns and their Prussian military. Surely, making the link to Prussian militarism across spotted wars of the 1700s and 1800s could find a relative argument in the mid 1940s, could it not?

Regardless of how relative, the converse side of the argument still exists. Despite Hitler’s infatuation with Frederick, his actions were driven by an agenda of hate and genocide, and not specifically for the good of the State and its subjects. One can only assume Frederick, the “Philosopher King,” would detest the very being of “der Führer.” Further, their visions and goals for the German people were polar opposites. Hitler envisioned a “Thousand Year Reich,” driven by power, greed, eugenics, and overt force. He basked in the glory of bringing war to Europe, and sought the destruction of entire races from the world empire he hoped to achieve. Frederick sought only to make Prussia a greater state within Central Europe, uniting the German states under a hegemony that could remove the yoke of the all-but-defunct Holy Roman Empire run by Austria while also suffering the constant maneuvering and whims of the great powers that surrounded the inferior fractured German states. He did see this as a matter of grasping glory for himself and Prussia, but he also saw beyond the glory to the overall potential—a Prussia-led Germany and the need for a role of a Central European power.

Understanding the Allied Council decision to abolish Prussia requires, first, the understanding of Prussia’s rise to power and how it led to the unification of Germany as a nation-state. Many factors were involved in the formation of the German Empire in 1871, but
there were two main figures, both Prussian, behind the realization of a Germany as one nation: King Frederick II, and the Junker-made diplomat, Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck has become synonymous with Germany, with even the most amateur historians aware of the “Iron Chancellor” and his role in bringing about the Second Reich. Less known, however, is the critical role of Frederick II, that is Frederick the Great, in establishing the original foundation for uniting the German states.

The name Frederick the Great is known, and, as was his original intent in dubbing himself “great,”15 so too is his military prowess and the legend of the exacting Prussian military. Less popular are his tireless efforts for domestic reform for his subjects, the periods of peace that were of a greater majority than his times at war, and his own iron willed diplomacy in dealing with Austria specifically and Europe generally. These latter efforts, combined with his initial wars for expanding Prussian territory and influence were vital to the eventual unification of Germany. Before Frederick created the Prussia he envisioned, Germany was splintered into more than twenty-five states that shared little outside a common language. With so many differing approaches to ruling—taxation, trade, domestic policies, diplomacy, military size and use, alliances, and Christian sectarianism—Central Europe was a spider web of conflicting ideals. They were anything but united, save the loose hold of the ailing Holy Empire. The latter providing a channel for subservience to an overlord rather than it was any unifying effort.

Their eventual unification was not a foregone conclusion in the 1700s, including Frederick’s ascension to the Prussian throne, nor during the early mid-1800s, when Bismarck was in power. The historiography of Prussia is thorough in capturing its early history, its rise under Frederick, his diplomacy, and Prussian military precision. It continues with the Napoleonic

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15 Frederick II, understanding the relative freedom of printed speech he allowed in Prussia, he “leaked” exploits of his “great achievements” on the battlefield and by the time he arrived back in the capital, the newspapers had already printed articles relating to the return of their king, Frederick the Great.
Wars, Prussia’s initial defeat and eventual resurgence, the domestic revolt that brought about a constitutional monarchy, and of course, the rise of Bismarck until the final crowning of a German Emperor. Where it falls short, however, is making the link of the pre-Napoleonic Era Prussification of Central Europe that altered the course of German states. A “United States of Germany” eventually happened because of the herculean efforts of Frederick the Great, despite almost a century passing between his death and the crowning of Emperor Wilhelm I in 1871.

Bismarck used Frederick’s successful expansion of Prussia as a foundation for his own actions. At times, Bismarck specifically invoked the name of Frederick in a speech or while addressing parliament—arguably not just for the impact of his namesake, but specifically linking his actions or ideals to those of his predecessor.\footnote{William Harbutt Dawson, \textit{Bismarck and State Socialism: an Exposition of the Social and Economic Legislation of Germany Since 1870} [1891] (1891; repr., London: Forgotten Books, 2012), 17, 21, 31 & 92.} Because of his infamous diplomatic abilities and his manipulation of Prussian policies and European statesmen, Bismarck was instrumental in the actual unification of Germany. For this reason, there is vast historiography capturing Bismarck the man, as diplomat, and as the unifier of Germany. Unfortunately, it seems the more works produced on Bismarck, the greater the shadow cast upon Frederick’s role becomes. One historic element consistently absent is the bridge back to the foundation of Prussia as the upstart and the impact that had on Germany. Prussia became a legitimate player in European affairs; it was Frederick’s own concept of Monarchial duties, domestically and internationally, that allowed for Prussian emergence in Central Europe.

The aforementioned historiography bridge that connects Prussia’s rise to power to the eventual unification of Germany has existed partially constructed. Frederick was a historian in his own right, and codified thousands of his thoughts and actions while on the throne. Sadly, as building blocks for unification, they fell to the dustbin after Napoleon ravaged Prussia. As
Bismarck’s political career began, it then left the construction of the bridge abandoned. The connection between Frederick’s founding blueprints exists, but following Bismarck’s actions and setbacks as Germany shouldered the blame for the Great War, and, undoubtedly, started World War II, the evidence is buried. Despite the Nazi tainting of Frederick’s name and accomplishments, and the abolition of Prussia as a state, this bridge is under construction once again. Upon completion here, it will ring clear that Frederick the Great was instrumental in the unification of Germany.
II
DISCUSSION OF EXISTING HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiography of Prussia, its rise, diplomacy, its military precision, and its fall to Napoleon is extensive. Likewise, the historiography existing for Germany, specifically its unification, and the established return of a Germanic Central European power is comprehensive. Combined, the historiography falls into one of three categories: 1) Frederick the Great serving as the main topic with discussion on his direct role on making the small state of Prussia into a legitimate power; 2) Otto von Bismarck as the main topic and discussion of his actions that assured Prussia’s rise and role for a unified Germany; and 3) Prussia or Germany as the main topic, with discussion traversing selected time periods, generally including selected information about both men, but more as a snapshot in time and not as the specific topic. The latter is not an easy task, as German history is much deeper than just Prussia, and more complex beyond just Frederick and Bismarck. What remains unexplored is the link that gives Frederick the nod as the creator of a unified Germany. Once established, it calls for a review of modern German history, with the door cracked open in understanding the true Prussification of Germany.¹

Deutschland für Deutschen, Preußen für Prussen

The generalized historical works help make connections on a grand scale, much like a grade school textbook for Western Civilization connects important events and movements in the development of societies in the West, but often misses the more intricate details that are reserved for undergraduate or graduate level texts. A quick sampling would include Nineteenth-Century Germany: Politics, Culture, and Society 1780-1918; Bismarck and Germany: 1862-1890;

¹ MacDonogh’s Prussia: The Perversion of an Idea is a magnificent work undertaking the backwards “infiltration” of Prussianism by the Nazis, but still falls short in fully crediting Frederick for the grassroots foundation of a unified Germany.
German History, 1770-1866; and The Rise of Brandenburg-Prussia to 1786—all distinctly covering Frederick the Great’s era or Bismarck’s role as the “Iron Willed.” These studies offer definite period-focus, absent further discussion of cause-and-effect outside the periods discussed, as is intended. They are surveys covering specific timeframes or events, but as typical historiography of Germany, it perpetuates the bookend concept that prevents coverage of events before or after that caused something greater than the timeframe at hand. The specific details overlooked, in this case, is the bridge between these two great Prussians, Frederick and Bismarck, and a commonality between their personal quests for glory that elevated Prussia’s status in Europe.

For example, in Bismarck and Germany: 1862-1890, Williamson provides an excellent and brief account of Prussia and lesser German states beginning in 1815, with further discussion of nationalism and political reform as undercurrents to Bismarck’s rise to power. However, there is not a single mention of Frederick II in the entire work—not one reference to the nationalism initially sparked under Frederick. He sets the backdrop to his work with a discussion on nationalism and some subcomponents—liberal and Catholic views of it—but mentions that German nationalism was “born” during the French occupation of Prussia and Austria during 1806-1813. He offers no reference to earlier German nationalism fervor when Frederick was victorious over the combined forces of Europe, including Austria, France and Russia.

Williamson also outlines Austro-Prussian relations, again focusing on 1815 as a starting point,

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3 Williamson, Bismarck and Germany, 5-9. Although the majority of his discussion on nationalism occurs on the pages listed, the entire work was researched, and other references to nationalism appear, but not in relation to Frederick II.

4 Ibid., 5.
but without any reference to the arduous relationship between the two states under Frederick, the three wars over Silesia, or the igniting of the real power struggle between the two states for domination of Germany and its affairs.\textsuperscript{5} This serves as a perfect example of the “bookend,” where the reader of this work begins the story with the “birth” of Nationalism in the early 1800s, while the slant of turbulent Austro-Prussian relations as a power-struggle for Germany “became obvious…in 1853,”\textsuperscript{6} vice immediately upon Frederick’s challenge to a woman inheriting the Austrian crown.

In his two-volume work, \textit{Germany and the Germans}, written in 1894, Dawson suggests, “the book is in no wise a history, but a study of men and institutions,”\textsuperscript{7} and in his first chapter, “Patriotism,” explains that Germany is a new nation, and as such still growing in its patriotic fervor.\textsuperscript{8} Then, slighting any nationalistic pride that Frederick may have induced across the German states, Dawson describes that in understanding political, individual, or collective patriotism within Germany or there is no need “to go further back” than a hundred years.\textsuperscript{9} Dawson is remiss in including some link to patriotism via the initial nationalism that developed under Frederick. This is even more perplexing since this specific work is more a discussion on Germany’s first 25 years as a nation, and so he does refer to Frederick and Bismarck in other instances. In his chapter on the German newspaper press, he relays the “misfortune” that it suffers from strict censorship based on the “Press Law” of 1874 and is observes how far from the relative freedom of press Frederick the Great established as a precedent for Germany under.\textsuperscript{10}

Another great work that alludes to a deeper connection between Bismarck’s political

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 10-11, 24-39. Same as above, further discussions occur outside just the annotated pages, but not in reference to Frederick II.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 10-11.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 1. Specifically, he discusses Patriotism and the new state of Germany on page 1, but the entry in the text substitutes as a summation of his overall theme from the entire chapter, pages 1-21.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 1-2.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 276-280.
movements laid upon the foundation of Frederick’s from a century before is H.W. Koch’s *A History of Prussia*. In his work, the origins of Prussia are discussed briefly, followed by an entire chapter devoted solely to Frederick, then moving into the impact of the Napoleonic Wars and providing a discussion on the Reform Movement and the War of Liberation as the precursor to Bismarck. He offers the slightest of bridges, but not without hesitation or reluctance: “The principle of harmony, of solidarity between state and social structure, formed the foundation of Bismarck’s ‘state socialism’, at its core identical with the concept of the function of the state held by…Frederick the Great.”

It is there, the bridge, but it occurs as Koch approaches his conclusion. It is also offered masked in different venues.

The chapter itself is entitled, “Prussia in Germany,” lending some discussion on patriotism or German nationalism as an extension of Prussification. The above quote appears during a discussion covering both Bismarck’s “survival” of the *Kulturkampf* and Koch’s observation of Bismarck’s view that the “primacy of the state” depended upon “neither the state nor society” becoming victims of domestic or foreign economic or political policies. This, at once, allows for stronger ties to earlier inferences and as a seed of drawing additional parallels in the remainder of his work. For example, Koch outlines Bismarck’s drive for quickly turning military success into “political capital,” as well as the militarization of Germany and the continued *Machtpolitik*, as the natural extension of Prussian diplomatic policy.

Sources and research exist that cover the span of both periods, but as shown, these exist primarily as less analytical works. They leave no room for real comparison of the two key Prussians, nor for the similarities between their concepts and actions. This thesis, however, goes

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12 Ibid., 272-275.
13 Ibid., 269.
14 Ibid., 276.
beyond a comparative biography, in that it looks to explore the similarities and differences that illustrate why Frederick is the true father of a unified Germany, and his concept of a Prussian hegemony in *Mitteleuropa* is more akin to what Germany eventually became. John Lord’s work from 1894, *Two German Giants: Frederic the Great and Bismarck – The Founder and The Builder of German Empire*, implies an analysis specifically discussing more than a superficial link between Frederick and Bismarck. However, it too tackled the subjects almost purely as two completely separate discussions, with too brief an introduction of any given parallels. 15 Perhaps, with a full century between the two men, the want for this comparison is excessive, but Lord’s title and introduction outline that his work will present just that—the missing bridge between “founder” and “builder.”

Historian and author, Tom McGowen, offers the closest link of Frederick’s greater role in his work from 2002, *Frederick the Great, Bismarck, and the Building of the German Empire in World History*. A solid connection is still missing, but it is one of the closest “in passing” reviews of the similarities between the two men. The final paragraph for the transition of discussion from Frederick to Bismarck offers: “He [Bismarck] would grow up to be the man who turned Prussia into a greater power than it was in Frederick’s time, and who would turn Germany into a single unified nation”16—and McGowen’s works are all written specifically for children and young adults. 17 With all the existing historiography, one would expect this missing bridge had been expertly designed and constructed. When one of the clearest connections comes from a historian that targets budding historians, it becomes obvious that Frederick’s “greatness” of

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17 “[He is the] author of more than fifty books for children and young adults…[one of his books] was chosen as a 2000 Honor Book by the Society of School Librarians International in the category of Social Studies, Grades 7-12.” Ibid., back cover.
military escapades, coupled with Bismarck’s “Iron Will,” has obscured the path Frederick blazed for German unification. What follows is the manufacturing and emplacement of this bridge.

*A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand*

At the most basic core, there exists Frederick II and his primary role in the elevation of Prussia as a legitimate power in Europe. There ends any discussion, save a few footnote-like entries, that appeal to a greater sense of the path he blazed ahead of a Prussian dominated German front. Then there is Bismarck’s political rise in a turbulent period in Prussia that sees his heavy-handed diplomacy deal with domestic issues while also extending Prussian influence to such a degree that, eventually, even he forces the course for a German nation.

Obviously not an exact science, and used purely as an initial jumping off point within this context, an index scrub further illustrates the shortcomings of historic works that deal with Frederician or Bismarck’s *Reichs* as isolated events. This is not dealing a one-off condemning blow to the historians or their works, but serves as examples of compartmentalized history obscuring links across the cross-sections. A short list, compiled only of this work’s bibliography—admittedly miniscule in a greater collection of all works on Prussia and Germany—reflects that at least seven of them contain some references to Prussian monarchs, but without mention of Frederick the Great.

This does not imply connections cannot still occur between Frederick’s actions and Bismarck’s, but that without a deeper understanding of events or policies of the pre-Napoleonic Era Prussia, the bridge is not necessarily evident, and perhaps is intentionally obscured by the authors. Some of the implications are conveyed in Bismarck’s actions, his political or diplomatic choices. Others arise through his actions toward, or reactions from, Austrian or French political
maneuvering. Of course, other links to Frederick survive within historians’ descriptions of Bismarck:

He despises these men as a group, these ideologues whom he is fighting, though he recognizes unreservedly that individual leaders among them are men of culture. As regards European affairs, he feels himself to be without qualification their superior. At the same time he suffers from having to struggle unceasingly against his sensitive feeling of honor; he has to learn not to hit back as of old. Hitherto he could attack his opponents openly, throwing all his forces into the battle: fighting when a deputy, from the tribune; and when a diplomatist, in reports and letters. Hence forward he has to conceal his thoughts and plans from the elected of the people, for otherwise they would come to the knowledge of the nations, and new plans would be needed. With his rise to power, his loneliness begins. 18

Save the words, “elected of the people,” this description of Bismarck, from Emil Ludwig in 1927, could just as easily describe Frederick’s initial seven years on the throne. In comparison, the notable Frederick biographer, Thomas Carlyle, in his work from 1885, observes of Frederick something akin to Ludwig’s description of Bismarck. Although, one must always wade beyond Carlyle’s almost poetic-style of narrating:

He is a king every inch of him, though without the trappings of a king. Presents himself in a Spartan simplicity of vesture...[he is] not what is called a beautiful man, nor yet, by all appearance, what is called a happy. On the contrary, the face bears evidence of many sorrows, as they are termed, of much hard labor done in this world, and seems to anticipate nothing but more still coming. Quiet stoicism, capable enough of what joy there were, but not expecting any worth mention; great unconscious and some conscious pride...according to all the testimony. 19

Another description of Frederick that could serve just as easily in an observation of Bismarck is provided in a letter written by a James Harris, later the first Earl of Malmesbury, to the Earl of Suffolk from Berlin, in March of 1776:

We may, in some measure, account for that motley composition of barbarity and humanity which so strongly marks his character... Thus never losing sight of his object he lays aside all feelings the moment that is concerned; and, although as an individual he

19 Thomas Carlyle, History of Friedrich the Second Called Frederick the Great (New York: John R. Alden Publisher, 1885), 1: 9-10.
often appears and really is humane, benevolent and friendly, yet the instant he acts in his Royal capacity these attributes forsake him and he carries with him desolation, misery, and persecution wherever he goes . . . If he has failed in small points, resolution and cunning, employed as the occasion required, and always supported by great abilities, have carried him with success through almost every important undertaking he has attempted . . . He undoubtedly owes this, in great measure, to his superior talents.20

These descriptions allow for a small glimpse into existing historiography that could easily serve as starting points for scholarly comparisons. Without allusion from either historian to the opposite figure of their focus, both men provide descriptions of Frederick or Bismarck that are easily interchangeable. Perhaps this is simply due to the extent of similarities between the two men’s actions.

What of Frederician historiography and the inclusion of Bismarck? Again, not all-encompassing, but even from a minor sampling, one can find discussion, allusion or comparison of the latter. In Frederick the Great And The Rise of Prussia, a work completed before World War I, Reddaway opens and closes with notes about Bismarck and then adds Reddaway’s less than desirable views of Frederick.21 Gerhard Ritter’s Frederick the Great shows twelve entries related to Bismarck, often as a comparison of political aspiration, diplomatic decisions or just overall influence.22 Generally, his allusion to Bismarck is that he served as Frederick’s “heir” in the continuance of an oft-quoted Prussian quip, “Frederick the Great stole Silesia, yet he is one of the greatest men of all time.”23 Staying the course, he later refers to Bismarck as furthering Frederick’s concept of Austrian waning equating to Prussian waxing, and the eventual “Prussianized Germany and an Austro-German Mitteleuropa” proved Bismarck was “the true

23 G. P Gooch, Frederick the Great, the Ruler, the Writer, the Man (1946; repr., Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1962), 10.
heir and disciple of Frederick."\textsuperscript{24} Not an abundance of samples, yet there appears as much, if not more, real connection to Bismarck’s accomplishments in Frederician historiography as there is Frederick within the Bismarckian.

\textit{Fürwahr, er dient Euch auf besondere Weise}\textsuperscript{25}

More analysis is offered in additional works centering upon post-Napoleonic Era Prussia, noting that while Frederick the Great is mentioned, it is more in a passing moment, a minor-detail to flesh out the historian’s work. These rationed details across multiple works, however, fail in the extension of the bridge awaited. One appearance of Frederick within the works on Bismarck is routine. At some point almost every historian alludes to the remarks by anti-Bismarckian politicians that constantly remarked to King William II the foreboding thought—had Bismarck served as Frederick II’s minister, Frederick would never have gained the moniker “the Great.”\textsuperscript{26}

Bismarck alludes to this exact occurrence, claiming that Adolf von Bülow stated “to the effect ‘Frederick the Great would never have been the Great if on his ascension to power he had found and retained a Minister of Bismarck’s importance and authority’.”\textsuperscript{27} Also of importance is that every bibliography on Bismarck tends to “use and abuse” his political accomplishments “for political purposes…[serving] scholars as a martial figurehead during the First World War, as an

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 102 and 348.
\textsuperscript{25} “Indeed, it serves you in a special way.” Hermann Schoenfeld, \textit{Bismarck's Speeches and Letters} (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 35 & 354. This is a line that Mephistopheles says to Dr. Faust in the famous play, and was used in a speech given by Bismarck in January 1864. Used here as tongue-in-cheek description for some of the Bismarckian historiography.
\textsuperscript{26} Fritz Richard Stern, \textit{Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire} (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 437; Erich Eyck, \textit{Bismarck and the German Empire} (1950; repr., New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), 308. As mentioned, this remark or allusion to something similar appears throughout many works on Bismarck. Here, this remark is offered in at least these two works.
ideal Nazi predecessor in the thirties, and as a caricature of everything ‘Prussian’ after 1945.”28 Despite what he was made out to be for others’ purposes, in his own works it is apparent, Bismarck remained Prussian until his death.

In his 549-page work, *Gold and Iron*, Fritz Stern has two mentions of Frederick the Great; the first use is describing Bismarck worrying that he was hopeless on a battlefield, “as Frederick II had done,”29 and the second is the anti-Bismarckian commentary aforementioned.30 There is also the “First Servant of the State” dictum from Frederick that inevitably spills over with some mention among Bismarck historiography as well.31 In Edward Crankshaw’s 414-page work *Bismarck*, he condemns Frederick for despising Germany and Germans, seeking only glory and power, and this just after he mimics the same “First Servant” concept bestowed upon Bismarck: “The idea of disciplined, sacrificial service—service to what? To whom? To the Whole, to the Community, to the State, to the King who embodied the State.”32

How then to explain the embrace of some historians, the *Bismarckphiles*, seemingly turning their backs on any mention of a Frederician influence? The easiest explanation lies with Bismarck himself. Bismarck had no qualms invoking the name of Frederick as needed in speeches during a political motions, and he authorized only an edited version of Frederick’s *Political Testament* for posthumous publication as a way of protecting Frederick the Great’s

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30 Ibid., 437.
honor, but he was no Fredicianophile. Perhaps Bismarckian historiography snubs Frederick because primarily, so too did Bismarck himself. First, Bismarck was the ancestor of a Brandenburg family older than even the Hohenzollerns that he served. In his preserved work from the early 1900s, W.F. Reddaway addresses in his opening remarks where this could have emerged as an issue within Bismarck. He attributes to him this query, “Why should I serve the Hohenzollerns? My family is as good as theirs.” Reddaway again questions Bismarck’s appreciation of Frederick shortly before his work’s conclusion: “A generation which salutes by the title of “Great” the Emperor whom Bismarck was wont to hoodwink and cajole is logically compelled to regard Frederick as superhuman.”

In Bismarck’s autobiography, across two volumes—755 pages of substance—Frederick gains mention worthy enough for indexing just eight times! In his first volume, Bismarck does pay a compliment, stating that Prussia became the fifth greatest power in Europe through his “transcendent genius.” However, this is the exception: earlier he condemns Frederick for his infatuation with France that gave Prussia gaining nothing, no “advantage from this exhibition of power except the satisfaction of her vanity in asserting her position.” He also offers backhanded compliments, such as in one of the other seldom mentions in Volume I; that is, recognition of Frederick’s accomplishment at uniting German states via the League of Princes, followed by his decree that he would create something similar, yet “different” and “more

35 Reddaway, Frederick the Great, 3.
36 Ibid., 350.
38 Bismarck, Bismarck the Man, 1:299.
Within Volume II, there are only three mentions of Frederick, one of which can only be described as a definite “pot calling the kettle black”-instance. Bismarck outlines Frederick’s “desire for historical fame” as a “monarch’s vanity [that] can be a spur to action and to labor for the happiness of their subjects.”40 Ironically, it is in the New Chapters of Bismarck’s Autobiography, a collection of codified thoughts and letters published years after the original autobiography, that contains another 14 mentions of Frederick. Ironic, in that ten of those are either positive in use or genuinely complimenting Frederick’s “genius.”41 Regardless if Bismarck purposely downplayed Frederick’s influence on his own actions, and regardless of Bismarckphiles toeing the same party line, Bismarck is still found admiring the Great One, and a score of his diplomatic achievements and domestic reforms bare truth to legacy as a continuance of Frederick’s work than following his own blueprint. In this vain, Bismarck continued the imprint of Prussification on Germany, yet drifted enough on his own that the original unification suffered additional growing pains.

39 Ibid., 1:111.
40 Ibid., 1:347, and 1:314-315. The use of “desire for historical fame” is as listed in the Index.
41 Bismarck, New Chapters, 40, 70, 100, 225-226, 238, 241-244, & 249.
III

BACKGROUND & TIMELINES

The first glaring difference between Frederick and Bismarck is the positions they held within the kingdom. Frederick’s inherited royalty placed him on the throne as a birthright, living as the crown prince under his father, King Frederick William I. Conversely, Bismarck was born into the Junker class, and was appointed all his diplomatic positions by the kings he served. As a Junker, Bismarck believed that all his actions were in service to the king, and that his priority was to the crown and the crown’s wishes for his subjects. This is an important fact, as it dictated the foundation with which he executed political action once appointed office at a national level.

On Frederick

Frederick was the son of a sadistic father, living a childhood of constant verbal and physical abuse, at one point coming close to life imprisoned or death from his father after a botched attempt to flee Prussia.¹ His ascension to the throne therefore was not guaranteed; his father’s largest complaint was the effeminate pursuits of his son—his embrace of French culture and the Enlightenment, his mastery of the flute and composing, and his constant pursuit of learning and education outside the structured military curriculum.² Despite his earning favor from his father after his remarkable performance on the battlefield, the rekindled father-son

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¹ Tom McGowen, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, and the Building of the German, 10-12. Although McGowen was chosen as the source here based on its simplistic pursuit of Frederick’s childhood, almost any work covering Frederick’s life will at least allude to his troubled childhood at the hands of Frederick William I. Frederick also codified his abuse in letters, see: Frederick the Great, The Confessions of Frederick the Great with Treitschke’s Life of Frederick, ed. and trans. Douglas Sladen (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1915); and for in-depth discussion of his childhood and the harshness of his father, see: Robert B. Asprey, Frederick the Great: the Magnificent Enigma (New York, USA.: Ticknor & Fields, 1986), specifically, 1-138.

² Ibid.
relationship was brief; Frederick William I passed away just five years after promoting his son to
Major General in his army. ³

In May 1740, at just 28-years old, Frederick II became King in Prussia. Upon taking the
throne, he assumed control of a state that was the tenth largest state in Europe, but was scattered
across the map, some territories noncontiguous, and none of it protected or marked by
advantageous terrain features [See Figure 1, below]. With land spread across Central Europe, and

Figure 1. Author’s Map of Prussia, 1740⁴

³ Ibid., 13.
⁴ Map created by author in Microsoft’s PowerPoint, October 2015. Any mistakes or irregularities are his.
both Poland and Austria-Hungary separating the two larger territories, Prussia was always in a perilous state. In his *Mornings*, Frederick offers written guidance to his nephew and successor. The following is advise from one such *Morning*:

As to this point, I am not so well off as I could wish. To convince yourself of which, cast your eyes over the map, and you will see that the greatest part of my territories is dispersed or divided in such a manner, that they cannot mutually assist of each other. I have no great rivers that run through my provinces; some border upon them, but few intersect them.' [Footnote from original, 'The situation, extent, and soil, of the territories of the great Frederick, have been wonderfully changed of late years; changed upon his own principles, too, as will appear hereafter. —Note of eighteenth century translator].

Although coming to power at a time of relative peace in Europe, the history of power struggles diplomatically and militarily left Frederick feeling uneasy and exposed when he first took the reins as king.6

The intent here is not a discussion of support or condemnation of Frederick’s waging of war, or a dissection of whether it was justified. Assuredly, there are enough works that offer points and counterpoints to his aggressiveness. Admitting they were launched preemptively for both security and glory,7 Frederick would not have cared how the historians spun his escapades, so long as they captured his service to his subjects. What is important is acknowledgement of the perilous state that was Prussia upon Frederick’s inheritance of the kingdom. In addition to a small, fragmented state, he gained a mostly untested military force—under Frederick William I, who was afraid to use his expensive military, it was essentially all bark and no bite. Regardless, it was still the envy of Europe for its precise drill and exacting discipline.8 He also inherited a considerable treasury given the smaller stature of the state. Thus was the state of affairs in May

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5 Frederick the Great, *The Confessions of Frederick the Great*, 37-38.
7 Ibid., 82-83 & 92-93.
8 Frederick the Great, *The Confessions of Frederick the Great*, 5.
of 1740, and Frederick was chomping at the bit to “aggrandize” himself and his kingdom.

**On Bismarck**

Otto von Bismarck, born Otto Eduard Leopold—and later, by full honors, Fürst (prince) von Bismarck, Graf (count) von Bismarck-Schönhausen, Herzog (duke) von Lauenburg—was born in April 1815. After a brief stint in the military and a brief attendance at a university, neither one of which he enjoyed, the Junker from a Swabian family helped his father manage the estate after his mother died in 1839. He was content in returning to farm life after his time in the city rubbing elbows with the Berliners. Here, he met his future wife, and having gone through a deeply religious conversion to hardline Protestantism, he subsequently began dabbling in politics to extend his pro-Protestant stances.9

One of Bismarck’s first official political endeavors was his representing “leading citizens” at the United Diet, or the United Legislative Assembly, in 1847, under King William Frederick IV. The Diet convened primarily for discussion of a railroad proposal that could further tax the people. What transpired was a majority of the council expressing their support for the encroaching ideals of liberalism—demanding limitations on the crown countered with the proposal of a constitution placing more power with the people.10 Bismarck was actually in attendance because the official representative fell ill, yet upon hearing the call of the masses, his Prussian aristocratic ties called to him. Questioning the king’s absolute authority was unfathomable to Bismarck, and so he spoke out against his fellow councilmen. He condemned

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the Liberals that spoke, referring to their ideals as “traitorous,” and defended the concept that “the Prussian State was indissolubly bound up with the power and authority of the ruler.”

This served as a watershed moment for both Bismarck’s entrance into politics and his career pursuit of anti-liberalism and pro-absolutism. His embrace of the more traditional concept of monarchial rule contrasted deeply with the rise of “power to the people” ideals emerging across Europe. Bismarck also agreed that the king served the people of Prussia, and as their “servant,” would make Prussia great again. Before his appointment as the Prussian Minister-President on October 8, 1862, Bismarck held many political positions, beginning with his aforementioned seat in the Diet, followed then by: the Prussian Second Chamber (1849); Erfurt Parliament (1850); Minister plenipotentiary at Frankfort (1851); became Life Member of the Prussian Chamber of Peers (1854); Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Russia (1859); and Ambassador at Paris, France (1862).

He is known as the Iron Chancellor, based on his famous “iron and blood” speech given just eight days before officially assigned as the Prussian Minister-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Certainly the great independence of the individual makes it difficult in Prussia to rule with the constitution… A constitutional crisis is not shameful, but honorable. Furthermore we are perhaps too ‘educated’ to put up with a constitution; we are too critical; … there are in the country too many subversive elements who have an interest in revolutionary change. This may sound paradoxical, but it goes to show how difficult it is in Prussia to carry on a constitutional existence… Germany doesn’t look to Prussia’s liberalism, but to its power: Bavaria, Wurttemberg, Baden can indulge in liberalism, but no one will expect them to undertake Prussia’s role; Prussia must gather and consolidate her strength in readiness for the favorable moment, which has already been missed several times; Prussia’s boundaries according to the Vienna treaties are not favorable to a healthy political

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11 Garlepp, *Germany's Iron Chancellor*, 81. This is not a direct quote from Bismarck, but a summary of the large speech he made as outlined by Garlepp.
life; not by means of speeches and majority verdicts will the great decisions of the
time be made—but by iron and blood.\textsuperscript{13}

Much can be said of the growth Prussia enjoyed under Frederick the Great, but it has become
overshadowed by the achievements of Bismarck. Be that as it may, in 1815, Germany was still a
mass of disjointed and fractured kingdoms and states of various sizes, military and financial
strength, and random alliances—thirty-eight in all.\textsuperscript{14} [See Figure 2, below].

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Author’s Map of Prussia, 1862\textsuperscript{15}}
\end{figure}

Referencing the same dual-policy with Austria that troubled Frederick, while also
acknowledging his predecessor’s achievements, Bismarck wrote in his \textit{The Man & The
Statesmen} retrospectively, “The Gordian knot of German circumstances was not to be untied by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Williamson, Bismarck and Germany, 125.
\item \textsuperscript{14} McGowen, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, and the Building of the German Empire, 63.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Map created by author in Microsoft’s PowerPoint, October 2015. Any mistakes or irregularities are his.
\end{itemize}
the gentle methods of dual policy, [and] could only be cut by the sword...."\(^{16}\) He continues his discussion on Prussian strength and the vitality of it serving as the driving force of German unification, or at least united in spirit under a “Prussian hegemony,” and further his praise for Frederick: “Prussia was nominally a Great Power, at any rate the fifth. The transcendent genius of Frederick the Great had given her this position, and it had been re-established by the mighty achievements of the people in 1813...Prussia’s material weight did not then [by 1815] correspond to her moral significance and her achievement in the war of liberation.”\(^{17}\) Like Frederick, Bismarck too was awaiting the opportunity to bask in personal glory, while bringing fame to his king, and prestige to his beloved Prussia.

Men of War, Men of Peace

Despite the eighty years separating their rise to power, both men inherited a troubled state seeded with unique challenges. Domestic reforms were necessary; while the handling of political situations as the absolute authority (for Bismarck, acting on behalf of his liege) were seconded only by the greater concern of diplomatic matters of a state surrounded by unsure friends and potential enemies. Sometimes painted as monsters, at other times as god-like, the controversial decisions of both Frederick and Bismarck will inevitably continue. However, no one can deny their incredible ability to govern, to instill national pride, or their absolute devotion to the state.

They both professed they were, first, servants to the state, their actions as men of power all for the glory of Prussia and Prussians. They both recognized the Prussian military was the key to this success, and through investment in continued military might, they elected to follow a policy of Machtpolitik. They both understood the conflict with Austria that must endure if

\(^{16}\) Otto von Bismarck, Bismarck the Man, 1:319.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 1:320.
Prussia was to lead the German states and their affairs. They both teetered between coolness and conflict with France, understanding the need for their alliance while keeping French involvement in Germany at bay. However, in the bid for supremacy over the German states, both men found their justification [albeit heavily disputed] for attacking Austria first and then later fighting against France.

The focus of this work does not allow for lengthy discussion on the military escapades of these Prussians, but instead focuses upon the similarities between the political decisions they made—including the initial use of the Prussian military for both personal and national glory—as well as a power base to then apply accompanying domestic policies and diplomacy. The quick comparison below coupled with the knowledge that both men wanted war, and ensured their wars began when they wanted, suffices to link the their military campaigns [see Timelines, Figure 3, on page 34].

Within both of their first four years of responsibility for Prussian policy, they started and won two wars, including victories over Austria. Although it took Bismarck a third of the time as Frederick, nine years and 28 years respectively, both men then defeated France, and went on to solidify Prussian dominance in Central Europe. This dominance allowed them the luxury to focus on domestic policy and adjust their diplomatic means as they deemed necessary. For Frederick, the end of the Seven Years’ War (and the 3rd Silesian War) guaranteed Silesia and showed Prussia was no longer the lapdog to the Austrian Emperor. This eventually led to the Prussian-led Deutsche Fürstenbund (the German League of Princes). For Bismarck, it produced the end of the Franco-Prussian War and the official unification of Germany.

Granted, Frederick basically gave himself the moniker “the Great” after his initial

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military success and Bismarck is known for the wars waged and the spider web of diplomatic alliances that he brokered, but little credit is really given to either man outside their aggressive European diplomacy. Both men oversaw empires that experienced more years of domestic reforms and years of peace than they spent directing troops on the fields of battle. Frederick was the King of Prussia for 46 years, out of which he was engaged in battle for less than 10 total years across three wars. For his part, Bismarck was “in office”—in a capacity to push for war—for just under 30 years, during which, Prussia was at war less than 24 months! [See Figure 3, on following page].
Figure 3. Key Points Timeline Comparison of Frederick and Bismarck

*If reading this work on electronic media, and you were directed here by imbedded hyperlink: click HERE to return to Page 32; or click HERE to return to page 67.

19 Table created by author in Microsoft’s PowerPoint, October 2015. Any mistakes or irregularities are his.
IV

PRUSSIFICATION THROUGH DOMESTIC AND DIPLOMATIC REFORMS

Historically speaking, most revolutions begin as a grassroots movement—the basic collective of citizens voice unhappiness, concern, or just a general want for something better or for something new. The Enlightenment and France’s Glorious Revolution; Germany’s public outcry to “Ban the Bomb” and minimize the nation’s armed forces in the 1980s; the current involvement of the Mortgage Victims’ Association in Spain preventing mass evictions due to Spain’s failing economy and its impact on more citizen involvement in political activities;¹ and the global “black net” organization, “Anonymous” using cyber warfare to both undermine governmental authority and interrupt terrorists organizations, all serve as examples of grassroots activities that brought substantial changes to society. With his domestic reforms and his unabashed militaristic approach to diplomacy, Frederick sowed the seeds of a Prussian spirit that spread through Germany. The final unification of all German states may have occurred under Bismarck, but make no mistake that Frederick, serving as the “Father of Germany,” set in motion a revolution that through killing the name of Prussia itself, eventually bore fruit.

The following section will provide the backdrop for the reforms Frederick initiated while also demonstrating the daily oversight with which he emplaced and administered them. These reforms are instrumental to the foundation of the initial Prussification that occurred as Frederick provided the impetus for his kingdom’s hegemony over Germany. His work, surviving the Napoleonic Wars, saw the rise of Bismarck—and through embracing his own Prussian lineage and devout service to sovereign and country brought Prussian ideals back to the forefront of Mitteleuropa. Frederick’s initial work and how it was followed by the political actions of

Bismarck will assuredly connect the dots of the Prussian psyche nestling in the bosom of Germany on the dawn of its unification.

Like Prometheus molding mankind from clay, so too did Frederick endeavor to mold a Prussian hegemony in his own image—and just as Prometheus set out to trick the gods for the betterment of his creation, so too did Frederick make and break alliances with the major European powers, as he saw fit all to better his creation: Prussia. Fortunately, for Frederick, he died before he endured the torment befallen upon Prometheus, missing the rise of Napoleon and France at the expense of Prussia. Bismarck arrived a century later, Prometheus reincarnate, to once again mold Prussia in Frederick’s image and using his “Iron Will” and silver-tongue of diplomacy, “tricked the gods” in a fashion that led to the exact Prussian hegemony of Frederick’s dream. This hegemony had a name, despite its Prussian birth—it was Germany.
Frederick, the Principal Servant of the State

Despite his acknowledgement that Frederick was essentially more French than German in his ideals and embrace of culture, the German historian, Gerhard Ritter is quick to argue that once he became King, Frederick focused all efforts through a prism of patriotism.² He further references Frederick’s *On Love of the Fatherland* and the personification of Germany as the father of the kindred spirit that he himself is subservient to— and in kind is in service to its people.³ The former claim that everything was accomplished via patriotism is probably a bit of a stretch, but as a theme, it is constant throughout all of Frederick’s memoirs and preserved correspondence. He once advised, “Rulers should always remind themselves that they are men like the least of their subjects… Therefore, he should perform with care the duties connected with

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³ Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 61. It should be noted that in this context Frederick is writing on behalf of the “personified fatherland” and not using these words in the explicit possessive form “me.”
these offices. He is merely the principal servant of the State.”

Immediately upon his ascension, Frederick made two things clear to the ministers he “inherited” from his father. The first was that he had plans for reforms beyond what Frederick William I established, or even dared envision, and the second was he planned on exacting these changes as the principal executor, caring little for the ministers involvement. As far as Frederick was concerned, his ministers should be relegated the most menial of administrative tasks. He also felt driven to receive as much information as possible as to the goings on of everything in his kingdom—he felt the flow of information directly to him, and not filtered through ministers, were the key to Prussia’s success. In this, he was vigilant, epitomizing his own adage that the sovereign served his subjects only through serving as “the foremost judge, general, financier, and minister of his country, [and] not merely for the sake of his prestige.”

However, he was also aware that “sound reasoning” was the driving factor behind any and all reforms, and in some cases, he found no need to necessarily reinvent every Prussian administration system. He realized the degree of stagnation and unimaginativeness in its execution by those in office. As a preventative measure, he simply placed himself at the head of all affairs, and he felt confident that some of the systems would sort themselves out without overarching reforms. Essentially, his government reform centered around four principal points: the army, justice, finance, and policy.

For this work, concentration relies more upon non-military reform, yet still allowing for

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7 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (“the Great”),” Gooch, Frederick the Great, 279; Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II (“the Great”) (1752)."
the links between Frederick’s military action and the reforms that occurred before, after, or because of said action. Frederick admittedly concentrated a disproportionate amount of time and resources to his Army, including his intention that any reforms would essentially play second fiddle to army expenditures. In his *Political Testament* to his heir, he advised that “finance, internal administration, policy and defense are so closely interlinked that it is impossible to deal with one of these branches while passing over the others,” and that “all measures” in regards to reform must be in collaboration with military, without which the strength and power of the state lay in peril.

Although considered a warmonger by some historians, Frederick reigned over Prussia with more years of peace than war. His reforms were in motion from the outset of his ascension. For example, he ended the use of torture as a matter of recourse in criminal law, and that policy continued until his death. At the base of his reforms lay a true desire for two objectives. First and foremost was overcoming what he felt was a slight to his family and placing Prussia “on the map” as a legitimate and great state in Europe. The second was his embrace of tolerance, serving as an extension his abhorrence of religion and his embrace of the philosophic concepts of humanity and reason.

In 1756, a French envoy having lived for months in Prussia described Frederick’s kingdom in the following way: “Toleration in Prussia is universal, unqualified, and absolute.

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10 Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 75.
11 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II (“the Great”) (1752).”
12 Ibid.
13 One such example is the hostile tone in which any mention of Frederick invokes in Edward Crankshaw’s *Bismarck*, as alluded to earlier.
This is the most tolerant state in Europe.”\textsuperscript{15} The peace and livelihood he felt he brought to Prussia he envisioned for all of Germany. Shortly before his death, he instrumented the League of Princes, and although it ultimately proved a failure, he intended it as the first motion in extending peace and prosperity, in “rais[ing] the standard in the aid of the chief of the Germanic body.”\textsuperscript{16} For Frederick, reforms for his citizens, albeit with his serving as “the brain” of the entire administration, were the true path to a Prussian hegemony over the German states.\textsuperscript{17}

Without focusing on pros and cons, or success or failure on a grander scale, the following discussion allows for a better understanding of Frederick’s reforms in the realms of justice, finance, and both domestic and foreign policy. Herein lies the foundation of the Prussification of Germany.

\textit{...and Justice for All}

He began reforms in the arena of justice and legal reform from the outset of his ascension to the throne. He condemned the barbaric and crude justice system he felt he inherited, expressing that they “called loudly for reform; as well in the persons of the judges, advocates, and attorneys, as in the laws themselves.”\textsuperscript{18} He made great gains working with, and through, one of the few ministers he felt was his equal in drive and intelligence.\textsuperscript{19} In the compiled works of Frederick’s \textit{Confessions}, exists the basis for the justice system that he intended for Prussia:

\begin{quote}
To our subjects we owe justice, as they owe respect to us. By this, I mean …that we must do justice to all men, and especially to our subjects, when it does not overset our own rights, or wound our own authority; for there ought to be no sort of equality between the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Frederick the Great, trans., \textit{Posthumous Works of Frederic II}, 2: 41.
\textsuperscript{17} Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II ("the Great"); Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II ("the Great") (1752)."
\textsuperscript{18} Frederick the Great, trans., \textit{Posthumous Works of Frederic II}, 2: 2.
\textsuperscript{19} In reference to Cocceji, one example appearing in a letter Frederick wrote to Cocceji’s widow, appearing in: Frederick the Great in \textit{Anecdotes and Characteristics of Frederick the Great, Selected and Translated from Eight Original Vs in the German Language, (Compiled After His... Civil and Officers, v 1 Volume 1 of 2 (1789; repr., n.p.: Gale ECCO, Print Editions, 2010), 108-109.
\end{footnotes}
right of the monarch and the right of the subject or slave. But we must be firmly impartial and just when the point is to settle a matter of right between one subject, whatever he may be, and another. This is an act which is alone enough to make us adored.\textsuperscript{20}

Through this lens, his first step in legal reform came just weeks into his kingship: The abolishment of torture. As one of his first acts, this may have been a byproduct and lashing out at his deceased father; surely the memory of watching his friend put to death by his father as punishment for trying to help Frederick escape still lingered. He felt that punishment for infractions should be swift, but not excessive, and specifically, that “violence should never displace the laws. It is better that a sovereign should be too mild than too severe.”\textsuperscript{21}

Regardless, he felt that abolishing torture would set the stage for further reforms, and would serve the justice system by clearing up any confusion between true guilt and the innocent.\textsuperscript{22} Frederick knew the key to legal reforms lay in the establishment of clearly written laws, easily understood, and therefore, easily enforced. Further, he felt that the existing laws were so full of superfluous language that they were easily taken advantage of, causing “the weak” to fall “prey to the powerful and the cunning,” or worse, allowing for stagnation, corruption, or needless protraction of lawsuits among his officials.\textsuperscript{23}

The Minister of Justice, Samuel Freiherr von Cocceji, was the man Frederick counted on extensively for ensuring these reforms occurred, and he felt Cocceji mirrored what he felt was the key to fairness for all his subjects, was. Cocceji felt that his king’s assessment was exactly what the kingdom needed,\textsuperscript{24} and together they began creating a system that they felt forced the

\textsuperscript{20} Frederick the Great, \textit{The Confessions of Frederick}, 49.
\textsuperscript{21} Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (“the Great”)."
\textsuperscript{22} Giles MacDonogh, \textit{Frederick the Great: A Life in Deed and Letters}, U.S. ed. (New York: St. Martin, 2000), 140.
\textsuperscript{23} Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (“the Great”)."
\textsuperscript{24} MacDonogh, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 212.
legal system to protect the people against injustices and the “grasping greed of lawyers.” The need for even a greater reform, the tightening of laws and the presence of additional ministerial, and of course Frederick’s direct, involvement emerged in 1746. Frederick’s *Privilegium de non appellando* decree produced twofold results: Imperial law loosened across all Prussian provinces, essentially equating to an “opt out” option of imperial justice and appeals system tied to Austria via, but while producing liberation from German Law, it now required that Prussia have its own.

Frederick felt he had the correct principal concept and the right man for the task. He described Cocceji as “a man of integrity, whose virtue and probity were worthy of the noble ages of the Roman republic,” and he knew that together they would produce the essential Common Law. This was no simple task, but in Frederick’s words, his goal was quite basic, the creation of a “Common Law based on common sense and the constitution.” Together they believed that natural equity was the foundation of true justice within the state. Any new law was written and codified with haste, and the expectation of expedited, yet precise, concise judgment and execution of justice was demanded in turn.

The *Privilegium de non appellando* decree of 1746 set in motion province-based reforms in the form of the *Codicis Fridericiani Pomerancuni* of 1747 and *Codicis Fridericiani Marchici* of 1748. These culminated in a Prussian-wide criminal justice system and codification of law—the *Codex Friderici* was established across all provinces by 1749. Although more of a testament to Cocceji’s brilliance, the *Codex Friderici* owes its existence to Frederick in the

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25 Ibid.
26 MacDonogh, *Frederick the Great*, 211, 182.
27 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (“the Great”)."
29 Ibid., 212.
30 Ibid., 214; Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 167.
form of both his astute observation that the existing system was inert and for lending the interest and approval of his royal decree.31

In Prussia, justice now lay in the hands of the government, with subjects and their fair treatment as the centerpiece. No longer were individual or private interests the driving factor behind closed doors and intentional labyrinths of corruption. Under these codes, training was required for judges and lawyers, judicial appointments became merit-based, and lawyership became an occupation—no longer a secondary employment, but an occupation requiring schooling and answerable to government officials. Litigation deadlines were codified, keeping consistent with Frederick’s aversion to idleness, they were set as one year for total resolution, and the courts were consolidated among a easily defined hierarchy for cases requiring special circumstances or higher level oversight.32 It was this latter attribute that opened the way for the Prussian initiative of legal policies and ideals to eventually become commonplace throughout European courts.33

Frederick rightly credits Cocceji: “This sage of the laws undertook the painful and delicate work with so much zeal that, after one year's assiduous industry, the sovereign courts of justice, purged of those men by whom they had been disgraced, were supplied with virtuous magistrates; a new code of laws [for the State].34 As will be discussed further under the policy section, he believed the true function of the king was not necessarily the establishment of law, 

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31 Walther Hubatsch, Frederick the Great of Prussia: Absolutism and Administration (Men in Office) (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1975), 222.
34 Frederick the Great, trans., Posthumous Works of Frederic II, 2: 2.
but the protection and preservation of the state’s laws. Essentially, however, through his justice reforms and codification of simplistic law, Frederick brought Prussia out of the Middle Ages, and provided a model for Germany to follow.

**Finances: the Blood and Sweat of the People**

Frederick was specifically involved in many aspects of Prussian economic policy and the management of its finances; this aspect of Prussian administration was second only to his involvement with his military. He was adamant that the state treasury, built through taxation, represented the “blood and sweat of the people,” and vowed never to waste a penny. He further believed that the key to successful sovereign financial oversight was “exact and detailed knowledge” of the strengths and weaknesses of the state itself, and a full comprehension of its resources, its economic value with international trade, and the very character of its subjects.

Frederick talks a good game about not wanting to burden his subjects, but further analysis of his own writings reveals the desired end state for his these reforms—financial liberation for Prussia, specifically for its military and thus the maintenance of his Machpolitik. This sought after liberation was from both the Dutch money market and the reliance on English and French goods, ensuring Prussia was independent from any foreign assistance during both times of peace and war. He embraced finance, not as a mere observation of figures but acting upon deficiencies and ensuring prosperity of the state, and outlined that such dependency on the Great Powers crippled the lesser state—even admitting in his memoirs that it was in some degree  

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35 MacDonogh, *Frederick the Great*, 346.  
36 Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 172.  
37 Ibid., 152. The quote, “blood and sweat of the people,” is attributed to Frederick through the author’s work, but no additional citation is provided as to its source.  
38 Frederick the Great, “Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (“the Great”).”  
39 Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 172.  
40 Ibid., 173-176.
Maria Theresa’s yoke of financial burden to England that not only accelerated her loss of power and prestige, but allowed his annexation of Silesia.41

Prussia did not enjoy income from colonies, from a Prussian-based or sponsored company, or a national bank as many other European nations did, yet, Frederick was aware that heavy taxation of his subjects would produce meager subsidy for preservation—in Prussia’s case, namely its military.42 He concentrated on a systematic trade policy, more or less, the foundation of mercantilism. This “methodical cultivation of modern industry” was achieved through his establishment of state-supervised artisans, loans, subsidies, and recruitment and relocating of specialized workers throughout the kingdom. This was then backed with state-supervised and enforced trade regulations, wages, and working conditions, and encompassing tariff and import/export restrictions on foreign goods. Not every concept was successful, and Frederick admits that “not all was gold,” but his financial and economic reforms formed the basic underpinnings of modern industrialization that later consumed the European states.43

Like his legal reforms, he explained to his heir that he must understand economics, equating them to “the nervous system of a country,” and advising through his Political Testament, that, “if you understand them you will always be the master of everything else.”44 Like the justice system he inherited, he was so unnerved by the incompetence of the General Directory handling the state’s finances, that upon discovering an embezzlement of over 40,000 thalers, he finally revisited his predecessor’s Instructions of 1722 with a line-by-line revision. He decreed his Instruction of 1748, aimed at castrating the General Directory’s interfering in Prussian economics. Even then, he continued secret financial ministry reforms while

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41 Gooch, Frederick the Great, 279.
42 Ibid.
43 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 172-174.
44 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II (“the Great”) (1752)."
consolidating wealth under the created “Royal Disposition Fund.” \(^{45}\) This fund was drawn from new revenues of taxes—on lotteries, mail, state-sponsored monopolies on tobacco and coffee—along with additional indirect taxation, and once he felt it provided the cushion he needed, he replaced the General Directory, assigning himself as financial administrator for the state in 1766.\(^{46}\)

As he looked for ways to improve Prussia’s economy outside of abolishing corruption, he concentrated greatly on farming and agriculture as additions to mercantilism. He declared that a sovereign’s duty was the management of the “cultivation of the soil,” while also providing, “an abundance of food for the people, [and to] encourage industry, and further commerce.”\(^{47}\) This amounted to his emplacing state oversight in farming and agriculture as—which served in increasing the amount of planting and along with rotation of crops, abolished night grazing and established stall feeding, and added involvement in livestock breeding and introducing new vegetable crops for production.\(^{48}\)

As is quickly noticeable of Frederick, there was no facet of Prussian administration he felt was too miniscule to warrant his oversight. He was intricately and passionately involved in every facet of administration from both the national and provincial levels. In regards to economic affairs, Robert Asprey provides a great summation of just how imbedded Frederick was:

> [He oversaw] selecting provincial officials, awarding civil pensions, organizing new departments, founding new industries and expanding old ones, financing land reclamation and colonization, procuring foreign artisans and tradesmen, constructing new canals and improving old ones, dredging new harbors, reorganizing Berlin police, improving postal services and roads, refining customs and excise procedures, regulating forests and mines,

\(^{45}\) Hubatsch, *Frederick the Great of Prussia*, 152-153; Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 151.

\(^{46}\) Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 151-152.

\(^{47}\) Frederick the Great, “Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (“the Great”).

\(^{48}\) Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 178.
investigating new crops, and encouraging maritime trade.\textsuperscript{49} However, he was not just involved—meddling for the sake of placing the royal stamp on projects so he could attach his namesake—many of his reforms proved beneficial to Prussian economics.

His involvement specifically in grain, even if initially established only as an extension of his managing military affairs, proved successful and showed his progressive approach to overall economic reform. The degree to which Frederick administered even this one area of commerce is captured in his Political Testament of 1768:

I have had calculations made in my state which tell me how much grain each province consumes, how large its surplus is, and how much it needs to import to feed its inhabitants. To ensure that this information is as precise as possible a register has been compiled for good, average and bad harvests. From this I can estimate when the sale of grain should be allowed and when its export must be prohibited.\textsuperscript{50}

The analyst of all the kingdom’s grain supply and demand from these registers allowed for his determining the correct amount of storage and export. This lessened impact on military operations and decreased the practice of price gouging of imports from the foreign states. Through this management for military use during campaigns, his system led to a surplus during peace that allowed for state-set prices and state-sponsored “buys” from the farmer’s when the demands were not as high.\textsuperscript{51}

Another area showing Frederick’s ability for adapting his administration based off the knowledge of his state and its people was the inventive use of gained lands and land reclamation projects with a “cross-pollination” colonization and offering immigration incentives. Actually, the reclamation of land began under his father, Frederick William I, but was not pursued nearly

\textsuperscript{49} Asprey, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 267.
\textsuperscript{50} Hubatsch, \textit{Frederick the Great of Prussia}, 59. Although the author of this current work had access to a great portion of Frederick’s Political Testament, and his Posthumous Works, the copies were not 100% complete, nor were they annotated properly if they were the Political Testament of 1752, or of 1768, or if they were the original redacted version (via Bismarck) or the full version as originally written. For this specific quote, the author felt it best to use it verbatim as provided by Hubatsch.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.; Ritter, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 178.
as enthusiastically as it was under Frederick. Specifically, he concentrated the efforts in the Oderbruch area along the west bank of the Oder and along the Netze. By 1753, the project produced 10,000 hectares that were prepared to receive upwards of 1200 settlers.\textsuperscript{52} He also financed projects for clearing sections of the Pomerania and Old Mark forests for new settlements, although they did not prove as successful as the reclamation expenditures.\textsuperscript{53}

Using the cleared and reclaimed land, along with a concentrated effort of repopulating those villages destroyed or suffering from under population following his wars, he instituted a colonization policy. In total, the two former efforts produced some 4000 colonists and some 20 villages.\textsuperscript{54} However, Frederick did not treat this akin to some American territory gold rush, allowing any adventurous family to partake, instead, he established guidelines. The first, an incentive, the new inhabitants would only have to pay taxes, or rent, but they would not incur any of the feudal services experienced in other areas of the kingdom. The second, was a call for specific trades or skillsets as annotated as shortages throughout Prussia, in this way he was appealing to non-Prussian artisans to further supplement goods, services, and at large, the economy. This call was answered in the form of many Catholic and Jewish immigrants, enjoying Frederick’s religious tolerance (discussed in more detail later in the following section), and further helped spread religious and cultural diversity in both new and old territories alike.\textsuperscript{55}

Additionally, these new villages were later converting into “manufacturing colonies” for his mercantilism system.\textsuperscript{56}

The annexing of additional land and duchies during his reign naturally added to the

\textsuperscript{52} MacDonogh, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 181; Asprey, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 359-360.
\textsuperscript{53} MacDonogh, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 181.
\textsuperscript{54} Asprey, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 359-360.
\textsuperscript{55} MacDonogh, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 181; Frederick the Great, “Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (“the Great”).”
\textsuperscript{56} Asprey, \textit{Frederick the Great}, 361.
income of the state. Silesia, the prize that started both his reputation for aggression and the beginning of his “Greatness,” was the largest contributor on this behalf. The acquisition of Silesia added in Frederick’s own estimation, “three millions six hundred thousand crowns to his revenue”; and of course, he is also quick to equate finances to military strength, adding, “the greatest part of this money was employed in the increase of his army. It then consisted of one hundred and six battalions, and one hundred and ninety-one squadrons.”⁵⁷ It was not just the immediate gains enjoyed during acquisition of more territory, but also the long-term gains once fully ingrained into his emerging and reformed state—especially in the case of Silesia.

Salt monopolies produced two-thirds of Silesia’s 687,000 thalers in the statement of 1745/6, and by 1756, Silesian accounted for 45% of Prussian exports—approximately 10 million thalers. Similar gains were made after acquisition of other duchies and areas as well, but none matching the return on investment from Silesia.⁵⁸ For example, ship building in coastal provinces—like East Friesland, where he expanded the harbor and overhauled naval goods exports, accounting for a revenue of 300,000 thalers a year by 1756. Colonization combined with acquisition was seen by the boom in production in the Silesian capital, with a sharp increase across multiple goods from mining, linen weaving, glass and pottery wares of Breslau.⁵⁹

Frederick remarked in 1752 that the “number of subjects makes the wealth of the state, Prussia was now able to consider herself twice as powerful as she had been in the last year of [his father, King] Frederick William.” By 1756, Prussia estimated 5.3 million people, just over double the population of the state when he ascended the throne in 1740.⁶⁰ Without economic

⁵⁷ Frederick the Great, trans., Posthumous Works of Frederic II, 1:174. Note that in Frederick’s manuscripts capturing his personal historiography, he intentionally writes in the third person as to not dilute the presentation of “facts” as recorded by himself. The uses of “he” and “his” therefore, are not in error.

⁵⁸ MacDonogh, Frederick the Great, 180; Frederick the Great, trans., Posthumous Works of Frederic II, 1:220.

⁵⁹ MacDonogh, Frederick the Great, 180.

⁶⁰ Asprey, Frederick the Great, 361-362. No source provided by author for quote attributed to Frederick.
math relying purely on a growth in population, overall, his financial reforms were positive—at least in term of gains during his reign and the Prussian military. In 1740, the annual revenue accounted for approximately 7million thalers. despite the ebb and flow that any economic reforms sustain and the first two cost of the Silesian Wars, Frederick proved his financial merit.

Through an apparently genuine concern, he set forth the lowering of taxes in areas that were unnecessary or overly “burdensome” to the lower classes, while sustaining financial nobility privilege, and punishing and/or removing government officials failing in or abusing their positions. Following the first two of his wars, he admitted that he had all but bankrupted himself, and within this also learned applicable lessons that furthered his reforms. By the close of 1745, the Prussian treasury was listed as 2300 thalers—a far cry from the 9million thalers in the till from Frederick William. But, through his grasp on the state’s finances, by 1748, his army was once again at full strength and combat ready; by 1749, he resumed payments to England on the Silesian mortgage and had necessary funds to pay it in full by 1752. Just four years after a nearly empty treasury, the Prussian large treasury housed approximately 6.2 million thalers—and by the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War, he accumulated 20million thalers.

However, despite the initial profit and the return of the treasury, there were still great demands on Prussian economics. Frederick reminisced:

While attentive thus to politics, the king did not neglect the interior government of his states: the fortifications in Silesia advanced rapidly; the grand canal of Plauen was cut, to obtain a short communication between the Elbe and the Öder; the port of Stettin had been deepened, and the channel of the Swine rendered navigable. Silk manufactures sprang up; the insect which produces that precious material became a new source of wealth to the inhabitants of the country, and every door of industry was thrown open. The academy of sciences was renewed; Euler, Lieberkuhn, Pott, Marggraf, became its

61 Ibid., 144.
62 Gooch, Frederick the Great, 280.
63 Frederick the Great, trans., Posthumous Works of Frederic II, 1:220.
64 Asprey, Frederick the Great, 358-359.
ornaments; and Maupertuis, so famous for his knowledge, and his voyage to Lapland, its president.65

Unfortunately for both Frederick and Prussia, this canvas of “a promised rose garden” does not accurately reflect the final state of financial affairs. According to Walther Hubatsch, Frederick remains heavily criticized for his mercantilism, and even more so for his involvement in every facet of state administration (Staatsdirigismus).66 Granted, he imbedded himself into every facet of the state’s functionalities, but through his orders and decrees, there was a method, a means, and a goal. He made mistakes, but still served as a “dependable executive” and the king’s directives provided “so much purpose, guidance, and good sense that they were not as insignificant” as many historians, anti-Frederician in their approach, illustrate.67

Regrettably, factors combined that ultimately turned to disillusionment as the torch was passed from Frederick. What he turned into a profitable customs system, tedious and invasive to foreigners, was specifically designed to ensure excise-free for all Prussian produced goods.68 The system though, spawned long bitter trade wars with other European states, and, atop the financial burden of his conventional wars it eventually crippled Prussia to the point it reverted to old draconian methods of tax collecting. All this, coupled with the vacuum that occurred upon Frederick’s death compounded the problems of such a heavy-state involvement and dependency, his ideals permeated Europe, but in Prussia, the more complex financial reforms ended initially in ultimate defeat.69 However, all was not lost. Following the Napoleonic period and the reemergence of Prussia in its wake, Frederick’s economic reforms added to additional territorial

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65 Frederick the Great, trans., Posthumous Works of Frederic II, 2:43.
66 Hubatsch, Frederick the Great of Prussia, 87.
67 Ibid.
68 MacDonogh, Frederick the Great, 346.
69 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 173-176.
conquests and allow Bismarck to show an increase of fivefold between 1786 and 1850.  

**Domestic Policy: “Enlightened Autocracy”**

Reflecting once again on the letter from James Harris to the Earl of Suffolk, the character of Frederick’s domestic policy reforms is mirrored in this observation of Bismarck:

The basis of his Prussian Majesty's conduct, from the time he mounted the throne to this day, seems to have been the considering of mankind in general, and particularly those over whom he was destined to reign, as beings created merely to be subservient to his will, and conducive to the carrying into execution whatever might tend to augment his power and extend his dominions. Proceeding on these grounds, he has all along been guided by his own judgment alone, without ever consulting any of his Ministers or Superior Officers; not so much from the low opinion he entertains of their abilities, as from a conviction from his own feelings that if he employed them otherwise than as simple instruments they would, in time, assume a will of their own; and instead of remaining accessories endeavor to become principals. To persevere in this system it was necessary for him to divest himself of compassion and remorse, and of course of religion and morality.  

First, it accounts once again for his disdain, or at least refusal, for reliance upon anyone but himself as the executor of the state’s administration. Secondly, it captures the fleeting moment that Frederick’s reforms were not about himself, or the name he would leave behind, but perhaps, a genuine concern for his subjects. In his *Forms of Government and the Duties of Rulers* essay, Frederick explains: “As all the wheels and springs of the watch serve together the single object of measuring time, all the springs and wheels of a Government should be so arranged and coordinated that all the departments of the national administration work together with the single aim of promoting the greatest good of the State. That aim should not be lost sight of for a single moment.”

Perhaps Frederick endured to provide a better life for his subjects, or a better state.

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71 Steed, “From Frederick the Great to Hitler,” 660.  
72 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (“the Great”)."
Although, for Frederick, a “better state” began and ended with a “better State,” the embodiment of which was the actions of the “first servant of the state.” He felt that true sovereigns owed their very title to servicing the State. Only through due diligence while serving in the position of “King of Prussia,” the personification of the King, could he directly serve Prussia and Prussians. This is not to mince words with double-speak, as this concept of the “King of Prussia” as the embodiment of the state itself passed from Frederick William I to Frederick, and speaks to the constant overtones of his subservience to the State.

Through this lens, it is better understood that Frederick consistently warns his heirs against allowing ministers to set the course for the kingdom. He warned that even the beginning of a reliance upon their taking action created an absence of oversight setting the state sailing for disaster. Missing the irony of his own actions, and absent of the vision of what transpired after his death, he warns that every appointed minister immediately seeks to “make changes even if they are quite unnecessary, wishing to originate a new policy which often is harmful.” Further, he warned, that, by default, the instant disapproval of the preceding minister as a show of change, is the exact cause of the “ship of the State” veering off the course intended by the ship’s master.73

In addition to the spillage occurring within justice and economic reforms, the keys to Frederick’s domestic policy reforms took shape primary in two forms: religious toleration, and the speed in which he handled all domestic affairs, despite his incessant strict attention to even the most miniscule matters.74 Before addressing these in kind, an aside is in order for a brief

73 Ibid.
74 For the latter, his attention to matters, many great anecdotes exist in both volumes of Anecdotes and Characteristics of Frederick the Great (Multiple Contributors, see Bibliography), and a specific reference to Frederick’s “unremitting and strict attention…is perhaps unparalleled among men, and is one of the most remarkable traits in his extraordinary character,” Appears in Anecdotes and Characteristics of Frederick the Great 1:31.
discussion on Frederick’s influence on the culture in Prussia. According to Ritter, the ascension of Frederick showed the beginnings of golden age for arts and sciences in Germany.\(^{75}\)

The Prussian Academy in Berlin was rejuvenated after he personally took over its administration in 1759. Through further expenditure of Royal monies, culture flourished, although, admittedly, initially it was dominated by French influence.\(^{76}\) Frederick also designed and built the Sanssouci, the centerpiece of Potsdam (and still a marvel today), introduced and encouraged the exchange of art, literature, and music. In addition to his own love for music and his mastery of the flute and composing, the Opera House in Berlin was actually kept at his own expense, and was gratis for “any well dressed persons.”\(^{77}\) In a closing thought for culture, and as a reminder of the Prussification that was so deeply rooted in Germany, Ritter points out one aspect that seems overlooked in much of the historiography that touches upon Frederick’s role in this arena, that is, that by virtue of Prussian victory on the battlefield, and the elevation of Frederick as one of the first “national heroes,” he greatly influenced German culture and pride and patriotism that expanded throughout German works of art and literature.\(^{78}\)

“Religion is absolutely necessary in a state. This is a maxim which it would be madness to dispute.” This one statement from Frederick to his eventual heir is profound, more so when one acknowledges that Frederick himself was an atheist.\(^{79}\) Ironically, it was this self-professed nonbeliever that established the first true religious tolerant state in Europe. In his opinion, God-based religions ran counter to the “great political views which a monarch” required for success, and a ruler should instead follow the religion of his interest and glory. His advice that religion was necessary also came with the advice that the sovereign must not have religion, because it

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\(^{75}\) Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 74.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 170.

\(^{77}\) Unknown Contributor, *Anecdotes and Characteristics of Frederick the Great*, 2:34-35.

\(^{78}\) Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 170.

\(^{79}\) Frederick the Great, *The Confessions of Frederick the Great*, 40.
caused only “tyranny” in man and ran counter to the expectation of good of the State vice what was good or comfortable for the king. This specific tolerance again stemmed from his policy that a “ruler must know its subjects,” and for Frederick, that included understanding that individual subjects would embrace God or their religious beliefs in their own way. For him, the ongoing cookie-cutter molds of “Protestants-There, Catholics-There, Lutherans-Here” that were normal in Europe was not just detrimental to the State, but caused further hardships for the greater collective of Germany, as a whole. In order to achieve a Prussian hegemony, he knew the one key was allowing the inhabitants to live “peaceably together,” and he felt one key to this foundation was religion. In his Political Testament he declared once must be inculcated in appreciating that one “rule of government [is] that men are to worship the Divinity in their own way; for, should you appear in the least neglectful of this indulgence, all would be lost and undone in your dominions.”

In this, Frederick was true to his word and successful in shocking the rest of the other European rulers. His Prussia offered complete and actual religious freedom as a state policy. With the addition of Silesia, he also added half a million Catholics to his predominantly Protestant, and, although there were initially some 3000 Jewish subjects in 1740, his extension of religious freedom created the Silesian capital of Breslau as having the highest amount of Jews of any city in the Empire. Despite later atrocities, ironically perpetrated under the façade of a “resurrected” Frederick the Great, Prussia was the first German state to tolerate the Jews.

He also instigated ecclesial reforms, state protection of catholic property, and was

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80 Ibid.
81 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II ("the Great")."
82 Frederick the Great, The Confessions of Frederick the Great, 42.
83 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 167-168. The number of Catholics; MacDonogh, Prussia: The Perversion of an Idea, 344-345. The number of Jews and information for their inhabiting Silesia.
instrumental in the erection of St. Hedwig Catholic Church in Berlin—in the very neighbor of
the palace. This is important, again, as Prussia was, before Frederick, the corpus
evangelicorum—the seat of the Protestant within the Holy Roman Empire. 84 In a marginal note,
one of Frederick’s mainstays for forming royal decrees, of a report concerning some Catholics
subjects’ treatment running contrary to his edict, he scribbled, “all religions must be tolerated…
for in this country every man must go to heaven in his own way.” 85 Religious tolerance was not
just political propaganda; he firmly believed it was important to both his subjects and the
Kingdom as a whole—so much that it soured the famous love-hate relationship he shared with
Voltaire. Frederick openly challenged both his friend and the enlightenment fervor of anti-
religion, and created this state based on religious tolerance instead of, as they wished, one based
on reason and humanity. 86

Upon hearing of Frederick’s passing near a town that he had he ordered rebuilt at the
State’s expense following a ruinous fire, the inhabitants sent deputies to specifically express the
town’s thanks. When they were finished, Frederick replied only, “you need not thank me, for it is
my duty to assist my unfortunate subjects—I was born for that purpose.” 87 This small anecdote
does not only allow for the observance of Frederick’s full embrace of his service to his people,
but provides another example of just how involved the sovereign was in all matters of the state. It
doubles as an introduction into understanding how one man was possibly the apex of this entire
hierarchy of administration.

Voltaire once observed of Frederick that through him, “…all the affairs of state could be
expedited in an hour…it was rare that ministers or secretaries of state met him…everything was

84 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 167-168; H.M. Scott, The Emergence of the Eastern Powers, 1756-1775
85 Asprey, Frederick the Great, 145. No source provided by author for quote attributed to Frederick.
86 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 169.
87 Unknown Contributor, Anecdotes and Characteristics of Frederick the Great, 1:158-159.
executed with military precision, obedience was so blind, that a land of four hundred leagues long was administered like an abbey.”

Hubatsch commented that the speed of Frederick’s orders and decrees were of such enormity in quantity, that his work ethic shames many world leaders even today. With all the reforms he implemented, especially considering the first approximately six years of warring in the first half of his reign, some leniency could be granted, for his slower action time, but during the second half of his reign he averaged twelve cabinet orders written and placed into action per day.

He ordered the use of superfluous language stricken from all matters of his administration and issued many of his orders as written on small sheets of paper used specifically for that purpose—or, as became customary as a byproduct of his frantic work ethic, orders and directives found appeared within letters of both professional and personal natures, and often in informal writing or scribbled thought in the margins or received correspondence. The longer he ruled, the more this latter method arose as a standard practice of making royal decisions—all matters appearing as marginal notes were later rephrased and styled into decrees for official validity.

However, since they were marginal notes, some unedited remarks were enclosed in his replies or rebuttals, and his wishes were executed as orders well before they were even decreed. These marginal notes, the ones not annotated or in personal matters, also gained enough and importance that Frederick was just as perturbed when they strayed beyond the secret audience as other official documents. (As an interesting note, Bismarck employed this same marginal-notes technique, and it was one that Kaiser Wilhelm felt undermined his authority as Emperor). His administrative feats and omnipresent involvement were superhuman. His work ethic

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88 MacDonogh, *Frederick the Great*, 180. This quote from Voltaire is as provided by MacDonogh, the original quote from Voltaire was not found, and would require translation from the original French.
89 Hubatsch, *Frederick the Great of Prussia*, 221.
90 Ibid., 221-222; Frederick the Great, trans., *Posthumous Works of Frederic II*, 2:236. Additional mention of Frederick’s annoyance at his correspondence not retaining their secrecy.
never questioned, even by historians that openly detest him. It is a credit to his drive that he
longed to know everything about his kingdom, to know and understand its people—despite his
own preference for French culture and his lower-class use of the German language. He advised
his inheritors to understand the land, its people, and to use transparent legal practices while
allowing for a true tolerance unheard of in other European nations. He felt and practiced that this
was only possible by limiting ministerial involvement and the spider web of civil servitude that
preexisted. By 1751, Frederick had but 3000 total civil servants in all of Prussia.

*Foreign Policy Equates to an Army Fit to March*

If any reform Frederick undertook continues the debate over his kingship, it is his
approach to diplomacy. For better or worse, he set out from the moment of his ascension to
challenge the status quo in Europe—and no one understood better than him that in order for
Prussia to rise as a legitimate power, foreign policy would have to undergo a complete overhaul.
And, like all other matters of the state, his foreign policy was established from the outset—he
would handle all events himself, not associating with, or wanting counsel from, any minister
existing under his father.

Frederick, under the strict education dictated by his father, did not actually receive any
training for diplomatic policy or concerns. Yet, as Gooch expresses, he took “like a duck to
water...He had accumulated an extensive fund of knowledge of the Courts of Europe and knew
*exactly what he wanted to do* [italics added].” For a baseline understanding, Frederick held in

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91 Frederick once remarked that he spoke German “like a coachman,” and admitted he struggled in reading
higher intellectual pieces of literature in his native tongue.
92 MacDonogh, *Frederick the Great*, 180.
93 Ibid., 142.
94 Gooch, *Frederick the Great*, 5; Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 -
1815 Political Testament of Frederick II ("the Great") (1752)."
contempt the treatment his family and state received from the European powers. Specifically, he felt his father had been hoodwinked into fully supporting the wishes and bidding of the Holy Roman Emperor, yet never receiving the promised territories for his loyal service. He also had disdain for England and France for their constant encroachment and meddling in German affairs, and for Russia was cast a constant coolness trying to decipher its next moves.95

Frederick felt Prussia was destined for greatness and felt it was his duty as sovereign to bring greatness to the state. He recognized within this destiny that it required him throwing off the yoke of “ownership,” or vassalage to the Emperor. He knew that carving out an empire for Prussia would inevitably mean a challenge to that institution. In hindsight of his actions, Frederick explained his policy at the initiation of his diplomacy with Austria:

I made pass in review before my memory all those acts full of rigor, and often very unaccountable, of the parliaments of England and Paris, and was surprised at some of them being so disgraceful to the majesty of the throne. It was amidst all these reflections that I determined to strike at the foundations of this great power, and it was only by simplifying it as much as I could, that I have reduced it to the point at which I wanted it.96

Compounding his desire to right the wrongs he felt were committed against his family name, and Prussia in general, is the precarious situation that was Prussia itself.

Frederick once defined the Prussia he inherited as a hermaphrodite, posing as its own kingdom but in reality serving as an electorate.97 It was also a patchwork kingdom, with entire provinces completely separated from Brandenburg and his capital—this topped by the defenselessness of its borders, as Prussia had been carved of borders not constructed by natural barriers such as rivers and mountains. Understanding he had no natural defense, he could only count on alliances with the surrounding states minimally, and with the burning desire to

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95 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 75.
96 Frederick the Great, The Confessions of Frederick the Great, 52.
aggrandize himself and Prussia, Frederick struck out. His take on foreign policy a product of necessity—no longer would he play the role of satellite for a greater power’s bidding.  

Here it should be noted that Frederick, too, was a historian. He loses place among historians, although he was the only modern king to capture, with candor, facts and thoughts of his campaigns and administrative actions. His works are definitely not perfect and they do contain errors of some facts, committed without intent. He was a student and practitioner of historiography, quite noted for emotionless, accurate—to the extent of self-admonishment, and propaganda-free narratives of both his and his contemporary state leaders. He is frank in his

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98 Map created by author in Microsoft’s PowerPoint, October 2015. Any mistakes or irregularities are his.
99 Asprey, *Frederick the Great*, 143; Frederick the Great, trans., *Posthumous Works of Frederic II*, 2:57-64.
100 Gooch, *Frederick the Great*, 298. For more on Frederick’s accomplishments and published historiography of his times, see the annotated work, specifically Chapter 14, “The Historical Writings,” 298-327.
admission for his thirst for aggrandizement while also explaining the motives for his actions absent of that call to glory. ¹⁰¹ This is important, as it is through his historic compositions that his innermost thoughts are available for scrutiny. Aware of his own descriptions, Frederick still unabashedly admits to quests of glory, of self-aggrandizement, and of a desire to elevate Prussia, by force when, or as, necessary.

Although condemning Machiavelli’s prince in the like-titled work, Frederick consistently offers that much of his diplomacy and military action rested upon the foundation of self-preservation by any means possible—although, in this respect his “self-preservation” was Prussia itself, not necessarily of himself. ¹⁰² Yet, Frederick appears trapped by his own duality, caught between the humanitarian ideals spawned of the Enlightenment pursuits of his youth and the realism of existing and/or eventual enemies in fact surrounding him. Ritter summarizes, “he seriously attempted to reconcile the eternal opposites of morality and policy, humanity and political necessity, love of peace and need for war.” Simultaneously, Frederick admitted that for him, the state’s very existence relies upon military strength, not necessarily in the offensive use of power, but as an extension of that very real projection of power. It was Prussia’s right, through Frederick’s understanding of history and his inherited military might, to further develop into a European power. ¹⁰³

This work is not intended to defend Frederick’s wars, nor argue the validity of his arguments that he committed his troops to action in preemptive strikes—enough credible research exists that shows, especially in the case of Silesia, that he struck more, if not entirely, for the glory and aggrandizement he consistently praised and advised for his heir to continue. However, it does not mean discount the overall volatile atmosphere of the Europe he shared.

¹⁰¹ Ritter, Frederick the Great, 61-63.
¹⁰² Ibid., 64.
¹⁰³ Ibid., 69-70.
Aspen defends him to some degree, relating that Frederick’s decisions were not greatly erratic considering the constant change and eggshell-walk-diplomacy that dominated European affairs. Great alliances, residual alliances, and actual or perceived conflict brewed behind every action in the mid-1700s. A Russian minister of the period exclaimed almost prophetically of the Seven Years’ War, “only a general war can end the present unnatural state of affairs.”

For the purpose here, it suffices to explain that Frederick “justified” the commencement of war based off the Emperor shaming his father and Prussia when he failed to uphold the deal to transfer Jülich and Berg to Prussia. He further argued, with some truth, the Hohenzollerns did have claim to some of Silesia, the duchies of Liegnitz, Brieg, Wohlau, and Jägerndorf, and the Hapsburgs had plenty of time to either uphold the “Jülich and Berg” ordeal or prepare for a Prussian claim to the aforementioned Silesian duchies. With this discourse, Frederick marked the Pragmatic Sanction null-and-void and within months of becoming King, invaded Austria’s province. He later admitted that Silesia did not equate to the duchies of Jülich and Berg but that the connection sufficed as cause to break the Empire’s hold on Prussia: “The war which he might undertake in Silesia was the only offensive war that could be favored by the situation of his state for it would be carried on upon his frontiers, and the Oder would always furnish him with a sure communication…Add to these reasons, an army fit to march, a treasury ready prepared, and, perhaps, the ambition of acquiring renown. Such were the causes of the war.”

Fredrick suspected all the interested states would find reason to retract agreement to the Pragmatic Sanctions, and placed in motion the one course that would ensure he was not left in

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104 Asprey, Frederick the Great, 143.
105 Gooch, Frederick the Great, 9-10.
106 Frederick the Great, trans., Posthumous Works of Frederic II, 1: 82-83; Ibid., 1: 92-93. The quote at the end of the paragraph, noting that Frederick wrote his history in the first person.
the lurch. He gambled on this and it costs him the reputation as breaking the peace in Europe. Alone, without allies, trusting in himself, his policies, his logic, and perhaps above all, the abilities of his inherited, but untested Army, he unleashed the first phase of his new foreign policy upon Europe. The concept of *Machtpolitik* was born.

Might they not have foreseen that, if the king of Prussia was not become entirely an idiot, he would not patiently wait till they should have taken measures for his destruction, and that he would rather use his utmost efforts to prevent the designs of his enemies? It was indubitable that Prussia could find no security in the peace of Breslau. Security must therefore be sought elsewhere. The situation was critical; either the king must abandon himself to the accidents of chance, or he must take violent measures, subject to the greatest vicissitudes.

Just as there is no intent to defend Frederick’s actions, so too must his military achievements remain abbreviated and used to illustrate the purpose of the Prussification that occurred across Germany. Suffice, this initial war quickly ended, and so too did the Second Silesian War—fought much like America’s War of 1812, as a needless but defining second chapter in their independence from England, this solidified Austrian “acceptance” of the Prussian ownership of Silesia.

What is important is that these victories elevated Frederick in the eyes of Germany. He was now viewed as the Champion of German estates—and therefore Protestantism—against the Catholic *Reich* and Hapsburgs interference. Borrowing from Ritter, “[Frederick] had achieved his aim: the influence and power of Prussia had been asserted in the face of opposition…That in the process the old hegemony of France had been destroyed—not, as once before, through the combined efforts of Europe, but in the main by Germans—awoke a new pride in the German

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107 Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 76-77.
108 Ibid., 81.
nation even outside Prussia.” 111 He was also careful to understand the lines he was drawing in Europe.

He never intended to weaken Austria completely, as he saw the Hapsburgs as “necessary” in the emerging rivalry with France concerning dominance in Mitteleuropa and involvement in German affairs. 112 Common to the English concern, Frederick worried about French involvement in central Europe with designs for German hegemony—Frederick worked on long-term alliances with England to this end—especially towards “his” Germany. Contrary to his Francophile demeanor and some historiography, Asprey explains that even as early as 1742 Frederick was becoming disillusioned with France as a kingdom, explaining to his minister, Heinrich von Podewils, almost perfectly the events that would later transpire concerning the precise reversal of treaties and friendships and the outbreak of war as it pertained to Prussia, France, and England. He outlined the events exactly as they unfolded in 1756. 113

As regards to treaties, this is another area that bears as much disdain for Frederick in the historiography as it did for him by his peers while he ruled. However, it was a point upon which he never waivered, and he continued preaching exactly what he practiced. Essentially, his approach to treaties amounted to these three points: “The first, self-preservation, and aggrandizement, according to circumstances. Second, alliances never to be made but for one's own advantage. And the third, to make one's self respected and feared in the most difficult times.” 114 Essentially, if a treaty does something for you and is in line with your interests, without you losing anything, commit. If it outlasts its usefulness or will cause either loss of territory or glory to the state, then renege with haste, and without remorse. Frederick, in his own

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111 Ibid., 127.
112 Ibid., 92.
113 Asprey, Frederick the Great, 272.
114 Frederick the Great, trans., Posthumous Works of Frederic II, 1:66.
words advises: “You may do so if you fear that your allies are making a separate peace, and if you have the means and the time to forestall them, if lack of money prevents you from continuing the war, or, finally, if important advantages demand it of you,”\textsuperscript{115} and further, “It is necessary that the sovereign should act with foresight and prudence and conclude alliances in good time, and he ought to choose his Allies among those who are most likely to promote the interests of his country.”\textsuperscript{116} Most importantly, he suggests making alliances when possible, designed for specific outcomes and goals, but understanding the necessity of ending them as needed for state preservation.\textsuperscript{117}

Some of his concepts on alliances were predetermined before he became king, such as his belief that the Holy Roman Empire was “weaker than ever,” and that Europe was so divided Prussia would always easily find allies. But, he was sickened at the majority of the lesser kings that balked at joining him in thrusting their states into greatness. He condemned the Ecclesiastical princes—referring to them as “the shame of my nation”—that continued attaching themselves to either Austria or France on religious principals. For that matter, they were condemned for supporting any principal other than pro-Germany, or more accurately, pro-Prussia.\textsuperscript{118}

Unlike the conundrum of America’s Boston Massacre—who fired first?—there is no doubt that Frederick was hell-bent on reversing his father’s lapdog-to-the-Emperor policies and was presented the perfect opportunity to place his army on the battlefield when Charles II passed away without a male heir. If it was partially driven by the volatile diplomatic measures of his

\textsuperscript{115}Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II ("the Great") (1752)."
\textsuperscript{116}Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II ("the Great")."
\textsuperscript{117}Gooch, Frederick the Great, 282; Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II ("the Great") (1752)."
\textsuperscript{118}Frederick the Great, The Confessions of Frederick the Great; Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II ("the Great")."
time is irrelevant, that he admitted that it was for “glory and aggrandizement,” yet also a matter of a preemptive strike, is also irrelevant. What rings of true importance is that once he decided upon *Machtpolitik* as the basis for his diplomacy and was militarily successful, the face of Europe changed permanently.

Frederick, like his “heir and disciple,” Bismarck, never minced words or shied away from speaking his mind. He realized he had both the men and purse to cast his die and gamble that he could rise above the “hermaphrodite” status he felt he inherited. He was military-minded, and once his military proved its mettle, he intentionally fed the cycle that economic policy drove the funding of his military. His military drove the platform for his projection of power; and in turn, this eventually led to a peace that allowed him to focus on further domestic policies.119

He was an enigma, defending his actions until his death, condemning Machiavelli’s *Prince* while, at times, also serving as one of its best examples. His policies were abrasive, intentionally, as he felt politics themselves were by their nature abhorrent. He pledged himself to his people, to the state, to the position of the “King of Prussia,” and unabashedly conducted a foreign policy centered on military action. As a point of finality to understand Frederick’s *Machtpolitik*, another offering from Frederick:

> While the state was monarchical, war was held honorable. It was useful for the defense of the country, and never could become formidable. In a republic it was the reverse... Ambition and intrigue are active in republics, which are insensibly degraded by corruption; and the true stimulus to honor is lost, because fortune may be attained by means which do not require any merit in the candidate.120

Here is but another stain of Prussification upon the psyche of the German people—because Frederick was successful, Germany rallied around him.

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119 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II (“the Great”) (1752)."
120 Frederick the Great, trans., *Posthumous Works of Frederic II*, Book 2: 236.
As Bismarck was not born into Royalty, his ascension to power in Prussia came through political prowess. Therefore, some allusion may be made to earlier political stances or earlier autobiographical entries, but the period of focus for this work begins with his appointment of Minister-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs in October 1862 [see Timelines, Figure 3, on page 34]. Just as Frederick came to power with his own preconceived ideas, Bismarck’s reputation and various political assignments not only prepared him for the tasks, but he definitely brought his own ideas to this prestigious office, and was actually awaiting the King’s beckoning to Berlin so that he could begin executing his will. Working with the Minister of War, General Albrecht von Roon, Bismarck awaited a predetermined telegram that advised his immediate travel to Berlin, his arrival and appointment preventing or overcoming a political disaster, even before the King officially ordered him present.¹²²

³²² Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 46 and 53-54.
Bismarck’s arrival coincided with a congressional challenge to the crown, intentionally blocking the government’s military proposals through refusing to create and pass an annual budget. The liberal components of the Prussian government saw the budget freeze as the first major blow to limiting the king’s power and opening the door to replacing the monarchy with a constitution-based republic. The crown prince and the queen of Prussia were not admirers of the hard-nosed Bismarck but eventually the challenge to his kingship became overwhelming, and the newly crowned King William I appointed Bismarck as Minister-President on the 23rd of September 1862. After advising that Bismarck’s personal memoirs should not be completely trusted, Dr. Eyck captures the Kaiser’s the single reason for selecting Bismarck:

The King now had no other way open than to entrust the government to the only man who was willing, as well as able, to defy parliament, and who did not care whether the constitution was being broken or not. Bismarck impressed the King deeply with absolute fearlessness, his stern energy, and his unconditional willingness to serve him as a liege man serves his feudal lord….it was certain that Bismarck would become Prime-Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs [October 8th, 1862], but also that he would be unhampered by any program such as the King had at first wished to propose [italics added].

Bismarck was loyal to the king, but he was also fully aware of his weakness in character in dealing with hard decisions and confrontation. Bismarck had no doubt he would lead the king, and Prussia, to greatness. The door was now fully open for Bismarck to genuinely influence Prussia’s domestic and diplomatic policies with the firm hand of autonomy backed by the King.

Although just a college student when Frederick William III passed and the Prussian crown passed to Frederick William IV, Bismarck must have undergone the transition from youth to adulthood still hearing of the exploits of the Prussians during the Napoleonic Wars. Frederick William III, always attempting to undo the harm done to Prussia during his father’s reign, was a proponent for a unified Germany, and even quit the Vienna Congress in 1815 to continue the

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123 Ibid., 57.
fight against Napoleon. He came to power just over a decade following Frederick’s passing, and yet, the might of the Prussian military and the possibility of a German state still appealed to him. This quitting of the Congress was a watershed moment, because the Austrian crown, Emperor Francis, declared in 1813 that he was absolutely opposed to either a German Empire or a German Federal State, and that Austria would not support it, nor appoint itself the head of such a monstrosity.

Instead, it appealed to the German states want of independency and proposed the possibility of a constitution that bound together independent but equal German sovereigns under the presidency of the Austrian crown. 124 Bruno Garlepp’s work of 1897 captures the slight that this proposition extended towards Prussia. He explains, adding a quote from an English paper:

This substitute for a unified Germany was very welcome to most of the foreign powers, Austria included, and only Prussia clamored for a closer union of the German nation. Prussia’s attitude in regard to this burning question was hardly worthy of the power which had taken such a leading part in the late campaigns. An English paper contained these words after the campaigns of 1813-1814: “Who set Germany the example of opposing Napoleon? The Prussians. Who were victims at Hanau? The Prussians. Who conquered at Grossbeeren, at Katzbach, and Denneqitz? None other than the Prussians. Who were the victors at Kulm, at Wartenburg, Möckern, and Leipzig? The Prussians, always the Prussians.” Yet this very nation, which had developed such extraordinary activity, an activity unparalleled in the history of Europe, or indeed of the whole world, was now forced into a confederation where no scope was offered for its influence, and where Austria alone was supreme. 125

This continuance of foreign powers and Austria meddling in German affairs was the Prussia of Bismarck’s early adulthood. It must have influenced him, and once he became involved in politics, it was undoubtedly what drove him. Bismarck even recalled a bet he made in 1833 with an American—the bet was that German unity would not happen, even given twenty years. Bismarck took the bet, and he recalled in 1853 that he had lost said bet, but more importantly, he recalled that in 1833 he politically stood against the “very societies which wished to bring it [a

124 Garlepp, Germany’s Iron Chancellor, 34.
125 Ibid.
unified Germany] about.”126 Ironically, he would later be the top advocate for this unification.

It was not the idea of unification that Bismarck opposed. It was the idea of a unified Germany at the expense, or exclusion of, Prussia; or the establishment of any Germany on a constitutional basis that allowed for liberalism to overrule the divine right of the Prussian monarch, that concerned him. Serving in the Erfurt Parliament in 1850, the first mention of Bismarck’s view on Germany unity and Prussia’s role in said unity appear. In a friend’s album at the conclusion of the Parliamentary session, he inscribed, “Our watchword is not *Federal Union* at any cost, but *integrity of the Prussian Crown* at any cost” [italics appear in text].127 The ongoing diplomatic struggle that began with Frederick’s departure from playing lapdog to the Holy Roman Emperor remained, and Bismarck knew that conflict with Austria was assured.

It was a matter of principle that his appointment to office was both a means to end the king’s domestic struggles, and ensured Prussia’s final escape from “the yoke of Austrian” influence in Germany. In a letter sent to a French publicist in 1866, Bismarck remarked on his initial entry into political service for the crown:

> The king summoned me to Frankfort as an envoy to the Diet. I had been reared in the admiration, I might say, the worship, of Austrian politics. I did not require much time to rid myself of my youthful Austrian errors, and became her declared adversary. The humiliation of my country, the sacrifice of Germany for foreign interests, a deceptive and perfidious policy—all this was not of a sort to please me. I did not know that I was destined in the future to play a role,; but then I conceived, a resolution which I am now on the point of executing—namely, to free Germany from the yoke of Austria, at least that part which, as regards its spirit, religion, customs, and interest, is bound to the destinies of Prussia: I mean North Germany. To attain that goal, I defy everything.128

Bismarck also commented that as he entered upon the office of Minister-President he “assumed the hereditary feud with Austria for the hegemony of Germany in a peaceful and civil

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126 Ibid., 51. In this instance, Garlepp attributes this story and quoting of Bismarck to Moritz Busch’s work, *Count Bismarck and His People*, but does not offer a Bibliography at the conclusion of the work.

127 Ibid., 92.

128 Schoenfeld, *Bismarck’s Speeches and Letters*, 11-12. Schoenfeld quotes Bismarck from an “expression to M. Volbert, a French publicist, June 9, 1866” but does not provide any further information for the source.
manner.”129 The feud was hereditary, as has been shown, and although he spoke of civility and peace, there is no doubt that from the outset that this approach was arbitrarily applied. Bismarck assumed an autocratic approach to domestic policies and pursued an autonomous Prussian hegemony in Germany championed by the Machtpolitik policy. Although he brought his unique spin to both sets of policies, mostly generated as responses to current events, the autocracy, autonomy, and the projection of force were in direct relation to Frederick the Great.

It was in his first Ministerial speech that Bismarck presented his “Blood and Iron” metaphor for the Prussian way ahead as a legitimate power in Europe. The repetition of this speech is not necessary here, but it must at least be noted that prior to the famous last words, Bismarck commented on “Prussia’s tendency” to “carry armor too heavy for her slender body.” He then remarked that her armor was necessary for continued Prussian strength, especially in light of Prussia’s borders and their lack of natural defense. Ultimately, it was not political jockeying or diplomatic dealings that would emerge Prussia back into the limelight of glory, but “blood and iron.”130

In his autobiography, Bismarck recalls the spirit and meaning behind his speech:

“Prussia… could no longer wear unaided on its long narrow figure the panoply which Germany required for its security; that must be equally distributed over all German peoples.” Written in retrospect following the unification of Germany, it is too easy for Bismarck to make the link from Prussian politics to German unification, but in this passage he adds that Prussian leadership to the hegemony was reliant upon the “greatest possible weight of blood and iron.” That is, the “weight” of the decision making and leadership must fall directly to the king, allowing the

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129 Garlepp, Germany’s Iron Chancellor, 102.
130 Ibid., 105. Garlepp quotes the majority of Bismarck’s speech in his work.
Prussian monarch the ability to leverage the military when and where he saw fit.  

He refers to the necessity of the king having this power. In reality, it was essential that Prussia ensure the military reforms of King William I not only continued, but also included the manpower remedy that the king and Roon proposed. Remembering that Napoleonic France all but annihilated Prussia motivated many political actions. Bismarck was aware that in 1820 the two countries armies numbered 169,000 to 130,000 respectfully. By 1854, the disparity had grown to an unacceptable difference of 400,000 French soldiers to only 138,000 Prussians. Bismarck saw this push for a larger Prussian military for what it was—the impetus for dealing with any foreign influence upon Prussian politics. He needed the military in greater strength, and at the ready, as he resorted to the same Machtpolitik policy as Frederick.  

Bismarck entered his ministerial career in what Lothar Gall termed, as “an out-and-out ‘Konfliktminister’,” or, a hired gun, so to speak. His appointment was specifically enacted knowing he would defy parliament and even the constitution, if necessary, on behalf of protecting the monarchy and the Prussian army. Like Frederick, Bismarck viewed himself as “the first servant of the state,” and felt that his actions would truly bring about the best for Prussia; it was irrelevant if they were constitutional. In this manner, he viewed his domestic policies and political career much like Frederick opined on foreign diplomacy—make alliances when necessary, for the good of the cause, for the state, but break them as you must, and always ensure you are prepared for war.  

It was the Bismarckian way of politics to “seize upon and exploit” any weakness in his enemies, usually with total disregard for scruples or humility. This lent to his usual disregard for anything other than the immediate future or possible repercussions, as he always believed he

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131 Bismarck, Bismarck, the Man, 1:313.
132 Garlepp, Germany’s Iron Chancellor, 103.
133 Gall, Bismarck, the White Revolutionary, 1:197.
would overcome any setbacks in the future with the same hardnosed approach. Describing Bismarck’s politics further, Gall describes his “belief that friction and conflict” were natural inclinations of the politician, and anyone in the field incapable of “an active, aggressive role” would merely disappear.¹³⁴

This was the exact approach Bismarck assumed in both his domestic and foreign policy pursuits. However, as he stayed the course diplomatically with *Machtpolitik*, as was Frederick’s foreign policy stance, his domestic policies required a bit of an adjustment. Because he was not the king and the sovereign of the state, his domestic policies occurred under the umbrella of *Realpolitik*—and it was through his appointment as Chancellor that he employed power politics and the realignment of alliances as he saw fit. For Bismarck, the blueprint of successful actions as a Prussian leader already existed. He simply had to follow the same path as Frederick: force war first, and on Prussian terms; reconsolidate the spoils, or new territories, with military might; and then once unified, underscore all policies with a blend of heavy-handedness with the ever-outreached promise of peace.

As far Bismarck’s domestic policies, his impact is really reserved for post-unification, as his initial focus was on the expansion and consolidation of Prussia and the German states into one nation. His most influential policy is his authorship of the first Imperial Germany Constitution, placed into action on April 16, 1871. Immediately following its implementation, he declared a “war of culture” against political entities that encroached on the well-being and unity of the new nation. His *Kulturkampf* against the Polish and the Roman Catholic Church also began in 1871. In the 1880s, Bismarck emplaced economic measures that would overturn the economic despair following the crash of 1873, and simultaneously created the first modern

welfare state with his major health care and pension reforms. Most of these reforms echo of
Frederick’s own reforms following his wars of expansion, others however, went beyond
Frederick’s own visions and impacted Germany in ways that tainted his version of the Prussian
hegemony of Mitteleuropa.

We the People, of the United States (of Germany)...

Despite Bismarck’s reference to the American Constitution as a guideline for his own
work, the first Imperial German Constitution read more like a treaty between the twenty-five
German entities—plus the administrative land area known as the Reichsland—than the creation
of a unified Germany with one government as oversight for the collective.¹³⁵ Even as the
Preamble established the goal of “conclude[ing] an eternal alliance for the protection of the
territory of the Confederation…as well as for the promotion of the welfare of the German
people,” the overall tone of the following 78 articles remains authoritative.¹³⁶

While it established the Imperial Diet (Reichstag) and the Federal Council (or Bundesrat)
as the legislative power of the Empire, the Prussian-control is immediately present in the next
Article. Article 6 establishes the amount of votes each state of the Confederation holds of 58, and
Prussia sits atop the list with 17; the next highest number is almost a third, with Bavaria having
6, and 17 other states numbering just one vote. Essentially, unless there was a law that was so
unpopular that none other state sought its approval, then Prussia had only to convince Bavaria,

¹³⁵ Gordon A. Craig, Germany, 1866-1945, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford
¹³⁶ Imperial Germany. The Imperial German Constitution (April 16, 1871). Accessed December 1, 2015.
Saxony, and any two other states to consistently ensure Prussian hegemony over the running of German administration.\textsuperscript{137}

Further, Section IV, in the attempt to ensure the Prussian monarchy retained its power, outlined the supreme powers of the President:

The King of Prussia shall be the President of the Confederation, and shall have the title of German Emperor. The Emperor shall represent the Empire among nations, declare war, and conclude peace in the name of the same, enter into alliances and other conventions with foreign countries, accredit ambassadors, and receive them...The Emperor shall have the right to convene the Federal Council and the Diet, and to open, adjourn, and close them.\textsuperscript{138}

It continues that the Emperor not only appoints and dismisses Imperial officials, requiring them to swear an oath of allegiance to him, he appoints the Imperial Chancellor. It outlined that the preparation and publication of laws, decrees, and ordinances falls solely to the Emperor and are

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
countersigned by the Chancellor who then puts them into action. Finally, Section IV finishes with this veiled threat: “If States of the Confederation do not fulfill their constitutional duties, proceeding may be instituted against them by military execution. This execution shall be ordained by the Federal Council, and enforced by the Emperor.”

On the surface, Bismarck included the freedoms of speech and religion, and painted the picture that his Constitution was a step towards a democratic republic. It actually included an incredible, almost anti-Bismarckian aspect: universal suffrage extending the right to vote for representatives to all adult, German males. This was included because Bismarck felt the subjects of Germany were opposed to many of the liberal ideas that opposition parties represented around him in parliament. The reality behind the wording was that it was all authored with intent; it was very specific when necessary, and then just as vague, when he felt it also necessary. It was written for the purpose of providing a legal basis for what Bismarck envisioned as the end state. The constitution provided an instrument of solidarity of German states in terms of its amassed military might and its enhanced economic gains. Equally, it ensured the very fabric of “aristocratic-monarchial order” was not only preserved, but also elevated. Although it did grant the Reichstag and the Bundesrat leeway in providing for the rules and policies of the mundane life and death goings-on of the general public, its real power intentionally sat with the Emperor alone.

In true Machiavellian fashion, Bismarck’s constitution established the King of Prussia as the sole arbiter of German foreign policy—making war, concluding peace, or arranging for treaties and alliances—as well as the commander-in-chief of all the German armed forces in time

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139 Ibid.
141 Craig, Germany, 1866-1945, 39.
of war and the majority of them in times of peace. He alone reserved the right to declare martial
law in cases of civil disturbances or uprisings, and, as alluded to above, he could declare the
execution by right and/or might against dissident states, allowing for sequester of the state’s
territory and sovereignty. Above all else, it also gave the Emperor the power to interpret the
constitution according his will, basically giving him a blank check to run the entirety of Germany
as the Prussian monarchy saw fit.\textsuperscript{142} Although Bismarck saw himself, the Chancellor, as the one
wielding the power in creating the Germany he wanted, it was only until an Emperor decided he
wanted the power himself that allowed Bismarck to remain in play. This was exactly what
happened in 1890, when Kaiser Wilhelm removed Bismarck from office. Until that time, and the
follow-on perversion of that Emperor—a type of “prince” Frederick warned against in his \textit{Anti-
Machiavel}—Bismarck had created the exact Prussian hegemony over Germany that Frederick
envisioned.

\textit{It is Not Religious, but Political}

According to Bismarck’s own account, the \textit{Kulturkampf}, or the “struggle for civilization,”
began innocent enough, as Germany had just officially united and Bismarck was pushing for
broad Germanization policies to bring the new nation together as Germans.\textsuperscript{143} His \textit{Reflections
and Reminiscences} outline that he initiated the entire affair because of the “preponderantly…
Polish side…and the establishment of the ‘Catholic section’ in the Ministry of Public Worship,
statistical data proved beyond doubt the rapid progress of the Polish nationality at the expense of
the Germans…[making the] Prussian element of the ‘Wasserpolacken’ become Polonised.”\textsuperscript{144}

Unfortunately, it took on the form of something more sinister, and became an open attack

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 38-41.  
\textsuperscript{143} Eyck, \textit{Bismarck and the German Empire}, 202-203.  
on both Polish influence—of which Bismarck declared, “There was no remedy except the abolition”\textsuperscript{145}—and Catholicism across Prussia. Bismarck was a pietistic Protestant in his personal belief, but he was not anti-Catholicism nor did he oppose religious freedom. During the “struggle” itself, Bismarck opined,

> The question that confronts us becomes in my opinion distorted and the light in which we regard it falsified if it is looked on as a confessional or religious one. It is essentially political. It is not a matter of an attack by a Protestant dynasty upon the Catholic Church, as our Catholic fellow-citizens are being told; it is not a matter of a struggle between faith and unbelief. What we have here is the age-old struggle for power, as old as the human race itself, between kingship and the priestly caste.\textsuperscript{146}

In his autobiography, Bismarck reflects this sentiment on the \textit{Kulturkampf}, “So far as I was concerned, the course of our policy was not determined by religious considerations, but purely by the desire to establish as firmly as possible the unity won on the battlefield.”\textsuperscript{147} Later, he reminds his audience, of his Frederician-like religious tolerance, “In religious matters, my toleration has at all times been restricted only by the boundaries which the necessity of various denominations co-existing in the same body politic imposes on the claims of each particular creed.”\textsuperscript{148}

Abridged, this “struggle” emerged from two documents published by Pope Pius IX: His \textit{Syllabus errorum}, or “Catalog of the Principal Errors of our Time,” in 1864, and his Vatican Decree of Papal Infallibility of 1870. The former established that the Pope alone reproves, proscribes, or condemns doctrines, past or modern—and the doctrines of target were the framework with which Liberalism felt constructed the modern state and civilization. The second, the Infallibility Decree, shocked most of Germany, the birthplace of the Reformation. Pope Pius

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 215.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., \textit{Bismarck, The Man}, 2:137.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
spelled out in no uncertain terms that Catholics owed their salvation to the Catholic Church, and therefore the pope. The papal decrees trumped both the Nationalism felt within their state and overruled even the rules and regulations of nation-states. Despite outrage in many nations, Bismarck initially viewed this as a last effort power play by a papal state that was on the verge of total consumption by the rising Italian empire, and he paid little attention to it.  

It was not until Bismarck agreed that Prussia would provide asylum to the Pope, if necessary, if the Papacy would speak out against Germany’s Center Party—the Center Party cut across class boundaries, drawing support from the German-Catholics within the new empire, and represented both Catholic interests and national minorities, mainly the Poles. Bismarck’s largest concern with the Center was that it represented minorities, and in his opinion, served the furtherance of weakening to the new nation by providing a platform to refuse the necessary Germanization.  

Bismarck first realized this anti-German, or at least anti-Prussian, sentiment in 1867, and in his Directive to the Prussian envoy in Rome of 12 April 1868, specifically wrote, “Given the way things have worked out in southern Germany, we cannot deny that those people are right who see the Catholic Church as it exists there as a danger to Prussia and northern Germany and warn strongly against anything that might foster or promote that church or in any way increase its influence.” Within the new German Reichstag of 1871, the Center Party was the second largest political party, and its leader was a man that Bismarck openly admitted to hating. Once the Papal Secretary of State not only failed to condemn the party, but also declared the Curia’s solidarity with the party, Bismarck announced his offensive, and this became the Kulturkampf.  

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149 Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 202-203.
150 Ibid., 204-206.
151 Bismarck’s Directive of 12 April 1868, as quoted in Gall, Bismarck, the White Revolutionary, 2:13.
152 Craig, Germany, 1866-1945, 71.
This was not just a “Bismarck issue,” and despite the support of Polish customs and language in East Prussia invoked a personal bias from him, the Kampf was waged at both federal and state government levels. One of the main battlegrounds was the schoolhouse, where Bismarck was adamant that the Catholic Church would no longer hold influence over German education. As it reached its peak, the Kulturkampf spawned the implementation of The May Laws (May 1873), specifically in Prussia. The May Laws ensured the state received complete control over both marriage rights (Civil Marriage introduced) and education. The latter included specific provisions for controlling the education Prussian clergy would receive before ordination; and they outlined disciplinary authority of Church matters rested with the state.\textsuperscript{153}

The May Laws were however, the opening of a Pandora’s Box that cost Bismarck dearly. The laws opened the floodgates for restricting the Catholic press, for state confiscation of Church property, the persecution of Catholic priests, nuns, and other officials. Bismarck attempted to shift the blame to the May Laws author, the anti-clerical Minister Adalbert Falk, in his memoirs, but rest assured, their inception and implementation was all Bismarck. Even after he admits his shock, he still admits to standing by Falk, stating that a man of his talent “does not grow wild with us”\textsuperscript{154}.

The error in their conception was made evident to me by the picture of dexterous, light-footed priests pursued through back doors and bedrooms by honest but awkward Prussian gendarmes, with spurs and trailing sabres...[but] it was better to have a fellow combatant of such ability and courage in the ministry than to make myself responsible for the administration if the Department of Public Worship, or for a new appointment to it, by encroaching upon the constitutional independence of his office.\textsuperscript{155}

Bismarck discusses the need for the reversal of the laws as well, but alludes to a prolonged


\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 217.
timeframe that he felt must be allotted in the overturn of such delicate matters. He suggested that to hasten their removal, would incur further injury to parliament.

According to Bismarck, the “majority” of Parliament wanted to keep the May Laws as “warfare after the desertion of the Freethought or ‘Liberalist’ party to the ultramontane opposition camp [the Catholic Center].” Yet, just a page previous, the venom of his feeling betrayed are present as he recalls, “the parliamentary policy of the government had been crippled” when the Progressive party joined with the growing strength of the Center. He was further exasperated when he received no support from the Conservatives and felt he was utterly opposed by “a majority of Democrats of all shades, bound together by a common enmity, and in league with Poles, Guelfs, friends of France, and Ultramontanes [italics added].” Bismarck was not concerned about the Poles or the Catholic Church. He was not concerned with the May Laws or the expulsion of the Jesuits from Germany in 1872. He was concerned that the Center managed to win 95 seats in the 1874 Reichstag elections, more alarming was that the subjects and even the Emperor and Crown Prince were beginning to question the May Laws impact upon the very moral-fabric of Germany itself.

His “struggle” against the encroachment of non-Prussian ideals upon Germany actually began alienating Protestants as well as Catholics, and fractured ties of non-German subjects (such as Poles, Danes, French, and Jews). Bismarck’s pursuit of immediate Germanization backfired, but he was “saved” by the death of a major adversary. Much like the Frederick’s “miracle” when Queen Elizabeth of Russia died just as Prussia was all but defeated by the Russo-Austrian forces in 1762, and her Prussophile nephew, Peter III became king, Bismarck’s

156 Ibid., 220.
157 Ibid., 219.
further pursuit of the *Kulturkampf* ended when the death of Pope Pius IX brought the
consiliatory Leo XIII to the Papacy. Pope Leo’s moderate approach to Catholic pursuits,
especially as they related to state rules and regulations, gave Bismarck a way to cut his losses
and end his campaign. In his words: “in the face of a compact majority…the policy of Falk had
no chance in the Reichstag. For that reason I considered it more politic to pave the way for peace
provided the schools remained protected, the Constitution freed from the abolished articles, and
the state rid of the Catholic section.”159

Again, this is his recollection through the comfort of hindsight. He further explains that
he also “won the Emperor over” and succumbed to the Liberal-Catholic coalition, so that save
the three points above, he established a *modus vivendi*, ending the “counter-Reformation” in
1886. His parting shot is that the end result of the entire *Kulturkampf* was “favorable to the
state,” more so than the “*status quo* before 1871.”160 This may have been the conclusion on the
surface, but as with most things concerning Bismarck, there was much more to it than that. The
death of Pope Pius IX also coincided with another event that Bismarck observed—and he knew
further preparations were required.

*Economics and Anti-Socialism, Bismarck’s Strange Bedfellows*

There is no doubt that Bismarck mastered the spinning of webs diplomatically, following
Frederick’s advice of “alliances never to be made but for one’s own advantage.” Bismarck was
not the monarch, however, and so he felt obliged to apply this same process in his domestic
politics. He emerged politically as a devout conservative, warring against anything remotely
liberal in its offerings—especially if it challenged the power of the king, and by extension, his

159 Bismarck, *Reflections & Reminiscences*, 221.
160 Ibid.
own powerbase. With the Center now holding almost 100 seats in the Reichstag, Bismarck had to pick his battles, and party, more carefully. His shape-shifting stance could no longer ensure the muster of a majority vote, and Bismarck knew it. The Liberal Party still held the majority of the seats, but the combined Conservative seats had to combine with either the National Liberals or the Center. Together, with the Social Democrats, these parties represented what Bismarck described as “opposed [to] national development by international methods and which fought against the nation and the nation state.”¹⁶¹

In 1875, mostly due to international fallout over the Kulturkampf, Bismarck feared an Austro-Franco-Russian alliance, and used diplomacy, the press, and politics to muster fear that France was on the verge of beginning a war that would shatter the European peace. It was a fear mostly instigated by Bismarck himself, but the threat of a possible French offensive was not necessarily impossible either, and Bismarck admitted he still feared a war between France and Germany in 1866.¹⁶² On those grounds, Bismarck wished to expand the strength of the German standing army, increasing from three to four battalions per regiment.¹⁶³ Any increase required funding, and the taxation revenues for military spending at the national level were not sufficient for the growth Bismarck desired. Like Frederick, Bismarck knew that Machtpolitik necessitated a strong, prepared military, and that all other foreign and domestic politics ultimately played second fiddle to the monetary demands such a military required.

Bismarck then stood facing superior numbers of votes from opposing parties in the Reichstag with a need for additional revenue and an escape from the disastrous results of the Kulturkampf, when he found a solution that was also beginning to threaten his nation. He had

¹⁶¹ Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 207. Eyck attributes this as a direct quote from Bismarck but does not offer additional citing as to the source.
¹⁶³ Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 220-226.
played Judas to many causes and parties, and here it was no different. He all but abandoned the Conservatives in 1872, all but announcing he would hang his hat with whatever party would push his agenda. In *The Man & The Statesman*, he remarks on his indifference and disappointment within the Democratic Party system of the Reichstag:

Constitutional government is impossible if the government cannot confidently rely upon one of the greater parties even in such exceptional matters as are not entirely to the taste of the party—if that party cannot balance its account in this way: ‘We support the government throughout; it is true we find that it commits a blunder now and then, but up to the present it has produced fewer blunders than acceptable measures for that reason we must take the exceptional cases in with the rest.’ If government has not at least one party in the country which regards its views and leanings from such a standpoint, then it cannot possibly rule constitutionally, but is compelled to maneuver and plot against the Constitution it must manage to get itself a majority artificially or to recruit a temporary one. It then degenerates into coalition ministries, and its policy betrays fluctuations which have a very prejudicial effect upon the state itself, and more especially upon the Conservative principle.  

With this backdrop of understanding what appeared as fickleness, Bismarck’s constant switching of parties and stances makes more sense.

It is at this moment, Dawson observes, that Bismarck began a policy of State Socialism, spawning through his desire to “serve the state” and reform economic and social policies that he felt were intertwined. He explains: “At a time when trade, industry, and agriculture were alike bordering on ruin, and when society was being undermined by the misery and discontent of the working classes, all eyes turned to the State for succor.” As an appeal to the State, to the monarchy, to the absolutism the Emperor, through his trusted Chancellor, could provide to the subjects an answer to the misery—this was Bismarck’s motivation and his motivation was continued praise for his systemized *Reich*. Dawson connects Bismarck subtly to Frederick, “The time had now come when Germany was to return to the economic and social policy of old Prussia, and the question of customs duties was taken in hand first,” and then, Bismarck “saw

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that the sense of the nation was with him, the resolution to act promptly was taken.\textsuperscript{166}

Despite his own admission that the “desertion of the Conservatives” necessitated his “\textit{rapprochement} with the National Liberty party,”\textsuperscript{167} he stood on common ground with them through the \textit{Kulturkampf}. He fed the liberal hopes of nationalizing the church and subordinating it to the state. He also used his influence to isolate the Conservatives to pass some economic reforms following the “crash” of 1873. In 1875, he broke his silence on the economic questions and concerns, hoping to come in as the hero to save Germany’s economy. His fiscal-reforms aimed at fundamental changes to make Germany independent from global economic fluctuations, and he called for a “system of indirect taxes” and less “revenue duties.”

Bismarck declared, in 1878, he was assuming the role and responsibility for correcting Germany’s economy, and said the first step was returning to the “customs liability of all imported articles [as] was laid down in Prussian customs legislation from the year 1818… and later found expression in the universal import duty imposed by the customs tariff of the \textit{Zollverein} up to 1865.”\textsuperscript{168} As he moved forward with his “abandonment of free trade,”\textsuperscript{169} Bismarck addressed the \textit{Reichstag} via a letter dated December 15, 1878: “I leave undecided the question whether complete mutual freedom of international commerce, such as is contemplated by the theory of free trade, would not serve the interests of Germany.”

He continues by listing multiple reasons, such as the surrounding nations custom barriers on German goods and the negative impact of partiality to only a portion of Germany’s industries, as to why Free Trade could not continue:

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} Bismarck, \textit{Bismarck, The Man}, 2:165.
\textsuperscript{168} Dawson, \textit{Bismarck and State Socialism}, 48.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 47-61. This description is from the title of the chapter dealing with economic reforms, “Abandonment of Free Trade.”
A customs system which secures the entire home production a preference before foreign production in the home market, while keeping within the limits imposed by financial interests, will not run the risk of antipathy...its effects will be more equally spread over all the productive circles of the land...the minority of the population, which does not produce at all but exclusively consumes, will apparently be injured by a customs system favoring the entire production. Yet if by means of such a system...the national wealth be on the whole enhanced, the non-producing parts of the population—especially the State and communal officials who are dependent upon a fixed money income—will eventually be benefited; for means of counterbalancing hardships will be at the command of the community. 170

He ended his letter explaining that the foreign suppliers would thereafter hold the responsibility for paying the majority, if not the entirety, the duty on imports. He implemented his tariff-reform, creating stronger state controls and increased oversight while calming the Liberals fears that such power would remain confined by the “present Constitution.” 171 In this regard, he was already leaning towards Socialism ideals, but either through willful ignorance or a master façade, he did so while attacking the Social Democrats and calling for a government that would take care of its subjects in a more “Christian State”-like manner that he felt Germany represented. 172

In February of 1878, Bismarck attempted to usurp the National Liberals. He placed one of their own representatives, Rudolf von Bennigsen as his Deputy Minister, just long enough to get his economic measures passed, and then he cast both the deputy and the party aside. He then established the state tobacco monopoly, and declared such expedient actions were required for economic reforms to ensure Germany’s greatness. As Gall describes, Bismarck “definitely decided...in the interests of providing a sound financial basis for the Reich and hence for its power and independence vis-à-vis the individual states—and that including Prussia—not to let himself be guided any longer by dogmatic economic and budgetary principles.” 173 This served as open defiance to Liberal views, and although he was still implementing policies at will, he

170 Ibid., 49-50.
173 Ibid., 88.
continued to do so beneath the cloak of servitude to the State and its subjects.

Ironically, he recalled the “Liberals and Conservatives were agreed in making use of me, letting me drop, and attacking me according as the interest of their section dictated.” 174 Regardless, he weathered the storm of these “attacks,” to again “recruit a temporary” majority for his next aim. In 1878, just five years after the May Laws were implemented, and as he was shedding subordination to constitutional oversight in regards to economic policy, he developed yet another smokescreen to his party-jumping and set his sights on what he felt was the true, ever-growing cancer: socialism. 175

In socialism, he found the cause that channeled all his efforts and ferocity. In May of 1878, after a failed assassination attempt on the Emperor by a man with loose ties to any party, Bismarck had his champion cause. The would-be assassin identified as a socialist, so Bismarck purposely manipulated the facts ensuring the Social Democrats were linked in a greater assassination scheme, thus beginning his pursuit to crush socialism in Germany. 176 As he stood in debate of his proposed Anti-Socialist Laws to the Diet, his vicissitudes of political flip-flopping seemed to come to an end: “From that moment on I recognized the Social Democratic elements as an enemy against which state and society are obliged to defend themselves.” 177 With that he threw his hat in the ring, creating an “enemy of the state” in the form of socialism. It was such a clever ruse that it forced the National Liberals to choose a side in the most heated political debate.

Essentially, Bismarck was now forcing the Liberals to show support for “necessary” measures to eradicate enemies to good order and progress, or continue their party line that any

175 Ibid., 229-233.
176 Ibid., 237.
discriminatory legislation placed civil law above equality. In this declaration of “war” against the Socialists, Bismarck saw both the escape and diversion from the Kulturkampf and a way to wrestle control over the Reichstag majority. Initially, his plan failed and he found himself further isolated from the government he set up intentionally to assure his power. However, a second assassination attempt on the Emperor forced the parliamentary hand to finally pass the so called-Anti-Socialist Laws\textsuperscript{178} (the full name was Gesetz gegen die gemeingefährlichen Bestrebungen der Sozialdemokratie, or the “law against the dangerous activities of the Social Democrats”).

The laws lasted on a renewal basis of two to three years from 1878 until 1890, and despite the protection that Bismarck felt the laws provided to the monarchial-absolutism he was still defending, they eventually created another perversion of Frederick’s visions. The Anti-Socialist Laws, along with Bismarck’s ironic passing of socialistic laws to undercut the Socialist platform served as another reform that pushed Germany off course.\textsuperscript{179} At its core, Bismarck pushed for the laws to completely restrict any socialism ideals or representation in the Reichstag. However, like the Kulturkampf, it quickly created a police state for a targeted audience of the German population, and, ultimately, it accomplished nothing—the Socialists never lost their seats or influence within the government. If anything, their resolve triggered a grassroots movement that maintained an undercurrent of Social Democracy that was ready to free itself from the oppressive government of Bismarck.

The laws repressed all freedom of speech for Socialist, both in public political rally form and in the press. Socialist politicians and supporters were arrested and exiled from their cities; although on the surface it “destroyed” the organization, it could not suppress the voting at the ballots—votes for the Social Democrats rose from 550,000 in 1884 to 1,427,000 by the end of

\textsuperscript{178} Gall, Bismarck, The White Revolutionary, 2:92-98.
\textsuperscript{179} Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 243.
the same decade. Eyck described the Anti-Socialist Laws as “grossly offend[ing] against the principle of equality before the law and against the freedom of the press and liberty of association. Indeed, the basic principle of the Rechtsstaat was at stake [italics added].

Further blurring of party lines and his own political views, Bismarck then initiated reforms throughout the 1880s that resonated pure Socialism. As the decade began, so too did Bismarck’s assault on liberalism and his “preemptive strike” to retain state authority and power. In regards to economics, he unequivocally ensured there was as little separation of state and commerce as possible—he waged war on Individualism and Laissez-fair. He declared that the state was not just responsible for the preservation of self, but for providing its subjects social conditions that promoted happiness and contentment. Addressing the Reichstag on these points, he forcibly declared:

…It is my opinion that the State can also be responsible for what it does not do. I do not think that doctrines like those of...'He who is not strong enough to stand enough to stand must be knocked down and trodden to the ground,' [or] ‘To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath,’—that doctrines like these should be applied in the State, and especially in a monarchical, paternally governed State. On the other hand, I believe that those who profess horror at the intervention of the State for the protection of the weak lay themselves open to the suspicion that they are desirous of using their strength...for the benefit of a section, for the oppression of the rest, for the introduction of party domination, and that they will be chagrined as soon as this design is disturbed by any action of the Government.

Through this lens and a short list of his actions, it is obvious that Bismarck was actually establishing a socialist state—actually creating Europe’s first modern welfare state in the process.

In 1883, he passed legislation that established national healthcare. In 1884, he established

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180 Ibid.; Dawson, Bismarck and State Socialism, 44. Dawson’s work (from 1891) captures the numbers as 493,288 in 1877; 763,128 in 1885; and more than a million after 1890.
181 Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 238.
182 Dawson, Bismarck and State Socialism, 28-29.
183 Ibid., 29. Dawson attributes many quotes to Bismarck from speeches he made but does not offer a source for further reference.
the Recht auf Arbeit ("right to work"), providing, as he stated, "the working-man the right to work as long as he is healthy, assure him care when he is sick; assure him maintenance when he is old." He continued advising that if these simple measures were passed and diligently upheld, then the Social Democrats would have to "cease" their "thronging" and accept the Government showed genuine concern for the working-men.\textsuperscript{184} By 1884, accident insurance, the precursor to worker’s compensation for injury in the workplace, was passed into legislation.

In 1885, he advocated for greater rights of the land-owning class, that is, the land-owners in the countryside that were “carrying on agriculture themselves.” He advocated that those land-owners that were actually farmers, were “a blessing for our country,” and if the government “succeeded in destroying this race, [they] would see the result in the palsyng of our entire economic and political life.”\textsuperscript{185} Despite even his own warning that Social Democrats would not allow “provision for old age,” by 1889, this too passed, and Bismarck established an early social security pension system.

Dawson’s\textit{Bismarck and State Socialism}, published in 1891, reflects the positivity of Bismarck’s economic policies, and reflects that most of the policies slanted more towards a want of socialism than someone “utterly opposed to it.” He attributes to his policies the increase of both industry and trade, bringing Germany’s own Industrial Revolution on par with or rivaling other “modern” European states; he also credited the simultaneous better workman wages and treatment that occurred without any significant increase in goods prices. He offers that the overall impact set Germany on the necessary and correct path to continue its domination of Central European affairs. As a supporting document, he quotes from a Düsseldorf Chamber of Commerce report: “We can, on the authority of a searching investigation made in industrial

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 35.  
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 33.
circles, assert with satisfaction that the influence of the customs tariff has on the whole been favorable to the branches of industry affected by it in this district. The balance-sheets of the larger establishments, as well as the increase of workpeople, afford ample evidence of this.”\textsuperscript{186}

He admits that agricultural sections did not really enjoy any growth from the new legislation and that some industries requiring raw materials from foreign trade suffered initially. However, the overall growth of the German economy, coupled with a workforce both content and cared for, more than compensated for the few drawbacks. Dawson explained that it put Germany back in line with the excellent founder of Prussian industry and commerce, Frederick.\textsuperscript{187} Bismarck’s polices set Germany on a brighter path and brought the state along economically much further than was expected after the crash of 1873.\textsuperscript{188} Bismarck, addressing the Reichstag in June of 1882, reminded them of the simplicity and fundamentals of his reforms: “[They were] a reversion to the traditional Prussian policy. Under Frederick the Great, here was a greater degree of protection than under the \textit{Zollverein}, and the attempt to break with protection was only a modern innovation.\textsuperscript{189}

\textit{Frederick to Bismarck, the Bridge Extends}

As mentioned earlier, compared to Frederick, Bismarck was in the unique position of having to “play” party politics since he was Chancellor and not Emperor. This does not imply that Frederick was free of having to cater to the life of politics, but he did not have to exert the extra energy to domestic policies of keeping numerous parties content with proposed legislation. Indeed, Frederick may not have fared as well as Bismarck in the position of Chancellor vice

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 60-61.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 21.
King, and he recognized the cutthroat existence that was politics: “Since it has been agreed among men that to cheat or deceive one's fellow-creatures is a mean and criminal action, there has been sought for, and invented, a term that might soften the appellation of the thing, and the word, which undoubtedly has been chosen for the purpose, is Politics." However, as king, Frederick ruled in a true monarchial-autonomy. Where Bismarck, conversely, created the shell of a constitutional monarchy stretched across the framework of autonomous power bound by the obtuse legalese of his Imperial Germany Constitution. Until he was relieved by Kaiser Wilhelm, who sought the autonomy—the power, the glory, and Frederick’s call to the aggrandizement—for himself, free of a Chancellor’s meddling, Bismarck served as the executor of Frederick’s will.

In his opening discussion on Bismarck’s creation of a Socialist Germany, Dawson offers his own commentary, much akin to the opening bon mot that, “without Bismarck, there’d be no Germany…but without Frederick, there’d be no Bismarck.” He simply states:

Prince Bismarck has done nothing more than develop the social and political system established by the Great Elector, Frederick William I., and Frederick the Great of Prussia. He has taken up the threads of policy which were laid down when, after the Liberation War…gave practical expression to Free Trade and Individualistic ideas, and has endeavored to infuse the spirit of the old Prussian Monarchy into the new German Empire.

The servitude to Prussia, to the state and its subject, is obvious in both men. Their seamlessly unending energy and attention to detail are observed in their devotion to make Prussia great, to create a Prussian hegemony of a Germanized Mitteleuropa. They also did so through initial military might followed by domestic policy reforms in religious practice, social and working class issues, national economic legislation, and their diplomatic artistry.

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190 Frederick the Great, trans., *Posthumous Works of Frederic II*, 1:53.
191 Ibid., 15.
This provides a portion of the bridge required for linking Frederick’s actions of greatness for creating “Germany,” even if in name he referred to a “Prussian hegemony of Germany.” As Bismarck rose to power and adorn the titles Minister-President of Prussia, and later, Chancellor of Germany, he used Frederick’s *Machtpolitik* concept. He followed the paths to war, the following calls for peace, and the diplomatic dealings perfectly to accomplish the unification of Germany under a strong Prussian hand. As James Charles Roy captures in *The Vanished Kingdom*, “Bismarck was a classic guns-and-butter politician, a master of barter and intrigue

![Figure 8. Map of Final Expansion of Prussia and Germany Before WW I Ended](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prussiamap.gif)

Figure 8. Map of Final Expansion of Prussia and Germany Before WW I Ended

both in his foreign and domestic policies. He had a knack for going too far when conventional

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192 “Prussiamap”. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prussiamap.gif
wisdom dictated restraint and for pulling back when others, appealing to his well-known greed, cried to advance.”

However, just as was shown through Bismarck’s Kulturkampf against non-German culture and Catholic interference, along with his fluid and transparent switching of political parties and stances while working domestic policy issues, he may have always maintained the representation of the Prussian tradition of authority. Yet, Bismarck did not always necessarily represent Prussian ideals. Roy continues, “[Bismarck was] a fervent militarist and devotee of the crown, at least in the abstract, he distrusted most officers and considered the Hohenzollerns little better than dolts.”

Moving forward to complete the crossing of the bridge, this point is significant. Bismarck absolutely represented the authoritative nature of the Prussian nobility and his adherence to all things through the divine right and authority of the monarch, but he fell short in representing nothing but Prussian, or Frederick’s, concept of Prussia and the Prussification of Mitteleuropa.

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194 Ibid., 168.
CONCLUSION

As discussed in the Introduction, Adolf Hitler invoked the name of a German “hero” as propaganda to legitimize the Nazi’s totalitarianism and brutal treatment of non-Aryans. It is even believed that Hitler thought himself the actual reincarnation of Frederick the Great. Setting aside any discussion on the belief in reincarnation, the use of Frederick’s name and image as a symbol for the National Socialist Party is absolute perversion. First and foremost, Frederick was Prussian through and through, not German, per say. He never saw the rise of an “Aryan Nation,” of master-race boasting and vicious attacks on fellow subjects of the crown. He envisioned a Prussian hegemony, a unification of the German states—free of Austrian influence, free of French meddling, free of British and Russian oversight—creating a Mitteleuropa that could serve as a counterbalance to the European powers using Central European states as mere pawns in a larger game of diplomacy.

Frederick spoke out against the pure Machiavellian ruler that sought only self-aggrandizement at the expense of his nation and its people. Admittedly, he wore the Machiavellian Emperor’s Clothes in some regards, but he never assumed the complete manifestation of the evil that he warned against in his Anti-Machiavel. Ritter is a bit shortsighted (ironically) in his observation that Frederick’s policies were shortsighted and ignored far-greater possibilities. He comments that Fredrick “lacked dynamism” and that his policies pursued a path “only to save the status quo [with Austria], not to achieve new goals.”¹ The historiography points too often to his dreams of the Prussian hegemony to discount, but Ritter still offers some

¹ Ritter, Frederick the Great, 197.
key additional observations.

Ritter explains that Frederick waged war for the sole purpose of maintaining the equilibrium of power and influence of Germany between the Hohenzollern and the Hapsburg dynasties, while simultaneously ensuring neither France nor Russia could dominate either of them in European affairs. He is correct in his observation that Frederick’s policies were not about the minor German princes—but that he, Frederick, was the key. He was convinced that through Prussian might, he would ensure this, and this led to his diplomatic motives for limiting any influence of Maria Theresa or Emperor Joseph on German states. Frederick’s League of Princes was, according to Ritter, an answer to the Holy Roman Emperor’s attempt to realign the electoral seat of Bavaria to the Austrian Netherlands and the Empires’ subsequent consuming of Bavaria, the Upper Palatinate, and Salzburg. With Frederick, the big three, the electoral seats of Prussia, Saxony, and Hanover, along with fourteen minor states, joined forces to prevent the slight by Austria and the “foreign emperor.”

It is important to understand Frederick’s goal was a greater Prussia serving as the overseer of the smaller German states, not the annexation or creation of one unified German nation. With the accession of Maria Theresa to the Austrian throne in 1740, Frederick saw an opportunity to test the 75,000-man army he had inherited and begin his “role of defender of German liberties against Hapsburg despotism.”

Frederick came to resemble, at the end of his reign, everything that was quintessential German tradition. He stood ready to defend German lands even at the cost of finally destroying the Holy Roman Empire, or worse, gambling his own life and kingdom. For Frederick, it was

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2 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 197.
3 Ibid., 197-198.
5 Friedrich, Brandenburg-Prussia, 90.
always Prussian interests above all, even self, and if felt threatened by outsiders, he resorted to Prussia’s survival first, and he would lead his army in its defense. Ritter opines that Frederick’s reorganization of Germany under Prussian leadership would have been a desirable goal, but that Frederick’s foray amounted only to “a soap bubble,” bursting the real hope of Prussian greatness, and amounted only to the uniting of the minor German princes under Prussia’s wing.

Essentially, this unification of states through the League of Princes was not enough to stem full-fledged, overarching German “nationalism.” Instead, it defaulted to unification through “particularism.” Ritter credits Frederick for attempting a rallying cry via German nationalism, or at least attempting a unified Germany through collective administration and legislation. But, he then points out the League failed to do so, resorting more to reactionary measures rather than proactive pursuits of unification. Ultimately, the League of Princes failed to play any meaningful part in the unification of Germany by action, but in concept, through the compilation of Frederick’s policies and actions, it did equate to new possibilities for Germany—especially if pursued under the hope of constitutional reform.

Frederick often quipped he was “The King of Beggars,” and it is through an approach akin to showing some humility that Dawson describes:

It was the attachment of the reigning house to the idea of nationality, its constant endeavor to promote justice between man and man, and its solicitude for the welfare of the poorer classes which led to the unbounded popularity of the Hohenzollerns amongst their people, whose loyalty to king and crown never varied amid the trying vicissitudes of Prussian history…The Prussian monarchy differs from other European monarchies in many things, but especially in its traditionally democratic sympathies. It was a proud boast of the Great Frederick that he was ‘le roi des gueux’; and solicitude first for the

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6 Asprey, Frederick the Great, 145.
7 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 198-199.
8 Ibid.
9 “Le roi des gueux.” Dawson, Bismarck and State Socialism, 15. This term is found in multiple works, but first noticed by this author in Dawson’s work.
prosperity and welfare of the nation as a whole, and then in an especial degree for the happiness of the weaker classes, has always been the keynote of Prussian kingly policy.  

He continues that Frederick was obviously not a socialist, but that his genuine concern for his subjects led to the foundations of ideals that were later categorized as such. He strove to ensure all Prussians were treated equally: in justice; that the state was strong and efficient in economic matters, serving the subjects as a byproduct to its success; and preventing the abuse of the lower classes by the aristocracy. None of his efforts were in pursuit of personal wealth, but for the country’s enrichment—even if in the name of economics, justice, education, or, as was key to Machtpolitik, the funding of the military.

In *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, Fritz Stern discusses Julius Langbehn’s assault on German modernism in the late Seventeenth Century. His discussion centers on Langbehn’s work, *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (*Rembrandt as an Educator*) published in January 1890, soon after becoming a best seller in Germany. Langbehn vilified science and intellectualism, as well espousing anti-Semitic rhetoric, and self-professed his true vocation was “to lead men back to natural spontaneity and simplicity.” In his view, modern Germany needed to undergo additional changes before making itself “great.” One can easily see the beginnings of Nazi culture in Langbehn’s opinions: Germany was German, had distinct culture and intellect, whereas Prussia was “estranged from Germany” precisely because it consisted of cultures from so many other regions it stagnated by “mixing” Prussian blood with non-German peoples. One view that Stern captures in Langbehn’s convoluted work, although cutting so contrary to how he

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10 Ibid., 15-16.
11 Ibid., 15.
actually intended, is this simple truth: Prussia and Germany were not the same—they were in fact “cultural opposites.”

In his work published in 1931, Der Preussische Stil (The Prussian Style): Arthur Moeller van den Bruck discussing the feat of Frederick and Bismarck’s final triumph of unifying Germany in regards to the impact on Prussia: “Prussia became the victim of Germany…The collapse began by self-alienation; by completely misunderstanding its inherited values…Prussia denied its past…and its deprusianization [sic] began.” Admittedly, Frederick gained what he felt was “breathing room” by launching a war in a time of peace. Preemptive in nature, justified, or purely for the glory, is not the matter of debate here. What remains important is that he did so—a small, all-but-insignificant state, spread non-contiguously across Mitteleuropa. His Prussia existed in a Europe crowded with powerful nations, that not only surrounded his naturally defenseless borders, but also had historically warred in or through the German states at will.

He warred for only ten of his forty-six years as king. Ironically, it was his disregard for, and victory over, the Holy Roman Emperor that brought the final dissolution of the First Reich. The Nazis, dubbed the Holy Roman Empire the “First Reich” and Bismarck’s Germany until the outbreak of World War I the “Second Reich.” They then described their iron rule with delusions of grandeur as “The Thousand Year Reich,” or, The Third Reich. It was Hitler, who upon election to Reichskanzler (or German Chancellor) that immediately pushed for war under the need for “lebensraum”—not a reprieve from the constant treading of other European powers on Germany, but the simple “need” (read want) for more land and resources for the aggrandizement of a “master race.”

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13 Ibid., 148.
Hitler became *Führer* in August of 1934 and committed suicide as Berlin was falling to the Red Army in May of 1945. By comparison, Hitler basically declared his own *Machtpolitik* policy when Germany left the League of Nations in 1933 and Hitler announced it would increase the size of its military and add an air force. If starting the clock in March of 1938 with the *Anschluss* of Austria as his first act of war, then as the leader of Germany, Hitler was at war for seven of his eleven years—64% of his reign was bringing devastation and genocide to Europe. Frederick was at war discontinuously less than 22% of his reign, and Bismarck, if beginning his clock with his appointment as Minister-President in 1862, less than one percent! Hitler represented everything in the Machiavellian prince that Frederick despised and warned against. He sought war for war’s sake, for a misguided stab at personal aggrandizement at the absolute expense of the state.

Hitler’s opening policies as the leader of Germany amounted to murder, legalized criminal activity, and a perverted police state via “The Night of the Long Knives” and *Kristallnacht*. Conversely, Frederick’s accession to the throne was met with the immediate outlawing of “barbaric” legal penalties and his engaging in policies to “illuminate this bleak sphere with the light of humanitarianism and common sense.”15 The true go-between, Bismarck, immediately attacked the democratic underpinnings of the *Rechtsstaat* (political concept meaning “the state ruled by law and according to law”) to further state-control. In this pursuit, he sometimes allowed his personal convictions to cloud his better judgment.16 The two purveyors of autonomous-rule following Frederick maintained their powerbase by continuously acting above the rules—above the constitution, above the same political and diplomatic rules of the rest of the

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15 Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 181.
16 Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire*, 206 and 224.
field. Bismarck and Hitler felt their intelligence, their ambitions, and their visions for a greater Germanized state authored this exception to political norms.

Frederick was an exception to political norms in that he was the king, and technically answered to no one but himself. He chose his servitude to the state and to its subject. However, despite all the dictums, decrees, instructions, etc., Frederick actually assured he was not technically the “sovereign” ruler of Prussia. Continuing the development of the initial concept of his father, technically the King of Prussia served as an institution sitting above the monarch labeled “king.” The state was therefore independent from the “sovereign,” and the laws and legislations passed bound even the king himself once decreed upon the Prussian people. At its core, this alone serves as a silver bullet that Frederick was anything of a precursor to Hitler and Nazism. Within this concept extends the fact that every action Frederick took as King was for the good of the state, not for himself—making him, in fact, the “first servant of the state.” Essentially, all action, all decisions were determined by raison d’état.¹⁷

_Bismarck’s Paradise Lost_

Just as the point of this work is not to justify Frederick’s means for personal and state aggrandizement, nor is it to vilify Bismarck. However, as the man that rose to power and inherited Frederick’s blueprint for a Prussian-dominated Germany, Bismarck did make choices that perverted some of the original Frederickian concepts of serving the people. To recall, many of his political actions caused his switching political party alignment so consistently that even his own “parties” felt betrayed and that a King eventually removed him from office, refusing to endure his manipulation.

¹⁷ Hubatsch, _Frederick the Great of Prussia_, 225.
Although trying to provide a direct link from Bismarck to “causing” Hitler is as ridiculous as Frederick serving as a Nazi propaganda icon, there is still the inkling that some of Bismarck’s domestic policies created an environment more susceptible to the rise of a Hitler-esque figure in Germany. As Roy notes in The Vanished Kingdom, “real Prussians” were ancestors to the Junkers, and a democratic government of any sort was contrary to Junker aristocratic heritage, so too was totalitarianism. The Junker nobility held both in contempt. Hitler emerged from the “peasant class” of Austria, rose to power and immediately implemented a totalitarian rule. To the Prussian nobility, everything about Hitler was perverse—they hated Hitler, but they hated Bismarck more. In him, they saw a traitor that sold out his own class, his own state, and the Prussian people for the sole glory encapsulated as the creator of a unified Germany. 18

Stern’s The Politics of Cultural Despair ensures that the link to the foundation of the Nazi ideology lies with the rise in combined popularity of Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Arthur Moeller—regarded as the revisionists of Germanic religion, Germanic irrationalism, and the conceptual designer of “The Third Reich,” respectfully. Langbehn was briefly discussed above as necessary, so following is a quick word on Lagarde.

Lagarde lived through the turmoil of post-Napoleonic controlled Prussia and the fractured German states, and he lived through the unification and the Bismarckian Reich. Despite the unification and the success of some of Bismarck’s policies, Lagarde felt certain aspects of questionable moral fiber and false-nationalism under Bismarck created “a cultural crisis in Imperial Germany…[and] he had felt something of the inner hollowness of the Reich.”19 Germans started equating the Emperor’s rule to the flaws and discontent of the people, using

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18 Roy, The Vanished Kingdom, 88.
19 Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair, 82.
Lagarde’s words as a rallying cry that the subjects were the key to true unity: “When people talk of the unity of Germany, they almost always think of the unity of political leadership; I contend that unity has to be understood as the unity of the governed. The former without the latter would be mere force; to demand the former when the latter prevails would be unnecessary, for it would come about by itself.”

Lagarde, who died in 1891, prophesized the annihilation of Germany as it existed. His teachings were invoked as an appeal to “austerity and duty, [a] call for sacrifice and purity” in the post-Great War environment of the state.

Arthur Moeller van den Bruck serves as Stern’s “father of totalitarianism thought” in Germany, the real precursor to the Nazi take over in Germany. Within Moeller’s *Das Dritte Reich* is found the culmination of his ideology for a better Germany and it serves as its own “blueprint” for the Nazi ideology that quickly consumed Germany in the interwar period.

It is through Moeller, that Stern constructs the bridge from Nazi to Bismarck: “The promise of the Third Reich, of the unity of the racial Volk, of its aggrandizement, of the resolution of its internal conflicts, the invocation of heroism, of individual exertion, and national will—all of these seemed timely echoes of an ideology first disseminated in the days of Bismarck.”

Bismarck created parliamentary bodies that possessed little to no power and, once stripped of any responsibilities, any offices outside the immediate attention and purview of Bismarck were viewed as governmental inefficiency. This in turn also dissolved a need for party politics, since everything in government was essentially done at the guidance and authority of Bismarck himself. As it was, if the Bismarckian system faltered (or was vacated, as with his removal), any ineffectual government filling the void would be instantly “at fault” by the

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20 Ibid., 53. Stern attributes this quote to Lagarde at the opening of his Chapter 4, but offers no additional citing.
21 Ibid., 83.
22 Ibid., 212-213 and 292.
23 Ibid., 292.
German people. They blamed and therefore shunned, “the new political machinery, with parlaments, with political parties, with the whole system of incipient democracy.” As Conservatives gained more followers through the Lagarde, Langbehn, and Moeller doctrine, the competency of the bourgeoisie was further questioned.

Additionally, according to Lagarde, Germans suffered from morality, and from any feeling of independence or free will. He observed that the people were slowly losing faith in religion, either Protestantism or Catholicism. He felt the people needed to place their faith in something, or someone. With the Prussian monarchy and German Emperor living in exile with his thrown abdicated, the Junkers no longer holding sway over Imperial legislature or policies, and Germans simultaneously demanding an answer to their losing World War I and a solution to the economic crisis, the failure of Weimar Republic was imminent. Germany needed to place its face in something. Germans needed to place their faith in someone. Unfortunately, it was a vacuum filled by the National Socialist led by Adolf Hitler.

Bismarck did fulfill his role as “the first servant of the state,” but fell victim to seeing himself above the very laws of the state he implemented. As with Frederick, his involvement in the minutia across so many facets of policy, Bismarck’s boundless energy and dedication cannot be denied. However, just as Frederick failed to foster an environment easily assumed by a successor, Bismarck’s removal from power left the same power vacuum and confusion throughout the Imperial government. Unfortunately, his Kulturkampf and establishment of socialist concepts in the face of his persecution of the Social Democrats overshadow the more positive aspects of his rule.

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24 Ibid., xxviii.
25 Ibid., xxix.
26 Ibid., 49.
27 Ibid., xxix.
Frederick the Great created Prussia, and it was in those footsteps that Bismarck saw the possibility in a rebuilt Prussia sitting atop an organized and unified Germany. He recognized Napoleon cut through Central Europe specifically because of the disorganized and divided German states. He saw himself cloaked in glory if he managed to use the Prussian Machpolitik to rebuild Prussia in the Great One’s image. Through a “pitch of power, a strong, self-reliant and unscrupulous military state could rise at the psychological moment afforded by the moral and political upheavals of the first half of the nineteenth century.”

Germany had only to rely on Bismarck’s initial adherence to Frederickian principles of "reliance on traditional dynastic friendships, on community of conservative monarchical instincts and on the absence of indigenous political divisions."

Unfortunately, Bismarck’s vanity and political ruthlessness served as an “evil” that misguided his role in staying true to fostering a Frederickian Prussian hegemony. In an article published in 1909, even before World War I began, Archibald Colquhoun observed of the post-Bismarckian Germany, “The Germany that existed before 1870, with its liberalism, pacific tendencies and high spiritual ideals, has disappeared before the march of industrialization, materialism and militarism.” Bismarck’s Reich was lost when Kaiser Wilhelm removed him from office and plunged Germany into World War I, and it is fitting to close this section with an excerpt from John Milton’s Paradise Lost:

Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host

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29 Ibid., 243.
Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the most High,
If he oppos’d; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais’d impious War in Heav’n and Battel proud
With vain attempt…. 31

Thus, “united by resentment,” 32 Hitler led his band of disgruntled “subjects” into impious war, and unleashed the worst violence, murder, and destruction in human history. 33

Suum Cuique

In the conclusion of Ludwig Reiners’ *Friedrich*, he warns that if anyone still attempts to draw a line from “Frederick about Bismarck and Wilhelm II up to Hitler” they do so “based on a lack of the historiography of an unusual degree; [as] these four names are so completely different in every kind of way, that only the most tedious blindness to reality can state them in a row [of succession].” 34 Frederick the Great found himself in agreement with Machiavelli on at least one point:

I regret it, but I am forced to admit that Machiavelli is right. Princes are bound to have ambition, but *it must be prudent, measured, and illuminated by reason*. If the desire of self-aggrandizement does not procure acquisitions for the prince-statesman, at least it sustains his power, because the same means which he prepares for offensive action are always there to defend the State if defense proves necessary, and if he is forced so to use them [italics added]. 35

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34 “Wenn man aber über solche Erwägungen hinaus eine Linie von Friedrich über Bismarck und Wilhelm II. bis zu Hitler hat ziehen wollen, so beruht dies nur auf einem ungewöhnlichen Maß geschichtlicher Unbildung; jene vier Namen sind nach Rang und Art so völlig verschieden, daß nur die stumpfsinnigste Wirklichkeitblindheit sie einer Reihe anführen kann.” Ludwig Reiners, *Friedrich*, 319. Translation by the author, any discrepancies or inaccuracies are his alone.
35 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II (“the Great”) (1752)."
Even if he agrees with Machiavelli begrudgingly, on this point alone is shattered any link that Frederick would approve of Hitler’s *Reich* or the use of his namesake in propagating its acceptance upon “the subjects.”

Frederick was unique. He was a king, with no equal in his entire kingdom; yet, he genuinely cared for both Prussia and the Germanization of Central Europe. That is, a unified effort of the German states representing *Mitteleuropa* free of Austrian or other foreign influence or will. Admittedly, as even he so often commented, a portion of his motivation was for self-aggrandizement, but he never lost sight of a new Germany. He had boundless energy, and his ambition for a greater state built, in part, on humanity and reason is admirable. He concerned himself to the minutest details of foreign and domestic policies *ad nauseam* because he felt it was necessary in bringing Prussia to greatness.\(^{36}\)

His domestic and diplomatic policies breathed life not only into Prussia, but also into all of Germany. Through him, the first wave of *esprit de corps* and a national spirit found a home in the bosom of subjects of the German states. Frederick himself admitted, “this is what I have worked for, and why, in the course of the first war, I did everything possible to spread the name of ‘Prussian,’ in order to teach the officers that, whatever province they came from, they were all counted as Prussians, and that for that reason all the provinces, however separated from one another, form a united body.”\(^{37}\) As the Silesian Wars eventually combined with the Seven Years’ War, and Prussia found itself facing not just Austria but the forces of France and Russia, this same sentiment echoed across many of the minor German states.

German national feeling rebelled against French mingling, and soon the public outgrew the same aristocratic yoke. Prussia became the cultivator of a national conscious, and that

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\(^{36}\) Ritter, *Frederick the Great*, 154.

\(^{37}\) Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Political Testament of Frederick II ("the Great") (1752)."
extended, to a point, to German nationality. Ritter observed: “Prussian patriotism needed to expand into German patriotism, and Prussia’s drive for power turn into the German people’s desire for liberty. In the period of gigantic conflicts which Europe now entered, the fate of the Prussian monarchy was inseparably chained to the fate of the German nation.”

Frederick believed wholeheartedly that monarchial rule was the only true form of government. Yet, as has been made abundantly clear, he felt that the sovereign existed only as a representative of his State. He codified his ideal duties of the righteous and successful kings: “They must be active, hard-working, upright and honest, and concentrate all their strength upon filling their office worthily.” For Frederick, this was not a mere “do as I say,” but an emplaced Facta non verba. Where we find fault with Frederick is that in all his attention to detail, he was aware of his own mortality, and yet he failed to prepare either a successor or a monarchy that could sustain the absence of his abilities. Eyck opined, “The institutions of a great state cannot be based on the unique capabilities of one man.” Frederick was unique, but without a true successor, the Prussian hegemony he envisioned would undergo a series of ebb and flow with the tides of European affairs until Prussia no longer existed.

His Prussia was all but eliminated by Napoleon, the succeeding Prussian monarchs and the minor German states incapable of preventing the engulfing flood of France’s initial military invasion. However, the Prussian military eventually prevailed, and set the stage for a resurgence of Frederickian hopes and dreams. In 1894, Dawson, while further explaining his observation that “in becoming citizens of the world, the Germans lost the sense of State-citizenship,” provides both a nod to the progress the Bismarckian Empire offered, while also offering a

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38 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 165.
39 Frederick the Great, "Volume 2. From Absolutism to Napoleon, 1648 - 1815 Frederick II (the Great).”
40 Eyck, Bismarck and the German Empire, 235.
41 Dawson, Germany and the Germans, 3.
The misfortunes which fell upon Germany during the Napoleonic despotism were a blessing in disguise. Germany needed a shock; she needed to be pulled together, to be reminded of what she was, had been, should be; and the shock and the reminder, rude as they were, proved her salvation. The time of her humiliation was the time of her renewal. The extremity of her condition called forth soldiers, statesmen, and singers of rare genius, men whose hearts were warmed by the sacred fire of patriotism, and who were inspired by the one desire to lift Germany from the dust and place her again upon her throne. Truly it may be said that her national unity has been perfected through suffering. From the close of last century onward for seventy years the history of Germany is the history of an uninterrupted movement towards national regeneration… this wonderful succession of epoch-making events made an empire out of a geographical expression, and a nation out of a concourse individuals who far too long had been proud of humility.  

Bismarck, too, faltered, and Germany, suffering even further “humiliation” allowed the “politics of culture of despair” that brought Hitler to power and forever stained German history with the malevolence of Nazism.

However, at its core—the multiculturalism, the true religious freedom, and a corrupt-free justice system—the Prussian spirit that embraced Germany through its “Enlightened Despot” managed to survive. Ritter commented, “military discipline and promptness, competence and complete integrity were the glories of the old Prussian bureaucracy. As long as the monarch existed, the population never completely lost faith in the reliability and impartiality” of the machine that was Frederician rule. Even today, the ideals of humanity and reason remain, even if the Hohenzollern dynasty and the monarchy do not.

Following World War II and the defeat of the Nazis, it was another 45 years (1945-1990) before Germany was unified once more. Today, Germany is the center of the European Union. The strength of German economy is the lifeblood of the European currency, the Euro.

Interestingly, it current leader, Chancellor Angela Merkel, was thrice elected through a rainbow coalition of some of the very German political parties remnants that Bismarck attempted to

42 Ibid., 3-4.
43 Ritter, Frederick the Great, 158.
destroy: In 2005, her Christian Democratic Union party joined with the Christian Social Union (CSU), and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD); in 2009 she was elected Chancellor through her party’s majority and formed a coalition government with the Free Democratic Party (FDP); and then again, in 2013, she was elected with just under half of the popular vote. Chancellor Merkel also serves as a senior member of the G7 (the finance minister forum) and is the leader of the G8 (the governmental political forum).

As a centerpiece of the European Union, the politico-economic union of twenty-eight European nations, Germany appears to enjoy the very hegemony of a *Mitteleuropa* that Frederick the Great envisioned for Prussia in the 18th century. If the historiography more accurately captured what Frederick envisioned and accomplished for Prussia, perhaps the victorious Allied powers would not have abolished his state. Frederick deserves his place as the true founder of a Germanic sense of unification against foreign interference, as the monarch that chose the path of the “first servant to the state,” and as the “Enlightened Despot” whose philosophy of reason survived the Second and Third *Reichs* and permeates modern German domestic and diplomatic policies. Considering Germany itself refers to itself, not as “Germany,” but as the *Land of the Deutschen*, perhaps in a movement to actually give “to each his own,” the Allied Control Authority’s Law Number 46 should have retained the name of Prussia and abolished the name of Germany.

*And these [Prussians] that you spit on as they try to change their worlds; are immune to your consultations, they are quite aware of what they are going through.*

-David Bowie 44

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44 *The Breakfast Club*, directed by John Hughes. The final scene of the movie is the appearance of this quote as the screen fades to black and the credits begin. The quote is actually lyrics from David Bowie’s song “Changes”—here the word “Prussians” substitutes for “children.”
VI

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