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**THE GERMAN NAVY:
FROM WORLD POWER TO ALLIANCE POWER**

by

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THE GERMAN NAVY: FROM WORLD POWER TO ALLIANCE POWER

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a case study of the German Navy. The analysis centers on the role of naval institutions within state and society, the interplay between naval strategy and statecraft, and the factors affecting civil-military relations. The progression from first a young empire driven by Weltpolitik and navalism, to ultimately a compact and multilaterally focused naval institution operating within alliance collective security systems, demonstrates the limits and potentials of naval strategy under widely disparate statecraft. Unlike the long-established maritime democracies, such as Britain, France, or the United States, Germany's naval experience is rife with discontinuities and in many ways can be viewed as infant in its contemporary form.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ASW | Anti Submarine Warfare |
| BALTAP | Allied Forces, Baltic Approaches |
| CCP | Catholic Centre Party |
| CSDP | Common Security and Defense Policy |
| DDP | German Democratic Party |
| EDC | European Defense Community |
| ESDP | European Security and Defense Policy |
| EU NAVFOR | EU Naval Force |
| EU | European Union |
| FRG | Federal Republic of Germany |
| GDR | German Democratic Republic |
| GMSA | German Mine Sweeping Authority |
| IRF | Immediate Reaction Force |
| KFOR | Kosovo Force |
| LSU | Labor Service Unit |
| MCM | Mine Counter Measures |
| MCMFORMED | Mine-Countermeasure Force Mediterranean |
| MLF | Multilateral Force |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NHT | Naval Historical Team |
| NVA | <i>Nationale Volksarmee</i> (National People's Army) |
| SED | <i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</i> (Socialist Unity Party) |
| SLOC | Sea Line of Communication |
| SNMG | Standing NATO Maritime Group |
| SPD | German Social Democratic Party |
| SSBN | Ballistic Missile carrying Submarine |
| STANAVFORCHAN | Standing Naval Forces, Channel |
| STANAVFORLANT | Standing Naval Forces, Atlantic |

UN
UK

United Nations
United Kingdom

WEU
WWI
WWII

Western European Union
World War I
World War II

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The story of the German Navy from the 19th century until the present illustrates the limitations and potential of maritime strategy as a feature of national and alliance strategy. In such maritime democracies as the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States, the tendency exists to focus solely on the national record of naval strategy to the exclusion of other examples of strategy other than the formation of legend and myth in a manner unhelpful to any real understanding of the nature of strategy and the purpose of navies as an expression of national power. This thesis takes the record of the German Navy more seriously than its many colorful legends or as a handy source of interesting tales of war at sea. In fact, the strategic order of the present is hard to conceive without the role that Germany's navy played in the 20th century with two failed bids for world power, for which reason alone a young naval officer interested in the higher aspects of war and power should concern him or herself with this important story.

Less well known as an example of strategy, but significant all the same, is the extension of this story after 1945 in the two Germanys and into the united Germany and its navy since 1990. In this connection, the navies of the world all have taken on different roles germane to the political character, size and geography of the given nation state and the international context within which said navy operates. What is the validity of Admiral Alfred T. Mahan's statement in his seminal late 19th century epoch of imperialism that "the history of the seaboard nations has been less determined by the shrewdness and foresight of governments than by conditions of position, extent, configuration, number, and character of their people."¹ This statement was to flatter both the British and the American reader of the late 19th century, but it was a statement that was as much read in Imperial Germany by those in a rising tide of national energy who aspired to world power. The impact of this idea was calamitous, but the German attempt at naval power was central, in the end, to Germany finally finding an appropriate role for itself as middle

¹ Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1918), 28.

naval power within the framework of more coherent statecraft, a fact that bears repeating in a new age of imperialism and its strategic confusion in the present. This study seeks to find this link between statecraft, national policy and naval strategy in the case of a non-Anglo-Saxon continental power with world standing. An analysis of such phenomena has great merit for young naval officers who seek to understand the high aspects of their service and its place in the arena of national and international policy and strategy.

Throughout the past century and a half, the German Navy as the servant of empires and republics has struggled to find a role appropriate to the geographical, political, and economic realities that characterized each phase of German nationhood in modern times. From a quest to become a great world power under the leadership of Kaiser Wilhelm II in the epoch after 1888, to the ambition of dominating Europe under Hitler in 1939, and ultimately, a preference for first the divided Germany's role as imbedded in international alliances through a multilateral framework and later its role as a united nation, the German Navy at first evolved through many failed strategy-policy configurations along its journey to the present. This thesis seeks to find the common themes of policy and strategy, as well as the imponderable features at the heart of navies that move across these epochs in an effort to understand the making of naval strategy and the character of naval institutions within the German nation state and its expression of policy in both international and domestic terms. The thesis also highlights how, despite the appearance of continuity in certain aspects, discontinuities of various kinds have eventuated and what these latter things say to the general topic.

B. IMPORTANCE

The German nation today has regained a position of power in Europe whereby the record of total war in the past figures more in a negative sense to contemporary national goals and the popular mind than does the memory of heroism at sea and feats of combat derring-do. Yet, Germany has a rich naval history and its navy is a prominent feature of the armed forces, if not on the scale as in the maritime democracies. Imbued with a skepticism about the costs of war and a conception of national interest more or less on a continental scale, the domestic landscape in Germany does not support an expansion of

the present-day German Navy on the level of ambition of, say, the French and British navies with their more intact imperial legacies and blue water ethos.

One does ill to stumble—from an American perspective—too greatly over present-day German civil military relations, which do or do not conform to U.S. civil military relations, with its rather loud celebration of martial virtues by un-martial persons. The *Bundesmarine* of the present has established itself as a feature of the *Bundeswehr*, to be sure, in the shadow of the German Army, but the naval service is central to the life of the forces, and its role in counter-terror and counter-piracy operations garners above average note if not some skepticism. Despite contemporary public doubts about the moral waste of war and its political futility, generally, and a neuralgia about any pathos-laden summoning in public life of Hitler's Navy in battle, the *Bundeswehr* is presently in a process of reconfiguration and reorganization with great importance for the peace and security of Europe and German civil military relations and the formation of strategy and policy in the alliance.

The role of the navy in the past bulks heavily into the formation of policy, the strength of the forces, and civil military relations as pertains to how sailors see themselves in German society. The common view in Germany is that a solid understanding of the failures of strategy, policy, and civilian interaction apropos the navy is of utmost importance as the *Bundesmarine* looks toward a future that can be unmarred by the past. The young officer learns that the extraction of narrow, naval operationally bound lessons from the record of war is a dead end. The making of wise policy decisions that support the long-term health of the German state and of Europe as a whole imposes the need for a broader view of policy and strategy, which has led to a profoundly different approach than operated in the epoch from 1880 until 1945.

With the creation of the *Bundesmarine* in 1955, Germany for the first time adopted a naval policy appropriate to the geographic and economic realities of the state—maintaining an appropriately medium-size force with an overall strategic aim of being a strong alliance partner. The modern German Navy has resulted from an evolution of the *Bundesmarine*, but now German policy makers have acknowledged a need for reform in

order to structure a navy that is postured to defend against global threats within the context both of alliance operations and German security interests.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

The German Navy's relationship with its past throughout its various phases have demonstrated how this view of the past has changed with the different political and strategic order in Germany, a process from navalism and world power ambitions in the 19th and 20th centuries and, in the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the manner in which German civil military relations are often polarized over the role of the navy in both the domestic political excesses of the imperial and Weimar epoch, to say nothing of the role of the Navy in the *Wehrmacht* in national socialism.

One must make a distinction between security policy, naval strategy and the role of the navy generally in the armed forces, and how sailors look at the past as they see themselves. The German past is fraught with challenges, as well as examples of naval virtues, and the selection of these issues has long been problematic in a way that outsiders can only poorly understand. In the German Navy, this issue hinges on what is meant with the term tradition—that is, a usable past for the professional extracted from a history that often offers little that is of much use. The German experience is unique in that the *Bundesmarine* (as a part of the *Bundeswehr*) has had to construct its tradition from selected episodes in the past while eschewing national socialism and the worst excesses of the *Kriegsmarine*—while maintaining the tradition of command and obedience that goes back to Prussian days, but altering it to fit within a democracy. An American scholar who has analyzed the issue notes “[m]aintenance of military tradition as practiced in the *Reichswehr* and *Wehrmacht*, that is to say, as a means of preserving the exclusive position of the military in the state through the use of symbols and ceremonies drawn from the past, and as a method of operational and political education for soldiers, played a minor role in the planning that took place during the period from 1950 to 1955,”² but

² Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 48.

this minor role was found to hinder the construction of a cohesive military, and ultimately gave way to a reconnection of sorts with the past. This all begs the question of how does a naval institution go about building new roles and missions, as well as laying a foundation of naval professionalism, as Germany did with its concept of tradition from the wreckage in 1945–1955. That is, how did sailors re-forged their connection with state and society, and how did the German Navy transform itself from an exclusive “state within a state” system as was manifest in the Weimar and Nazi eras, into one centered around the “citizen in uniform” as is found in Germany today?

Part and parcel to understanding the ways in which the German Navy rebuilt itself in state and society is the reform of command, obedience, leadership and democratic integration manifest in the practice and ideal of *Innere Führung*.³ Without equal term in the English language, the German air force officer and NPS graduate Michael Lux explains it “means that the soldier in democracy—the citizen in uniform—must *not* serve or defend any regime, ruler, or ideology with unconditional obedience against the best of one’s knowledge.”⁴ This concept served as the guiding light during the early years of a West German military in the wake of Nazism, and it created an ethos amongst the naval professionals that could be both be functional and exist within the bounds of a military serving in a democracy. *Innere Führung* recognizes that the cultivation of tradition “promotes the intellectual and political maturity of soldiers and the integration of the *Bundeswehr* into state and society.”⁵ Thomas Berger argues that for Germany, “the armed forces are trustworthy only if they are integrated into civilian society,” as well as the executive branch of government with its checks and balances,⁶ which has resulted in a conflict between those who view tradition as essential to fostering a functional

³ *Innere Führung*, as defined in the January 2008 *Dienstvorschrift* 10/1, is “the guiding principle of the ‘citizen in uniform,’ and ‘ensures that Bundeswehr soldiers are part of society.’ The term cannot be translated literally as “internal command,” as such a term in English has no counterpart in U.S. military usage.

⁴ Michael G. Lux, “Innere Führung—A Superior Concept of Leadership” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2008), 1.

⁵ Joint Service Regulation ZDv 10/1, *Innere Führung (Leadership, Development and Civic Education)*, Bonn, January 28, 2008, annex 3/3.

⁶ Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 195.

professional military and those who fear its role in a resurgence of German militarism, imperialism and nationalism. In this thesis, I argue that the reconstruction of tradition and the cultivation of military professionalism within the *Bundesmarine* has been vital to the healing of German civil-military relations, and I will demonstrate the ways in which the contemporary German Navy has drawn from the past to foster a professional alliance-based force that is disassociated with the unfavorable aspects of its history.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

A useful framework for the major themes in German naval history comes from the prominent German naval historian—and retired head of the *Bundeswehr* history office and German Navy captain—Dr. Werner Rahn. At the 1990 Mahan Centennial Conference, Rahn presented his “*Twelve Theses on the Development of the German Navy in the 19th and 20th Centuries*.”⁷ Rahn’s theses span the gap between the early German Navy and its role as a symbol of national unity during the unification of the German states, to an instrument of alliance strategy as manifest in its modern form. These ideas have great utility for the purpose of this study and are further undergirded by the work of a U.S. historian of the cold war epoch, Keith M. Bird’s *German Naval History: A Guide to the Literature*. His work serves as a bibliographic guide to fill in the details along the trajectory from the imperial *Kaiserliche Marine* to the post-war navies of West Germany (the *Bundesmarine*) and East Germany (the *Volksmarine*). An exploration of the process of German reunification following the fall of the Berlin wall, and the reinforcement of a strategy centered around promoting Germany as a responsible alliance partner as the two separate naval organizations were merged into one, will rely on contemporary sources, such as the late Ronald D. Asmus’s, *Germany in Transition: National Self-Confidence and International Reticence*, and the various German White Papers published by the ministry of defense.

⁷ Werner Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies: Their Defeat and Re-Birth—from Confrontation to Cooperation; Twelve Theses on the Development of the German Navy in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 1990). This work is the final essay in the collection of essays edited by Rahn titled *Deutsche Marinen im Wandel: vom Symbol nationaler Einheit zum Instrument internationaler Sicherheit* (The German navy from its beginning as a symbol of national unity to its role as an instrument of international security).

Rahn's second thesis deals with the origins of the German Navy not only as an answer to a Danish blockade, but as a symbol of unity that the Frankfurt parliament used as a political tool in unifying the German states. A brief foray into the early beginnings of the German Navy is useful as a scene-setter, but the story of the German Navy truly starts after 1871, with article 53 of the constitution granting the German navy imperial status and bestowing it with the name *Kaiserliche Marine*.⁸ In his first thesis, Rahn discusses the prominence of Mahan's sea power theories in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and the evolution of the navy for use "as a military instrument in order to be able to assert her position in relation to other great powers."⁹ Kaiser Wilhelm II was an ardent disciple of Mahan, and, together with his Chief of Navy Admiral Alfred Von Tirpitz, he ultimately conceived of a High Seas Fleet that could be used as a tool of his aggressive foreign policy *weltpolitik* (world policy). Lawrence Sondhaus's *Preparing for Weltpolitik* provides context to the early social and strategic dilemmas facing the imperial navy. A deeper exploration of the economic and domestic political strains imposed by the construction of the Kaiser's High Seas Fleet will be facilitated by Gary Weir's *Building the Kaiser's Navy* and Holger H. Herwig's "*Luxury*" *Fleet*.

The *Kaiserlichemarine* ultimately focused on a Mahanian strategy of building a battleship fleet, engaging in an economically damaging naval arms race with Great Britain perpetuated by the unveiling of the Grand Fleet's first dreadnaught class battleship in 1905. Rahn's third thesis alludes to the dangers associated with Germany's aforementioned naval trajectory in the early twentieth century, concluding "any power policy which included a claim to rule the seas interfered with Great Britain, was bound to encounter deep mistrust on the part of this strategically-minded sea power, a mistrust which could quickly turn out to be a deadly danger to the Reich."¹⁰

Prior to this bid to become a great maritime power, the German admiralty spent some time in the late nineteenth century under the influence of the newly developed

⁸ Lawrence Sondhaus, *Preparing for Weltpolitik: German Sea Power Before the Tirpitz Era* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 101.

⁹ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

Jeune École (young school)—a camp espoused by French Admiral Hyacinthe-Laurent-Theophile Aube—which focused on cruiser warfare and *guerre de course* rather than sea control and the maintenance of large battleship fleets.¹¹ The *Jeune École* was diametrically opposed to Mahan’s theory of how a navy should be structured and employed, and it came at a time when the maritime democracies were all amenable to adopting new naval policies. Such debates were not merely theoretical, but required completely different approaches to fleet construction. Technological advancements were outpacing construction timelines, which, taken together with uncertainty of the overall direction the fleet should take, fed into Wilhelm II’s less favorable traits, which Alfred von Tirpitz outlines as “his swift comprehension, his imagination, which was easily distracted by individual impressions, and his self-consciousness,” resulting in “the danger that irresponsible influences would release impulses which would either be impossible to carry out or would not be in harmony with the whole course of action.”¹² Tirpitz was highly influential in the focusing of the Kaiser’s naval ambitions, the extent to which will be researched through Tirpitz’s seminal work *My Memoirs*. Rahn’s fourth thesis touches on the inability of the Reich’s military-industrial complex to keep pace with the Kaiser’s ambitious fleet design in the years leading up to World War I while still meeting the requirements of maintaining Europe’s largest army.¹³

The failures of German naval strategy and policy were strikingly evident at the outbreak of war in 1914. Per Tirpitz’s series of naval laws that went into effect between 1898 and 1912, the fleet would not be ready until 1928, which by itself posed major problems to the Reich when it unwillingly went to war in 1914. Beyond inadequate material readiness, Ivo Nikolai Lambi summarizes the foundational problems as such: lack of inter-agency coordination by the *Reichstag*; the Kaiser’s direct involvement in minute details of naval matters that should have been reserved for the chancellor and the naval office; relative youth of the navy as a military institution; and an unclear concept of

¹¹ Sondhaus, *Preparing for Weltpolitik*, 159.

¹² Alfred von Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, Vol. 1* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1919), 201–202.

¹³ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 2.

naval strategy.¹⁴ Lambi's work supports Rahn's fifth thesis, which is that at the outbreak of World War I, "the German Naval Command's political and strategic concept did not work."¹⁵ Dan Van der Vat provides a chronicle of the naval follies during the war, culminating in the scuttling of the High Seas Fleet at Scapa Flow in 1918, an event that represented "the embodiment of one of the greatest geo-political and strategic errors in history and the product of an obsession sustained for two decades in defiance of reality."¹⁶

During the Weimar period, the German Navy took on the name *Reichsmarine*. This period was characterized by the limitations placed on the armed forces of the German republic as dictated by the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Rahn, in his sixth thesis, addresses the conflict between the Naval High Command and the unfamiliar republican form of government, going on in his seventh thesis to conclude that "the German naval leadership did not reconcile itself to the Treaty of Versailles."¹⁷ Two interesting phenomena resulted from the limitations placed on the *Reichsmarine* by the Treaty of Versailles. On the one hand, Timothy Mulligan points out the sea service became "rigorously selective in recruitment,"¹⁸ due to the manpower cap of 15,000 officers and enlisted imposed by the treaty.¹⁹ Not only was the navy highly selective, but Bird argues the navy also went about rewriting its history to "create a tradition that would support its aspirations."²⁰ These two factors served to isolate the naval professionals from the Weimar society and government. An in-depth analysis of the Weimar naval period will

¹⁴ Ivo Nikolai Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862–1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 424–25.

¹⁵ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 2.

¹⁶ Dan Van der Vat, *The Grand Scuttle: The Sinking of the German Fleet at Scapa Flow in 1919* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), 25.

¹⁷ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 3.

¹⁸ Timothy P. Mulligan, "German U-Boat Crews in World War II: Sociology of an Elite," *The Journal of Military History* 56, no. 2 (April, 1992): 261–82, JSTOR(1985799).

¹⁹ Brigham Young University, "Treaty of Versailles," Section II (Naval Clauses), article 183, <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versailles.html>.

²⁰ Keith Bird, *German Naval History: A Guide to the Literature* (New York: Garland, 1985), 43.

be facilitated by Douglas Carl Peifer's 1991 thesis, "Evolution of a Naval Strategy: The Lessons of the First World War and their Incorporation in German Naval Planning 1924–1939."

Public support of the navy was initially very low after the war, and only through great propaganda campaigns undertaken by Tirpitz was this turned around. Building public support for the navy relied on a distorted historiography that espoused the greatness of Germany's brief foray as a blue water navy, and a disassociation with the navy as a symbol of national unity, as Bird proposes "the attempt to link the *Reichsmarine* of 1919–1933 with its revolutionary ancestor's colors of black, red, and gold was vigorously fought by the navy."²¹ The development of German naval strategy in the interwar years was driven then not only by the material limitations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, but by the myth of the great German blue water navy. Rather than breaking from the past and developing a naval strategy that was a good fit for the German state, the *Reichsmarine* went about a naval construction program that supported past conceptions of German naval power. The *Reichsmarine* attributed its failures in World War I to the revolutions and mutinies of 1918 and to bad statecraft rather than to the realities of British sea power that decimated the inferior German Navy.

The Versailles Treaty limited German warships to a maximum displacement of 10,000 tons.²² Rather than build up a fleet of smaller coastal defense cruisers, Germany continued its ambition to be a seafaring nation by building *panzerschiffe* class armored battleships that weighed in at exactly at 10,000 tons. These "pocket battleships," a name bestowed by the British, served no true strategic purpose other than fulfilling the myth of Germany as a great sea power—constrained nonetheless by treaty limitations. Germany, it seems, had not yet accepted geographic realities, and the *Reichsmarine* could not afford to abandon the myth that Tirpitz constructed, because as Peifer argues, "in the immediate post-war years, the key concern of the German navy was survival."²³

²¹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 219.

²² Brigham Young University, "Treaty of Versailles," article 190.

²³ Douglas C. Peifer, "Evolution of a Naval Strategy: The Lessons of the First World War and Their Incorporation in German Naval Planning 1924–1939" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1991), 25.

An analysis of the *Kriegsmarine*, the German Navy during the period of National Socialist rule from 1933 through 1945, will be facilitated by the multi-volume work *Germany and the Second World War*. Major currents during this phase of the German naval experience were the mismatch between Hitler's bid for world domination and the material readiness of his fleet, Hitler's hesitance to become entangled in a naval war with Great Britain, and continued misunderstanding of the limited naval possibilities for a continentally aligned state. In his eighth thesis, Rahn argues, "When the war came, the Navy was totally unprepared for it."²⁴ Hitler, initially, was not a proponent of a large naval construction program. He was "quite prepared to accept only a 'coastal navy' in order to achieve an understanding with Great Britain."²⁵ The major theme of Hitler's naval ambitions in the decade leading to World War II was this refusal to provoke Great Britain, which stood in opposition to Commander in Chief of the *Kriegsmarine* Grand Admiral Raeder's Z-plan (a massive fleet construction project, which included two aircraft carriers) and strategic ideas for how the *Kriegsmarine* should be employed. A deeper understanding of the Hitler-Raeder relationship will be drawn from Raeder's autobiography *My Life*, which will be a pivotal exploration in understanding the evolution of Hitler's naval aspirations throughout the *Kriegsmarine* period.

Despite Hitler's desires for England to remain neutral, England declared war on Germany in response to his invasion of Poland. The German fleet was nowhere near completion at that point, and it was certainly no match for the British fleet. The Reich realized that the only way to counter England was to disrupt its seaborne supply lines, which is how Admiral Karl Dönitz and his U-boat force came into prominence. In a 1945 essay, Dönitz posed "only the U-boat could be considered [in disrupting English commerce], as only this could penetrate into the main areas of English sea communications in spite of English sea supremacy on the surface."²⁶ Rahn's ninth thesis argues the *Kriegsmarine's* reliance on U-boat Sea Line of Communication (SLOC)

²⁴ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 3.

²⁵ Wilhelm Deist, "The Rearmament of the Wehrmacht," in *Germany and the Second World War Vol. I: The Buildup of German Aggression*, ed. Klaus A. Maier et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 458.

²⁶ G. H. Bennett and R. Bennett, *Hitler's Admirals* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 59.

disruption failed by 1943, due to advancements in allied surveillance and anti-submarine weaponry.²⁷ A deeper analysis of Germany's failures at the close of the war will be facilitated by *Germany and the Second World War* and Bennett and Bennett's *Hitler's Admirals*.

The German state was disarmed in the direct aftermath of the war, and the navy was dismantled. Naval activity was limited to minesweeping, policing, and enforcing customs regulations—activities that were administered by the occupation governments. It was not until 1955–56 that the governments of both the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the GDR began building indigenous naval forces. The *Bundesmarine* and the *Volksmarine* were both staffed by former officers of the *Kriegsmarine*, but both organizations identified with German naval history in different ways and developed strategies reflective of the disparate policies of the two states as dictated by their alignment with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the West and the Warsaw Pact in the East. Peifer argues “the *Kriegsmarine* proved controversial in post-World War II Germany because it had combined admirable characteristics with objectionable traits,”²⁸ and Bird adds that “the navy’s leaders found themselves from the beginning faced with the problem of selecting the appropriate traditions and military virtues from its past.”²⁹ It was during this period, Rahn argues in his eleventh thesis, that the *Bundesmarine* “was obliged merely to perform that function which a German Navy can actually perform.”³⁰ That is to say, as a feature of alliance strategy, rather than as an unrealistic tool of power politics.

Thomas Berger argues that the persistent fear of remilitarization and renationalization among German society makes Germany’s “continued preference for diplomacy and engagement over military power and confrontation understandable.”³¹ He

²⁷ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 4.

²⁸ Douglas C. Peifer, *The Three German Navies: Dissolution, Transition, and New Beginnings, 1945–1960* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002), 1.

²⁹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 725.

³⁰ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 5.

³¹ Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 192.

poses that the German military has before it the task of not only repairing the relationship between itself and the civilian population, but getting society to accept a military that develops a culture based on history and tradition for the sake of cohesion. The *Bundeswehr* has been in a process of reform since the end of the Cold War, transforming itself from an instrument of repelling the threat of the Soviet Union to an expeditionary force capable of participating in multilateral military engagements commensurate to the size and capabilities of the German state. Thomas Durell Young reasons Germany has had more trouble than other European nations in reforming its military forces because of its unique history.³² Supporting German national interests beyond the homeland—in other words, using the military as an extension of foreign policy—is still very controversial.

The 2006 White Paper lists national and collective defense as the central tasks of the *Bundeswehr*, and that per Article 24(2) of the Basic Law, “German Armed Forces may, in addition to national and Alliance defense, be deployed on international operation in the context of, and according to the rules of mutual collective security systems.”³³ The German Navy has evolved from an escort force into a capable expeditionary force that is postured to act globally to support NATO and other alliance initiatives. This evolution has occurred often times against the grain of public opinion, because within the German public a certain skepticism still exists regarding an expansion of German military capability beyond direct national defense. The important task for the German government thus is to fully repair the relationship between the citizens and the military in order to assure future funding appropriate to the strategic goals of the expanded German Navy and its responsibility as an equal partner in alliance frameworks capable of responding to transnational threats, such as terrorism and piracy.

³² Thomas D. Young, “Nationalization or Integration? The Future Direction of German Defense policy,” *Defense Analysis* 11, no. 2 (1995): 109–120.

³³ German Federal Ministry of Defense, *White Paper 2006: On German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*, 30, October 2006, <http://www.cfr.org/germany/white-paper-german-security-policy-future-bundeswehr-2006/p11877>.

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

The research for this thesis will entail a historical study of the German Navy, following a methodology along the lines of *Militärgeschichte*, which calls for “an examination of the history of the armed forces within the state as a social and political institution, as well as its development and accomplishments in war and peace.”³⁴ Specific lessons will be drawn from each period in question, and the common themes that span the history of the German naval experience will be analyzed—specifically as those themes apply to the contemporary German Navy. A plethora of historical sources exist for the *Kaiserliche Marine*, *Reichsmarine*, and *Kriegsmarine* periods; what is lesser known and researched is the experience of the two German navies during the Cold War, and the intricacies of unification into what has become the German Navy of today.

These common threads from history that manifest themselves in the traditions and roles of the modern day *Bundesmarine* will be weighed against the German military’s guiding principle of *Innere Führung* in an attempt to gain some universal lessons for the naval professional on how history and tradition play into the functioning of a professional naval institution operating within a democracy. As a technical note: A plethora of German sources exist that would be relevant to this thesis, but this author is limited to drawing upon English secondary sources and translated primary sources where available due to an inability to read German.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

Chapter II of this thesis will analyze the origins of a German Navy, touching briefly on its role a symbol of nationalism under Chancellor Bismarck, and moving on to its place in Kaiser Wilhelm II’s drive to become a great maritime power the likes of Great Britain. The research in this chapter will pay specific mind to the search for a strategy in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Chapter III will gauge the effectiveness of the Versailles Treaty in quelling German naval ambitions during the *Reichsmarine* phase. The chapter will then analyze the problems that arise when a nation’s naval strategy is built around assumptions (i.e., British neutrality) and treaty constraints rather than reality.

³⁴ Bird, *German Naval History*, 5.

The initial effectiveness of the *Kriegsmarine* under Hitler's leadership, and the connection between the naval elites with their past will be assessed. The reasons for the failure of Germany's U-boat campaign against the superior English sea power will be assessed, specifically as those strategic shortcomings relate to Germany's ultimate failure in the war. Chapter IV will focus on the parallel development of two separate, but historically linked, naval organizations during the period of West and East Germany. Chapter V will assess the German Navy's success in creating a unified historical monologue that provided a foundation for a unified German Navy to be successful. It will then provide historical examples of why a strategy that acknowledges Germany's geography and is built on supporting a greater alliance has been the most effective in German naval history, and will address contemporary issues facing the German Navy as its roles expand ever more into expeditionary and transnational operations. Chapter VI will conclude by synthesizing the lessons learned through the preceding historical analysis into practical and universal takeaways for the naval professional serving any flag.

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II. THE KAISERLICHE MARINE AND THE BID FOR WORLD POWER

By the end of the 19th century, naval power emerged as the arbiter of world power in the age of imperialism. During this tumultuous time of industrial and technological growth, the German empire—with Kaiser Wilhelm II at the helm since 1888—sought to ignore geostrategic realities and make a bid for world power through the creation a first-rate navy the likes of Great Britain. The Kaiser’s foreign policy centered around *Weltpolitik* (world policy), and he saw a large battle fleet as dictated in the writings of Mahan as a way of not only building credibility as a possible alliance partner with a second tier power, such as France or Russia, but as a way of gaining the respect of Great Britain as a peer. The pages of history resonate with the failure of German sea power by the end of World War I as a bid for world power—failure that is largely attributed to the effects of building a navy without understanding its grand strategic purpose and without a suitable basis of policy and sensible ends and means. This chapter will demonstrate how the construction of the High Seas Fleet was more an exercise in political control and consolidation of power at the hands of the Imperial Navy Office than an exercise in rational strategic decision-making. The key relationship between civilian leadership, constituents, and naval leadership will be analyzed as essential factors to the raising of a fleet where before none existed.

A. ORIGINS OF A NAVY: THE STORY LEADING UP TO 1888

To fully understand how the Navy as a tool of *Weltpolitik* came to be, a brief foray into the origins of the German Navy is of importance. In its Prussian history prior to 1870, Germany had no legacy of naval tradition and thus none of the framework in place required to support a navy. Bird argues that “the building of a German navy and a naval tradition where none had existed before could not proceed without the development of political, military, and strategic foundations.”³⁵ Since Prussia was a continental power focused on other continental powers, this process happened slowly and haphazardly

³⁵ Bird, *German Naval History*, 10.

under Prince Adalbert during the initial era of German unification and confederation; the navy at the time served more of a political purpose in providing a symbol for nationalism and less of a strategic purpose as a military institution. Nationalistic sentiment, and the prominence of liberal ideas like that of Friedrich List's national political economy theories that espoused the importance of attaining maritime power in order to expand the empire and become a power player in world politics, helped in developing public support for German naval ambition. Perhaps most vexing to the construction of a fleet was that the Frankfurt Parliament, though strongly advocating the construction of a German Navy, had no power to tax the individual German states and thus was relegated to appealing to the individual states in a bid to raise funds for a fleet.

The unification of Germany in 1871 resulted in a nation state with the financial capacity to build a fleet, but having little experience with navies and no consensus on what role exactly a fleet should carry out, initial efforts at fleet construction were haphazard and unguided. The Prussian naval ministry passed a ten-year fleet plan through the *Reichstag* in 1867 that called not only for sixteen armored warships to defend home waters, but 20 corvettes that could be used for foreign service.³⁶ Of these, only five armored warships were built, a symptom of the indecision and reversals that characterized the German shipbuilding program in the first decades of the empire. Albrecht von Stosch (1871–83) went on to update this construction plan in 1873, but the plan, like others before it, suffered from “few direct connections to the strategic needs of the state.”³⁷ The early naval plans all suffered from a lack of consensus on what purpose a navy should serve in connection to the state, and they predated considerations of the political-economic aspect of naval construction. Because “most pro-navy politicians did not view naval expenditure as a source of employment and income for their constituents,”³⁸ inexpensive construction plans were favored over expensive ones. For this reason, animosity toward the construction of battleships existed and many in the

³⁶ Sondhaus, *Preparing for Weltpolitik*, 86.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

Reichstag preferred a strategy that focused on less expensive cruisers and torpedo boats—not necessarily because that was the best strategy, but because it was the most cost-effective.

1. The Politics of Civil-Military Relations in the Imperial Period

Denmark’s ability to impose a blockade on the German states during the 1848–50 Schleswig-Holstein war is what seeded the nationalist sentiment for a navy; as Naval historian Lawrence Sondhaus aptly put it, “outrage over the Danish blockade generated a pro-navy sentiment that went hand in hand with the broader desire for German unity.”³⁹ Sondhaus contends that the main reason Germany had not built a fleet capable of preventing a small state like Denmark from blockading it can be attributed to cultural factors—a lack of precedent among the populace for having a navy—a hurdle that was “weakened only when the revolutionary enthusiasm of 1848-49 inspired young men from all over Germany to volunteer for naval service.”⁴⁰ Prince Adalbert’s 1848 *Denkschrift* (memo), which Bird refers to as the “intellectual birth of the navy,” offered three strategic possibilities for a German navy: a “defensive” coastal defense, an “offensive” coastal defense and protection of trade, and an “independent sea power.”⁴¹ Germany, for the first time, had a vision of what its naval strategy could be, but as yet, no political basis or plan for realization to go along with it at a time when Germany was hardly unified and able to wield power in central Europe, to say nothing of the either French or British maritime power of that epoch.

The relationship between the civilian leadership and populace and the military, is an important one to consider in analyzing the progress of the German Navy from the mid 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century. Because fleets are expensive programs, and thus absorb large amounts of tax revenue, no naval ambition can be realized without the political support of the nation state and its citizens. An example of what happens when this relationship sours is manifest in the public relations nightmare

³⁹ Sondhaus, *Preparing for Weltpolitik*, 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴¹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 9.

that was the *Grosser Kurfürst* disaster. On May 29, 1878, just 23 days after its commissioning, the battleship *Grosser Kurfürst* collided with the *Koenig Wilhelm* while steaming in formation. The collision sent the *Kurfürst* sinking into the depths of the North Sea along with 276 of its 500-man crew. Mishaps were commonplace during the first decades of the German navy owing to a lack of experience among the personnel, but this mishap in particular put a sour taste in the mouths of Germany's naval enthusiasts and resulted in a popular loss of confidence in the navy at a critical time when the Reich was yet new. Not only was the inadequate training of personnel brought to light, but the public began to question the expenditure on fleet construction. As a result, major fleet construction initiatives were not again undertaken until Tirpitz and his propaganda machine entered the scene in the 1890s.⁴²

2. Manning the Fleet

During the Bismarckian wars for unification from 1864 until 1871, the German Navy was treated as a supporting arm of the army as was the norm in the strategic culture of central Europe. This phenomenon carried over into the first two decades of the empire, evident not only in the navy's role of coastal defense against a potential French threat, but in the fact that at its head the Navy saw leaders the likes of Stosch (1871–83) and Leo von Caprivi (1883–88), both of whom were army generals—as such, they treated naval strategy as an extension of infantry tactics and took myopic views as regards ship building. The early German Navy experienced a sort of identity crisis as its sailors took to drill and organization on the model of exacting Prussian army form, leaving little time for the technical practices akin to seamanship—as Sondhaus puts it, “Prussian army spit and polish went to ridiculous lengths.”⁴³ That is not to say that the efforts of these generals at the helm of the early navy were ineffectual, for it was their organizing principles that laid the foundations in industry, in politics, and in public relations that were required before a navy aimed at sea power could come to fruition. In addition to the networks he forged, Stosch did his part to professionalize the officer corps by establishing Germany's first

⁴² Sondhaus, *Preparing for Weltpolitik*, 129.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 107.

naval academy in Kiel during his tenure—placing emphasis on general education in matters relating to the naval practice.

Two key problems became evident in the early raising of a professional corps of personnel to run the navy. When recruiting his officer cadre, Sondhaus points out that for Stosch, “practical experience—even bravery in wartime—failed to outweigh factors, such as inferior social background, poor education, and the stigma of onetime civilian sea service.”⁴⁴ As such, the officer corps was more built around nobility and less around aptitude. Within the ratings, there was little consistency or long-running knowledge because the enlisted force was conscripted. Three-year conscription offered the men just enough time to receive training and serve actively in the fleet for perhaps a year before leaving the service. In comparison to the British Navy, which had a volunteer force, proficiency ranked far lower. Tirpitz would later twist this into a strength, claiming that because of conscription, Germany could more readily man their growing fleet in the early twentieth century than Britain could, but his was an argument strictly for quantity over quality.

B. KAISER WILHELM II—“THE NEW COURSE”

On June 15, 1888, Wilhelm II succeeded his father Frederick III as the King of Prussia and Emperor of Germany. Described as “a man of elegant superficiality,”⁴⁵ the Kaiser had an affinity for the pomp and circumstance of naval traditions, and he was generally obsessed with all things associated with the navy. He brought this enthusiasm to bear in his foreign policy preferences. After firing Bismarck as chancellor and putting aside the former’s alliance policy and its limits to continental power, Kaiser Wilhelm brought about a “new course” in German foreign policy that focused on the fleet as a means to world power or, conversely, an inevitable national decline if Germany failed to match the imperialists. The Kaiser was an ardent believer in Mahan’s sea power theories that were en vogue during that era, but he also found himself intrigued by an alternate

⁴⁴ Sondhaus, *Preparing for Weltpolitik*, 105.

⁴⁵ Holger Herwig, *Luxury Fleet: The Imperial German Navy, 1888–1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 19.

option for sea power that was emerging on the scene at the turn of the century: The *Jeune École*. His vacillations over just what type of fleet Germany would need resulted in what is termed the “lost decade” in German navalism, and it was not until Admiral von Tirpitz became involved that politics, the German people, and the shipbuilding industry were sufficiently focused to actually undertake a respectable fleet construction policy.

Wilhelm went about a massive re-ordering of the naval command structure that served his role as the supreme commander of naval force, with the ultimate goal of giving himself more control and creating a navy “completely dependent upon him.”⁴⁶ On March 28, 1889, he created the *Marine-Kabinet* (Navy Cabinet), an office within the monarchy that gave the Kaiser himself authority over the appointment of officers, presentation of awards and decorations, and overall vision for the fleet. He followed this move by splitting the roles of the Imperial Admiralty into two new offices, the *Oberkommando* (Naval High Command) for operational control of the navy and the *Reichs-Marine-Amt* (State Secretary of the Imperial Navy Office) for administrative matters. He also established the *Admiralstab* (Admiralty Staff), which took on functions similar to the Prussian General Staff by advising during peacetime and in wartime giving the Kaiser direct authority over naval matters through this office.⁴⁷ By dividing the leadership of the navy in this way, the Kaiser effectively destroyed any unity of planning and command in the navy—things that not would be regained until Vice Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz was appointed as State Secretary in 1897, where he proceeded to consolidate the power of his office and gain major sway within the *Reichstag*. Tirpitz recalls in his memoirs that during this time, naval plans were presented to the *Reichstag* “not so much upon requirements as upon the probability of their being granted,” which was only compounded by the fact that “every authority in the navy wanted and proposed something different.”⁴⁸

Just as Kaiser Wilhelm came to power, a great strategy debate was sweeping the maritime powers of the world within the age of imperialism. Although Wilhelm was

⁴⁶ Herwig, “*Luxury Fleet*,” 18.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20–22.

⁴⁸ Tirpitz, *My Memoirs Vol. I*, 61–2.

enraptured by Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power on History*, and eventually became obsessed with the idea of a massive battle fleet that could afford Germany sea control and international respect, he was also influenced by the newly emergent *Jeune École* (young school) strategy espoused by French Admiral Theophile Aube. Calling for a completely different type of fleet composition, the *Jeune École* emphasized *guerre de course* and the use of smaller warships as the new face of maritime affairs, owing to the international nature of commerce and maintenance of overseas colonies. Such an approach would require a fleet of light cruisers for overseas service and thus stood in stark contrast to the battle fleet and ships of the line requirements of Mahan's blue water school of thought. For all of the Kaiser's strengths—a quick intellect, vision, and technical interest in navies—his weaknesses tended to stand in the way of progress. His mind was easily swayed, his vision would jump from one thing to the next, and although he made it his task to consolidate a great deal of control over the navy into his personal hands, he was not good at concentrated work or actually performing the important tasks that he had laid out for himself as regards building and running a navy. This all became evident with his vacillations over just what type of maritime power Germany should strive to be, and no consistency of direction was introduced until he appointed Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz as the State Secretary of the Imperial Navy Office.

C. ADMIRAL ALFRED VON TIRPITZ AND THE HIGH SEAS FLEET

Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz served as State Secretary of the Navy Office—that is maritime minister in the imperial cabinet—during the nineteen pivotal years from 1897 to 1916. He cut his teeth early in his career with the torpedo boat service and later as Chief of the cruiser squadron in Asia, but his true talent and contribution to the German Navy was in his penchant for politics and his passionate vision for a first-rate battleship fleet predicated on Alfred Thayer Mahan's sea power theories of the day. Herwig describes him as “a manipulator of men, the forerunner of the modern professional manager, an expert parliamentary tactician, a capable organizer, and the forerunner of the twentieth-century propaganda specialist.”⁴⁹ His role in building the German navy expounds upon

⁴⁹ Herwig, “*Luxury Fleet*,” 34.

the primacy of politics in naval matters. When it comes down to it, it was Tirpitz's ability to control the Reichstag, and thus the purse strings, that made him so successful in enacting Germany's first unified vision of a fleet construction plan. Where Tirpitz fell short was in understanding the strategic reason for his High Seas Fleet.

Tirpitz understood that in order to pass his bills through the Reichstag, he had to first garner mass public support for naval expansion among the German people. Ardent propagandist that he was, he launched a multi-pronged information campaign that successfully built a precedent for his sea power ideas. He popularized naval journals, such as the *Marine-Rundschau*, distributed translated copies of Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power on History* to the public via serialized prints in newspapers and complete volumes to every ship in the fleet, and perhaps most importantly recruited hundreds of academics to his cause. Organizations, such as The Colonial League, the Pan-German League, and the Navy League, were vital instruments in his campaign to rally public support around navalism as a singular national cause, while distracting the public from the rival political parties that were simultaneously trying to garner support for their anti-imperialist aims.⁵⁰

Tirpitz devised the *Reichsmarineamt Nachrichtenbureau* (Section for News and General Parliamentary Affairs)—a powerful propaganda tool that was used not only to foster support for a fleet among Germany's societal elites and members of the Reichstag, but among the German populace as a whole. In this connection, a strong civil-military relationship was a vital aspect of Germany's fleet construction program.⁵¹

1. The Navy Bills

Tirpitz first communicated his ideas regarding sea power to the Naval Office in 1884 with his *Dienstschrift IX*, which at its core espoused strategic offensive as the primary concern for the fleet. He argued "national world trade, world industry, and to a certain extent high-seas fisheries, world transportation, and colonies are impossible

⁵⁰ Herwig, "Luxury Fleet," 39–41.

⁵¹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 10.

without a fleet capable of taking the offensive.”⁵² This memo was the first connection of the fleet to a policy of *Weltpolitik*, and demonstrated his “linking of naval power to economic power and the equation of economic power with political power.”⁵³ Once he was able to win the Reichstag over with his shipbuilding plan, he was equally able to cement in the Kaisers psyche that Mahan’s “blue water” school was the course for German naval aspirations—not the *Jeune École*.

The First Navy Bill was passed through the Reichstag in April 1898. Calling for 19 battleships and 50 cruisers of various sizes by 1904, at an agreed upon expense of 409M Goldmarks, the bill was seemingly innocuous.⁵⁴ The significant clause of the bill that Tirpitz slipped in under the radar was the agreement that the battleships would be automatically replaced every 25 years. This bill secured regular fleet construction, enhanced the Kaiser’s power over the Reichstag, and provided work for a growing industrial base.⁵⁵ His Second Navy Bill came later in June 1900, largely in response to the Boer War and the Boxer Rebellion, and called for twice as many ships and an unconstrained budget. Because this bill morally constrained the Reichstag to constructing a fixed number of ships, historian Ivo Nikolai Lambi argues, Tirpitz was able to increase the size and cost of the ships after the bill was passed—no one in the Reichstag would “assume the responsibility for making the legally stipulated ships come out small and bad because of inadequate appropriations.”⁵⁶ His Second Navy Bill passed in 1900, and provided the Kaiser with what would later become his High Seas Fleet. The bill basically doubled the number of capital ships to be built, and left the budget open to be negotiated each year in the Reichstag. The first Navy Bill would have provided Germany with a fleet capable of deflecting French or Russian naval attack, but this Second Bill grabbed the attention of Great Britain and propelled Germany to the status of second naval power in the world.

⁵² Ivo Nikolai Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics, 1862–1914* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 75.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁵⁴ Herwig, “*Luxury Fleet*,” 42.

⁵⁵ Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics*, 149.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

As a domestic political weapon, Tirpitz's navy bills served to fight the Social Democrats cause. By promoting German industry through guaranteed naval contracts, the shipbuilding program afforded capitalist stability to the proletariat workforce and de-incentivized socialist and liberal backlash against the state. Within the Reichstag, Tirpitz aimed to consolidate as much power at the hand of the Kaiser as possible and block the Social Democrat's aims of establishing a more parliamentary government. Tirpitz also sought to garner support among Germany's middle class for his and Wilhelm's vision of an expansionist Germany, which he accomplished through propaganda campaigns and the increased standard of living afforded by industrial growth.

2. Risk Theory and the Naval Arms Race

Tirpitz's fleet building strategy assumed that as long as Germany could maintain a fleet ratio of 2:3 with that of Great Britain, then Germany stood a chance in a naval battle against them. This calculus was based on the fact that Great Britain's fleet, though numerically superior to Germany's, was spread thin across the globe supporting its vast colonial empire. This idea formed the basis of Tirpitz's "risk theory," which argued that the 2:3 ratio would deter an aggressor because even if an aggressor beat them in battle, the enemy could still potentially face a third aggressor after having been softened by the German fleet. Dr. Rahn argues that "any power policy which included a claim to rule to seas interfered with Great Britain, was bound to encounter deep mistrust on the part of this strategically-minded sea power, a mistrust which could quickly turn out to be a danger to the Reich."⁵⁷ This was Tirpitz's miscalculation, for he failed to anticipate the naval arms race with Britain that his battleship construction project incited. As indicated by Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill's initiative in 1912 to build two capital ships for every one that Germany built, rather than pose as a deterrent to Britain's sea power, Britain saw it as a direct threat to their livelihood and responded in kind.⁵⁸

Tirpitz had no delusions when he passed his Second Navy Bill that even with the increase in capital ships, Germany would not be a credible threat to Great Britain by

⁵⁷ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 2.

⁵⁸ Herwig, "Luxury Fleet," 79.

1905. This was acceptable, because at the time he was more concerned with having a fleet that increased Germany's *Bündnisfähigkeit*, or alliance value to other maritime nations, such as France or Russia. He observes in his memoirs that Germany's first task was to create a fleet "which would give us alliance-value; and the second was a corresponding policy of alliance."⁵⁹ So even in its infancy the German navy was oriented toward alliance value, but in a different way than we find in the contemporary navy that is fully integrated into alliance security constructs. Tirpitz understood the realities of German economy and industry, and that it was no match to that of Britain's in terms of ability to produce quantities of capital ships. He lost this grip on reality, however, when the HMS *Dreadnaught* was unveiled.

Great Britain's commissioning of the HMS *Dreadnought* on December 3, 1906 threw a large wrench into Germany's naval aspirations. This new class of battleship was a response to the technological realities of the day—the Mahanian concept of large fleet on fleet skirmishes was challenged by the increased range and accuracy of torpedoes and shipboard guns—Great Britain realized this when they incorporated large caliber 30.5cm guns in the *Dreadnaught*, their longer range was a response to the proliferation of torpedo boats carrying long range torpedoes.⁶⁰ In keeping pace, Tirpitz passed the 1906 and then 1908 *Novelles* (addendum to the Navy Bill) through the Reichstag that increased the replacement of capital ships from every 25 year to every 20, putting Germany on track to produce 3 dreadnaught-class battleships per year in place of outmoded pre-dreadnaught battleships and meet Tirpitz's goal of 60 capital ships.⁶¹ Thus began the maritime arms race between Germany and Britain, driven by the fast pace of technological advancement during the era—but as Dr. Rahn argues, Germany was unable to keep pace with Britain's shipbuilding program while still meeting the requirement of its large army.⁶² Herwig classifies this period leading up to the outbreak of war as "the most hectic, chaotic and,

⁵⁹ Tirpitz, *My Memoirs Vol. I*, 121.

⁶⁰ Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics*, 150.

⁶¹ Herwig, "Luxury Fleet," 67.

⁶² Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 2.

for the Reich, fateful in modern European history.”⁶³ The arms race cost Germany an inordinate amount of money, and the Reich was finding that taxes on consumer goods could no longer foot the bill. Tax reform had long been an avoided issue within the Reichstag, and the Army leadership was becoming distraught with the second seat they were taking to Tirpitz’s grand naval aspirations; this all culminated in the emergence of dissenting voices from the German leadership that began to question Germany’s naval aspirations.

D. WORLD WAR I—THE WAR THAT CAME TO SOON

Tirpitz recalls that Germany’s failure in the First World War “did not proceed from the acquisition of power, but from the weakness which did not know how to use that power either for the purpose of preserving or concluding peace, and in addition, from our illusions about our enemies, the nature of their war aims, their conduct of the war, and the nature of the economic war.”⁶⁴ Along these same lines, Herwig contends the outbreak of war revealed “the utter fiasco of German strategic planning.”⁶⁵ Tirpitz knew all along while he built his High Sea’s Fleet that Germany would still be no match for Great Britain in terms of all out war at sea, but he continually sold the lie that it was possible to the German people and to the Reichstag to ensure funding for his project. It took Britain’s Grand Fleet only a few days to gain sea control in the North Sea, and effectively to blockade German commerce. Initial conflict between the Grand Fleet and the High Seas Fleet at Heligoland resulted in the virtually unopposed loss of one of the Kaiser’s new dreadnoughts, and for fear of losing any more to combat, Wilhelm II ordered them back to port and thus relegated his battle force to a “fleet in being,” further facilitating Britain’s distant blockade strategy which had an attritional effect on the central powers of slow, but fearsome results.

A running strategy debate between the Imperial Naval Office and the Admiralty that permeated the years leading up to World War I (WWI) was that of the strategic

⁶³ Herwig, “*Luxury Fleet*,” 67.

⁶⁴ Tirpitz, *My Memoirs Vol. I*, vi.

⁶⁵ Herwig, “*Luxury Fleet*,” 148.

defensive versus the strategic offensive. Tirpitz, as the State Secretary, was a strong proponent of the strategic defensive—the value of the High Seas Fleet, as far as he was concerned, was in concentrating its forces in the mouth of the Elbe and presenting England with the looming threat of a “fleet in being,” while retaining elements of coastal defense in support of fleet action. This view ran counter to Friedrich Count von Baudissin’s (Chief of the Admiralty staff from 1908 on), who strongly believed that the fleet was best used in open combat on the high seas in an offensive manner.⁶⁶

The Battle of Jutland (Skagerak to the German) in 1916 revealed just how fateful had been the idea of German offensive sea power against Great Britain. Tirpitz’s risk theory was based on a British close blockade of German forces at their stronghold in Heligoland Bight, but in reality the British had no incentive to meet the German’s in open sea battle because they could just as easily conduct a distant blockade as a form of economic warfare and avoid decisive battle in which the Skagerak fight showed that the in qualitative terms, the British were often inferior to the Germans in tactics and equipment. The High Seas Fleet decided at last to bring the decisive naval battle to the Grand Fleet in May 1916 off the coast of Jutland, and although in the ensuing battle the High Seas Fleet was able to attain tactical victory in the battle (sinking 14 British ships to only 11 German ships lost), the tactical victory did not amount to any type of strategic victory for Germany because of the larger strategic problems of war for the central powers. Jutland was the High Seas Fleet’s only adventure a la Mahan across the North Sea, and after limping home post-battle, it did not set out against the Grand Fleet again due to the realization that in a further encounter, the superior British fleet would destroy the High Seas Fleet. It was at Jutland that the concept of a risk fleet was debunked, and after that encounter German strategic thinking shifted over to *guerre de course*, where the U-boats proved their worth over the dreadnought battleships.⁶⁷

Despite the High Seas Fleet’s ineffectiveness in battle, Tirpitz stood by his imperative of the strategic offensive, and only after a year of inactivity on the part of the High Seas Fleet did he concede to the effectiveness of *guerre de course*. This decision led

⁶⁶ Lambi, *The Navy and German Power Politics*, 338.

⁶⁷ Herwig, “*Luxury Fleet*,” 187-189.

to the offensive use of what heretofore had been an auxiliary defensive weapon, the submarine that replaced the commerce raider on the model of Graf Spee's cruiser squadron, for instance, the Emden. The rising success of U-boat commerce raiding missions led to a new strategic direction for the fleet. Clearly, Tirpitz's death grip on the offensive as a possible strategy was more tied to maintenance of his credibility for undertaking such an economically damaging construction plan, and an attempt to secure monies that the Reichstag was increasingly redirecting to the army in support of its active land campaign. Wolfgang Wegener, one of Tirpitz's greatest critics, likened his strategy to a "rider without a horse," arguing that his misinterpretation of Mahan's sea control theories completely ignored the Geo-strategic realities of Germany. As was demonstrated throughout the war, Britain had no reason to meet the High Seas Fleet in battle when distant blockade could be employed to affect Germany's wartime economy without contact. Germany's only successes at sea were in *guerre de course* tactics at the hand of cruisers and U-boats, completely contrary to the strategic ideas that Germany's navy was built upon.⁶⁸ This unintended outcome of the war was a newfound appreciation for the submarine. Tirpitz had always considered the U-boat projects as ancillary, but the damage they were able to inflict on British shipping during the war was substantial and influential in the development of Hitler's naval strategy in the war to come. A further analysis of this will follow in the next two chapters.

⁶⁸ Herwig, "Luxury Fleet," 191.

III. FROM REICHSMARINE TO KRIEGSMARINE: REBIRTH FROM DEFEAT, AND THE RESURGENCE OF GLOBAL AMBITION

World War I signified a strategic and moral disaster for the German navy. The revolution that had swept Germany in the fall of 1918 within defeat had begun among the bored sailors infected with Spartakist agitation. The naval leadership had caused the revolt with an insane kamikaze idea of self immolation as a final act of Wagnerian restoral of honor through mass suicide. Thus, in the immediate post war epoch, the High Seas Fleet—the crown jewel of the Tirpitz shipbuilding program—lay atop the seabed at Scapa in Scotland, scuttled there by its own commander Admiral von Reuter on June 21, 1919. The thought of the allied powers splitting up and laying claim to the ships of the High Seas Fleet, which was to the German navy a symbol of its greatness, was just too much to bear. The scuttling of the fleet served to reinvigorate the spirit of the officers, while also depriving the victors of their war spoils.⁶⁹ Not only that, but the moral and strategic suicide of the navy in the last moments of the war swept clean the slate, made more clean yet still by the dictates of Versailles, and the new Republic was seemingly unburdened of Tirpitz's strategic failure, although the former had no apparent desire for world power in 1919, only the imperative to survive.

The High Seas Fleet never did live up to the Mahanian strategic vision that Admiral Tirpitz had for the navy in 1897, its inaction during the war certainly did nothing to support the Kaisers foreign policy of *Weltpolitik* as he had anticipated it would. The Versailles Treaty set the starkest limits on the size and character of the fleet, and most important, the anti military and anti naval public opinion in the young Republic posed a stark contrast to the navalism of a generation earlier. In this light, the scuttling of the fleet and the collapse of the Empire at the end of the war afforded Germany the opportunity to pursue better forms of statecraft and in conjunction, a naval strategy more fitting to the geo-strategic realities of this central-European non-Anglo-Saxon power—a course that proved hardly practical and which became ensnarled in the problematic civil military

⁶⁹ Erich Raeder, *My Life* (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1960), 105.

structure of the Weimar Republic, where domestic conflicts and problems of statecraft revived illusions of naval power that were devoid of means and which resided in the realm of fantasy.

Faced with massive reductions to manpower, armaments, gross tonnage of allowed naval shipping, and tactical capabilities as delineated in the Treaty of Versailles, the Treaty of London, and the Five Power Treaty—and a proven dearth of strategic purpose—the *Reichsmarine* (The name given to the German navy from 1918–1935) spent the immediate years following the war in a struggle for survival as junior beside the army, itself organized as a cadre for a future great power, but devoid of modern weapons and the command and brains appropriate for the task. As Bird points out, the Reichsmarine “was lost in the shadows of the army and relegated to a secondary support role unable to reach even the personnel and material limits imposed by the Treaty of Versailles.”⁷⁰ There was much support within the Reichstag to absorb the navy into the army, abandoning the pursuit of sea power and using the navy for coastal defense, mine sweeping, and support roles only. It took a justification of the Imperial Navy’s role prior to and during the First World War through Grand Admiral Tirpitz’s propaganda campaigns and autocratic control of the officer corps at the hand of Grand Admiral Raeder to ensure the navy’s future. Once its survival was assured, the Reichsmarine set about the process of reconstructing its personnel and developing a naval strategy that fit within the bounds of the limitations set by the multitude of post-war treaties, and also, like the army, to lay the foundation for some revival on a new ideal of world power. In this way, German strategy during the interwar period was shaped more by external factors than by the specific strategic needs of the Republic—a phenomenon that took place until Chancellor Adolf Hitler and his National Socialists Party rose to power in 1933. From that point on, Hitler directed a naval strategy that suited the needs of the state rather than the dictates of the international community—those needs at the time being *Weltmachtstreben* (the struggle for world power).

⁷⁰ Bird, *German Naval History*, 499.

A. WEIMAR REPUBLIC: CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS IN CRISIS

Civil military relations within the Republic existed in a state of crisis, advanced from a deficit that began with the military failures of the High Seas Fleet, and the legacy of mutinies that occurred during the final days of WWI.⁷¹ The civilian view of the navy following the war was poor, and it was only compounded by the events of March 13, 1920, when former member of the Reichstag Wolfgang Kapp attempted to seize control of the government and establish himself as chancellor. This action, known as the Kapp Putsch, served to teach some formidable lessons to the officer corps of the Navy. When the Chief of the Admiralty, Vice Admiral von Trotha, was informed that a new provisional government had been put in place, he immediately made the navy available to this government. Von Trotha had at his disposal the rightist Erhardt Brigade, which was an illegal 15,000 man naval detachment that refused to disband as directed by the Versailles Treaty. Although Trotha was not actively involved in the Putsch, he and many other naval leaders were initially accused of resisting the constitution, and after the whole ordeal was resolved, Trotha and the other officers involved were dismissed from the service, thus diluting the leadership of the navy at a critical time of rebuilding.

Public opinion of the navy faltered further after this event; the naval leadership had already been alienated from the political right with the mutinies of 1918, and now the political left alienated the navy as well for supporting the Putsch. Raeder recalls that the remaining naval leaders learned from this event that they must at all times follow, “the path of complete abstinence from every type of party politics, and of unconditional loyalty to the State and to the government chosen by its people.” Essentially, the navy had been trained to avoid becoming embroiled in the political.⁷² As a result of this aversion to the political, the Navy’s relationship with the Republic was weak. The Weimar government failed at working with the military, and a rift existed between the military leadership and the civilian leadership. The public perception of the navy took

⁷¹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 510.

⁷² Raeder, *My Life*, 113.

some time to repair, and Institutions, such as the Skagerrak Club, were essential during the interwar period in promoting a healthy relationship between the civilian population and the naval personnel.

In order to understand the trajectory of the German navy during the interwar period, it is important to understand the political context within which the navy was operating. Three basic political forces were in existence within the republic: The Weimar Coalition—consisting of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Catholic Centre Party (CCP), and the liberal German Democratic Party (DDP)—whose foreign policy was based on pacifism and respecting the bounds of the Treaty of Versailles and the renunciation of war agreed upon in the Briand-Kellogg Pact. On the far right-wing, the National Socialists—an anti-parliamentarian camp—sought to reestablish German national prestige and pave the way for realpolitik through the buildup of military power outside the bounds of the Versailles Treaty. On the far left was the Communist party, also anti-parliamentarian, but in favor of developing a communist form of government within Germany. During the Weimar period, the officers of the navy aligned themselves with the coalition government, adhering to the lessons learned from the Kapp Putsch to remain servants to the state and not become embroiled in the political. Once Hitler came to power in 1933, the navy re-aligned itself with National Socialism and its foreign policy goal of attaining world power.

B. POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTED HISTORY AND THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF STRATEGIC THINKING

In the early years of the Reichsmarine until about 1924, a great deal of infighting and finger-pointing and invocations of the stab in the back in print occurred among the defeated naval leaders of the former Imperial Navy. Grand Admiral Tirpitz fired what Bird terms the “opening salvo” of a memoirs war in 1919 that would span a decade, blaming the Kaiser and Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg for the inaction of the High Seas Fleet during the war, and attributing the failure of the battle fleet concept to them.⁷³ Tirpitz maintained the position that “the fleet could have fulfilled its destiny, and could

⁷³ Bird, “Origins and Role of German Naval History,” 45; Peifer, *Evolution of a Naval Strategy*, 49.

have aided us to secure an honorable peace, if a right use had been made of it.”⁷⁴ His critical assessments were not limited to the political leadership, but targeted other prominent naval leaders as well. In response to this, a series of memoirs and articles went into publication refuting Tirpitz’s claims and splitting the pool of navy supporters into pro- and anti-Tirpitz schools. Critics, such as retired Admiral Lothar Persius, Eckart Kehr, and Admiral Wolfgang Wegener, spoke out against the justification of the High Seas Fleet, damaging its legacy and thus weakening the position for a future resurgence of German navalism. This infighting went on unchecked until 1927, when Prince Heinrich of Prussia—realizing that the lack of solidarity among the officer corps was damaging to the credibility of the navy at a time when it was on the brink of dissolution—appealed to the naval leaders for a “cease fire” to bring an end to the back and forth vitriol and focus efforts on more productive things.⁷⁵

Rahn argues “during the Weimar Republic the Navy had great difficulties in adapting to the new republican form of government.”⁷⁶ Bird points out that in the years directly following the war, the naval leadership “sought to save the ‘spirit’ of the navy from collapse in 1918–1919 and was not only committed to but expected a military revision of Germany’s post-war position.”⁷⁷ The personnel of the navy were stymied by what Tobias Philbin terms the civil military “stigma of defeat and surrender.”⁷⁸ Tirpitz focused on keeping *Seemachtideologie* (ideology of sea power) alive, glossing over the complete failure that was the High Seas Fleet in WWI and creating a precedent for a revised German sea power. Raeder recalls, “one of the Navy’s main problems in the new decade was the low morale brought about by the armistice and peace conditions.”⁷⁹ Because the terms of the armistice dictated that the German navy could only retain a few

⁷⁴ Alfred von Tirpitz, *My Memoirs, Vol. II* (New York: Dodd, Mead., 1919), 75.

⁷⁵ Bird, “The Origins and Role of German naval history,” 45; Peifer, *Evolution of a Naval Strategy*, 49–56.

⁷⁶ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 3.

⁷⁷ Bird, *German Naval History*, 503.

⁷⁸ Tobias R. Philbin, *The Lure of Neptune: German-Soviet Naval Collaboration and Ambitions, 1919–1941* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 8.

⁷⁹ Raeder, *My Life*, 104.

of its pre-dreadnought battleships, and placed heavy restrictions on any future shipbuilding program, the future of the German navy was necessarily bleak. This had adverse effects on the morale of the German sailors. The allied plan of extraditing many high ranking naval officials—despite being stopped due to such massive German backlash—served to hurt morale even more.

One of the most outspoken critics of Tirpitz's strategic concepts during WWI was Wolfgang Wegener, whose seminal work *The Naval Strategy of the World War* argued that the employment of the High Seas Fleet completely ignored the geo-strategic realities of Germany.⁸⁰ To understand Wegener's argument, a summary of Mahan's six principles of sea power are provided:

- I. Geographical Position
- II. Physical Conformation
- III. Extent of Territory
- IV. Number of Population
- V. Character of the People
- VI. Character of the Government, including therein the national institutions.⁸¹

Wegener's main argument was that in failing to recognize the first three of Mahan's preconditions for attaining sea power, the Imperial Navy was left to chase an impossible strategy. Having limited access to the sea and a numerically inferior navy, Wenger argued that Germany could not possibly gain control of the Atlantic sea-lanes to which Britain had free access, and thus could not possibly challenge British command of the sea.⁸² This type of dissenting historical analysis was not accepted by the naval leaders during the fragile times of the Reichsmarine, and as Bird points out, top officials, such as Erich Raider, realized that any discrediting of Tirpitz and his concept of naval strategy would force the navy to "lose its tradition and be forced to rethink its historic and future role in national defense."⁸³

⁸⁰ Wolfgang Wegener, *The Naval Strategy of the World War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 62.

⁸¹ Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power on History*, 28–29.

⁸² Wegener, *The Naval Strategy of the World War*, 26.

⁸³ Bird, "The Origins and Role of German Naval History," 52–53.

Aside from gaining solidarity among the officer corps, the key task of the naval leadership in the early years of the Republic was to justify its existence to the Reichstag and the German people in the civil military relations of the new republic. Peifer points out that “any condemnation of Tirpitz’s battle-fleet concept would make future requests for ship ‘builds’ hard to justify before a hostile Reichstag.”⁸⁴ In this connection, the navy, like the army, set about the task of creating a historical narrative that highlighted the strongpoints and overlooked the weaknesses of the Kaiserliche Marine’s actions in WWI. Led by Admiral Eberhard Mantey, the German Naval Archive undertook in 1919 an expansive construction of German naval history, and the lessons drawn were not necessarily correct lessons but were geared toward justifying the battle fleet (despite its minimal contribution to the war) as a way of assuring the future for the German navy.⁸⁵ Bird argues that during this time, “the opportunity to break with the past and explore new directions and strategic alternatives was ignored in favor of maintaining a view of the future that included a large blue water navy,”⁸⁶ contributing largely to the “intellectual impoverishment” of German naval strategic thinking during the interwar period. Rahn argues, “the Germans failed to draw the correct conclusions from the political and military scale of the defeat in 1918,”⁸⁷ perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the ways the German navy connected with its past during the Weimar years. Such a phenomenon was in accord with the civil military relations of the epoch, which were noteworthy for the formation of legend and the refusal of professional soldiers and sailors to acknowledge their own role in defeat and their own baleful insistence of an unfeasible civil military system in the Weimar Republic.

Despite the fact that Tirpitz actually backed unrestricted submarine warfare in the final years of World War I, in the interwar period he stood strongly behind the notion that a better outcome of the war would have been possible if the political leadership at the time would have embraced the use of the High Seas Fleet in offensive warfare against the

⁸⁴ Peifer, “Evolution of a Naval Strategy,” 29.

⁸⁵ Bird, “The Origins and Role of German Naval History,” 45–48.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁷ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 3.

British Grand Fleet instead of relegating the fleet to inactivity after the battle of Jutland (Skagerrak).⁸⁸ In this way, Tirpitz tried to shift focus away from the failure of his “risk theory” concept and lay the onus on ineffective policy instead. He believed that a “ ‘thorough and fair history’ would vindicate the creation of the Imperial Navy’s High Seas Fleet.”⁸⁹ This was all part of his campaign to justify his fleet construction program in the public eye and build a precedent for a reconstruction of the fleet along the same lines of the Imperial German navy—flying in the face of those in the Reichstag who would just assume see the navy be disbanded and its roles given to the army.

Theoretical conceptions of naval strategy evolved during this time to blend elements of Mahan’s sea power concept with Aube’s commerce warfare strategy. German naval thinkers embraced the idea of a battle fleet, but devised new strategic roles for it. Rather than merely targeting an opponent’s fleet, German strategic thinking during the interwar years shifted toward a battle fleet that could target an opponent’s commerce. Despite the requirement that the battle fleet concept be glorified in naval thinking, it was impossible to ignore the successes of the unrestricted submarine warfare campaign that was undertaken against allied shipping in WWI. Strategy, then, was shaped by the need to justify the past while still extracting some useful lessons from it. The concept of a new strategic role for the battle fleet would carry over into Hitler’s strategic thinking, manifest in the intended role for the *Bismarck*, the largest battleship of the time, which was to be used against allied commercial shipping rather than against allied battle fleets.

C. TREATIES, LIMITATIONS, AND THE EFFECT ON NAVAL CONSTRUCTION AND STRATEGY

1. The Treaty of Versailles

The Treaty of Versailles, which was signed on June 28, 1919, set the stage on which Germany’s Weimar period was defined, and in many ways, created the conditions that led to the eventual resurgence of political ambition that would be experienced a decade and a half later when Adolf Hitler rose to power. Politically, the treaty forced

⁸⁸ Peifer, “Evolution of a Naval Strategy,” 28.

⁸⁹ Bird, “The Origins and Role of German Naval History,” 42.

Germany to admit guilt for the disaster that was WWI. Economically, the conditions set by the treaty pushed Germany into massive recession with the almost absolute deflation of the Deutschmark currency. Psychologically, the morale of the German people was crushed—but the miscalculation of the victorious allies who wrote the terms of the treaty was that they believed it could, in Raeder’s words, “keep the German people shackled forever.”⁹⁰ In reality, the war guilt placed on the German populace by the treaty contributed to the rise of German nationalism and set the conditions for the National Socialists to come to power. With all of this said, the treaty was a half-measure that despite placing heavy restrictions on German armed forces, was impossible to fully enforce and thus allowed for stirrings of resentment and ambition to grow. Dr. Rahn concludes “Like other parts of Germany’s political and military elite, the German naval leadership did not reconcile itself to the Treaty of Versailles.”⁹¹

In his memoirs, Admiral Raeder argues that one of the main objectives of the treaty was “to limit Germany’s naval potential so that any resurgence of German sea power to a point where it would influence power politics would be impossible,”⁹² the specifics of which are detailed in the following paragraph.

The following summary outlines the major restrictions placed on the Reichsmarine by The Treaty of Versailles, as stated in Section II of the Treaty document. Total German naval forces were limited to six *Deutschland* class pre-dreadnought battleships, six light cruisers, 12 destroyers, and 12 torpedo boats, and all ships under construction at the time of the treaty were to be broken up. Maximum displacement for replacement ships to those already in commission was capped at 10,000 tons for battleships, 6,000 tons for cruisers, 800 tons for destroyers, and 200 tons for torpedo boats. Stocks of naval munitions were forbidden, and heavy limitations were placed on the type and amount of war materials that German ships were permitted to retain onboard. Conscription was abolished and the navy directed to maintain an all-volunteer force, with no cross training of merchant marine personnel permitted, and maximum

⁹⁰ Raeder, *My Life*, 183.

⁹¹ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 3.

⁹² Raeder, *My Life*, 145.

manpower was capped at 15,000 personnel (to include a maximum of 1,500 officers). All German warships interned in allied or neutral ports were to be surrendered to allied control, and Germany was forbidden to maintain submarines or aircraft in its naval inventory (in an effort to prevent any future policy of unrestricted submarine warfare the likes of what Germany enacted against the allies toward the end of the war).⁹³

Admiral Raeder argued, “the restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 were so severe that it took a special plea by the Chief of the Admiralty to get the Navy to view them as a challenge rather than a death sentence.”⁹⁴ The limitation of a 10,000-ton maximum displacement for battleships presented the Reichstag with the dilemma of needing to very carefully design the specifications for the next generation of German battleship. With only 10,000 tons to work with, a compromise would have to be made on armor, speed, or gun size. The ultimate decision by 1928 was to go with the *Panzerschiff* design, commonly known in English as the “Pocket Battleship,” which was essentially a cruiser with six 28-cm guns for a main battery and eight 15-cm guns as a secondary, medium armor, high efficiency diesel engines for long range cruising, and a 26 knot maximum speed. Designed to be more armored than the fastest ships, and faster than the most armored ships, the “pocket battleship” was a manifestation of German ingenuity and making the best of the conditions set by Versailles.⁹⁵ More important than the actual tactical capabilities of the Pocket Battleships was the psychological effect that they had on Britain, which Thomas Hoerber argues was the true advantage of these designs.⁹⁶ Philbin points out that this design was “the deliberate result of a German naval decision to circumvent the intention of the Versailles Treaty to keep the Germans confined to the mud flats of the Elbe.”⁹⁷ An unfortunate side effect of the unveiling of the pocket battle ship was the French response, a 26,000 ton ship with 33-cm guns, which sparked the next phase of the European naval arms race.

⁹³ Brigham Young University, “Treaty of Versailles,” Articles 181–197.

⁹⁴ Raeder, *My Life*, 106.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁹⁶ Thomas Hoerber, “Psychology and Reasoning in the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, 1935–1939,” *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 1 (2009): 153–174. doi: 10.1017/S0018246X08007358.

⁹⁷ Philbin, *The Lure of Neptune*, 34.

Although the republic undertook a secret military rearmament program that exceeded the limits placed by the Versailles Treaty, Max Hantke and Mark Spoerer point out that the secret program was not significantly more than the public one, “In financial terms, the sums spent in the 1920s on secret rearmament programmes, the ‘X-budget,’ never exceeded 10 per cent of the ordinary (and disclosed) military budget.”⁹⁸ What was significant, however, about the covert construction plans was the establishment of infrastructure for a future U-boat service. Germany was prohibited by treaty from constructing or maintaining submarines, but during the years of the Reichsmarine, a framework for training and outfitting an officer corps for some future submarine fleet was put together.

In 1933, however, the civil military universe in Germany changed in a way that fulfilled the hopes of those who refused to abandon world power. Adolf Hitler nourished his own version of Tirpitz’s ideals, but within a regime of exceptional aggressiveness and a single-minded drive for world power via a continental strategy. Nonetheless, the advent of the Nazi government made for a strategic revolution for German naval thought and practice.

2. The Anglo-German Naval Agreement

The Anglo-German Naval Agreement, concluded June 18, 1935, limited Germany’s naval strength to 35% of Britain’s, and was politically significant in that it replaced the unfavorable conditions set by the Versailles Treaty. This agreement gave Germany the freedom publically to rearm while still maintaining a favorable relationship with Great Britain, which was a relationship that Chancellor Hitler valued greatly. Unfortunately, this measure was never seen as more than a stopgap in Germany’s eyes, and interim measure to be superseded by follow on concessions from the other European powers. At a point when the policy of continental power had reached a climax after the annexation of the rest of Czechia, on April 28, 1939, Hitler publically denounced the Anglo-German naval agreement, giving away his intentions to construct a full-scale

⁹⁸ Max Hantke and Mark Spoerer, “The Imposed Gift of Versailles: The Fiscal Effects of Restricting the Size of Germany’s Armed Forces, 1924–9,” *Economic History Review* 63, no. 4 (2010): 849–864. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0289.2009.00512.x.

battlefleet with the intention that Britain would view this expanded German naval power as an incentive not to become involved in Germany's intended continental military affairs. Hitler's attitudes toward Britain had changed due to the changing international political system, spurred on mostly by the naval arms race incited by Japan's withdrawal from the London agreement on naval force restrictions in 1936. Hitler had always excluded Britain from his naval operation planning, but now considered her as a possible adversary

D. GERMAN NAVAL STRATEGY LEADING INTO WORLD WAR II

Grand Admiral Tirpitz based his construction program for the Imperial German navy on Alfred Mahan's theory that battle fleets were the key to attaining control of the sea. This theory was proven to be a poor fit for the realities of Germany's geographical and political circumstances, and as it turns out the *Jeune École* brand of naval strategy worked out much better for Germany during the unrestricted submarine war that was waged against allied shipping in the second half of WWI. Despite these lessons, the strategy debate of battle fleet versus cruiser warfare continued during the interwar period. Just as the development of naval technology during the Weimar period was determined by the limits of the Treaty of Versailles, the development of a naval strategy that supported German foreign and domestic policy was shaped by the treaty limits as well. Naval operational planning at the time was limited to coastal activities against a French or Polish threat, and no delusions about the supremacy of the British fleet were cultivated.

Philbin argues that during the Weimar period, "German naval-political strategy concentrated on a corps wide effort to resell the navy as a vitally needed instrument of German national power—*See Geltung* (Sea Power)."⁹⁹ This meant convincing the German people that the High Seas Fleet was an example of successful German sea power and justifying Tirpitz's shipbuilding programs, which was accomplished through propaganda and selective history. Strategically, the Reichsmarine was preparing itself to make the same mistakes that the Kaiserliche Marine made, but naval strategy at this time

⁹⁹ Philbin, *The Lure of Neptune*, 8.

was driven more by the desire to justify building a fleet than by the actual practical application of a fleet. Perhaps the greatest advancement of German naval strategic understanding in the interwar period was the realization that Germany's geographic position dictated a strategic offensive posture in any naval battle, and gone was the notion that the fleet could hope to take up the strategic defensive around Heligoland and wait for an opposing navy to bring the battle to them. This understanding, along with the advancement of the idea that German naval power should target an opponent's commerce and not its naval fleet shaped the naval strategy that would be employed in World War II (WWII). This embracing of the idea that commerce warfare was vital to German strategic success, however, did not represent an abandonment of the High Seas Fleet concept. Rather, German naval thinkers took the stance that a future German battle fleet would be employed in commerce raiding, with supplementary action coming from a U-boat force.

There has been some debate over the continuity of the German navy's global ambitions from the Kaiserliche marine through to the Kriegsmarine, the Reichsmarine could not afford to adopt a revisionist policy due to the restrictions set forth by the Versailles Treaty and the unpopularity of naval adventurism within the political circles of the day. Bird argues the goals of Imperial Germany and the Third Reich were the same, and that "the rise of National Socialism and the origins of the Second World War are closely intertwined with the goals of Germany's ruling elite."¹⁰⁰ Rahn points out "after 1933, the Navy eventually became subject to Hitler's long-term ambitions for dominating the world and the seas in particular,"¹⁰¹ but that orientation had already existed clandestinely among many of the officer corps of the Reichsmarine, and even among the political elite. It was, after all, Chancellor Brüning who in 1931 said in his christening speech for the *Deutschland Panzerschiff* "we can forget our long period of suffering if other nations will grant us the same national pride and the same love of our country which they claim for themselves."¹⁰² It was not a stretch for the navy to get back on the horse of global ambition once the shackles of the Treaty of Versailles were tossed aside.

¹⁰⁰ Bird, *German Naval History*, 539.

¹⁰¹ Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 3.

¹⁰² Raeder, *My Life*, 156.

Germany's political elite during the Weimar period, though not necessarily seeking *Weltmachtstreben*, did seek national pride and parity with the other European powers.

E. THE KREIGSMARINE AND GERMANY'S RESURGENT NAVAL AMBITIONS

The military code of 21 May 1935 renamed the navy to the *Kriegsmarine*, an institution that was eventually to become intimately tied to Hitler's global ambitions. During this phase of the German navy, it in many ways became a reflection of Germany's national politics. In the beginning at least, a key feature of Hitler's attitude toward the navy was his conviction that Germany must make all efforts to maintain a friendly posture toward England, and that a resurgent naval arms race with the superior maritime power was to be avoided. This was evident in the combat instructions issued to the navy on 27 May 1936 that "rejected the idea of a conflict with Britain."¹⁰³ Bennett and Bennett point out that early in Hitler's tenure, none of the great naval powers were seen as potential adversaries.¹⁰⁴ The leadership of the *Kriegsmarine* held a strategic vision for the navy that differed from Hitler's in that Grand Admiral Raeder viewed all out economic warfare against Great Britain as the only path to German maritime dominance, whereas in the early years Hitler still firmly believed that the war would be a short one and attacking Britain's economy would not be required. Hitler's incorrect assumption was that as long as Britain's overseas interests were not affected, she would accept Germany's expansionist foreign policy.¹⁰⁵ He viewed the 1935 Anglo-German naval pact, which allowed for a German naval strength that matched 35% of Britain's (a major increase from the Versailles limits) as an indicator from England that Germany was free to pursue its continental objectives, which was just a stepping stone for Hitler's greater world-power objectives.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Klaus A. Maier, "German Strategy," in *Germany and the Second World War Volume II: Germany's Initial Conquests in Europe*, ed. Klaus A. Maier et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 183.

¹⁰⁴ G. H. Bennett and R. Bennett, *Hitler's Admirals* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 32.

¹⁰⁵ Deist, "The Rearmament of the Wehrmacht, 470.

¹⁰⁶ Bird, *German Naval History*, 540.

The major naval strategy debate leading into World War II was between those in the *Grosskrieg* camp who stood by the battleship as the dominant naval weapon, and those in the *Kleinkrieg* camp whom espoused submarines and commerce warfare.¹⁰⁷ This debate was a vital one, in that it would shape the character of German shipbuilding and thus determined what kind of fleet the Kriegsmarine had at its disposal for the war. Within the naval leadership, Admiral Raeder stood firmly in the battleship camp postured against Admiral Dönitz and his advocacy of a strong U-boat force. Hitler tended to place more merit in the development of a strong battle fleet, but his preference was not based on naval-strategic terms so much as his adamant desire for eventual entente with Great Britain. In Hitler's view, the type of commerce warfare that Dönitz envisioned would ruin any future peace with Great Britain, which was something he simply would not subscribe to. Deist points out "Hitler's stubborn insistence on the construction of battleships in connection with his directive of 27 January [1939] seemed, as in the Tirpitz era, to open the way to the build-up of a fleet embodying Germany's claim to be a sea power and thus, in the navy's view, a world power."¹⁰⁸ From a geo-strategic standpoint, the lessons of World War I all indicate that German naval power could emanate from a strategy of *guerre de course*—trying to counter Britain's sea power in conventional terms was a lost cause. Regardless, Hitler's preference for the construction of an offensive surface fleet was manifest in his rejection of the naval proposals of 1937–39 that called for a shift toward U-boat and cruiser construction, and his adoption of the 1939 Z-plan that called for *Deutschland* class pocket battleships and *Bismarck* class battleships.¹⁰⁹ This fleet plan "represented the core of a *Weltmachtflotte* which would be used in a final confrontation with the other sea powers."¹¹⁰ Hitler was convinced that war would not come until 1944, and thus believed that Germany would have enough time to build up its fleet in preparation for conflict.¹¹¹ It seems as though Germany would repeat the same

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 461.

¹⁰⁸ Deist, "The Rearmament of the Wehrmacht," 477.

¹⁰⁹ Douglas C. Peifer, "Origins of the East and West German Navies: From the Kriegsmarine to the Volksmarine and Bundesmarine, 1944–1956" (PhD dis., University of Michigan, 1997), 3.

¹¹⁰ Bird, *German Naval History*, 573.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 540.

mistakes from its First attempt at navalism. Because there was a lack of consensus on the direction in which fleet construction should go during the interwar years, argues Rahn, Germany once again found itself in the position “when the war came, the Navy was totally unprepared for it.”¹¹²

Raeder’s leadership was pivotal in the early years of the Kriegsmarine, and he had a true understanding that the navy had “far-reaching political significance.”¹¹³ He, like Tirpitz before him, understood that fleet construction required long-term planning, understanding that “a strong and long-term policy of ship construction in peace is therefore an essential part of strategy in war.”¹¹⁴ Raeder did his best to reintegrate the navy into politics in order to support the realization of his long-term construction goals. As a result of this naval-political integration, however, “he could not prevent political decisions from playing an increasingly important role in the naval construction programme.”¹¹⁵ Despite his work to focus the rearming and construction of the German navy, it all occurred in a vacuum from the other services, as Deist points out “the services made their basic decisions without consulting or even conferring with each other.”¹¹⁶ This phenomenon was only made worse by Hitler’s rejection of the concept of a unified Wehrmacht.

The U-boat arm of the Kriegsmarine was initially very successful at denying the British access to the oceans. As Bernd Stegemann points out, “it became clear that on the whole, as in the First World War, the U-boat was still the most effective weapon in the battle against the flow of supplies to Britain. Its successes against enemy shipping were far greater than those of the pocket battleships.”¹¹⁷ Advancements in radio technology during the interwar period resulted in vastly changed tactics during WWII, due to the

¹¹² Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 3.

¹¹³ Deist, “The Rearmament of the Wehrmacht,” 480.

¹¹⁴ Maier, “German Strategy,” 183.

¹¹⁵ Deist, “The Rearmament of the Wehrmacht,” 480.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 505.

¹¹⁷ Bernd Stegemann, “The First Phase of the War at Sea up to the Spring of 1940,” in *Germany and the Second World War Vol. II: Germany’s Initial Conquests in Europe*, ed. Klaus A. Maier et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 176.

instantaneous nature of communications. Headquarters was able to disseminate orders to ships no matter where they were, which allowed for the execution of operations plans of a higher complexity than was possible during WWI. Additionally, Germany's development of the Enigma encoding device allowed for secure two-way communication between operational units at sea. This gave Admiral Dönitz the tools he needed to develop the Wolf Pack tactics used by U-boats in WWII, which were coordinated attacks on allied convoys that proved to be very effective until allied anti-submarine war-fighting capability (especially in the field of radio direction-finding, and code breaking) improved toward the end of the war—a phenomenon that rendered Dönitz's U-boats, and the associated tactics more or less useless.

Because the warships of the navy were becoming increasingly complex, they required men with strong technical aptitudes to run them. Specific professions, such as metalworkers and mechanics, were in high demand, especially in the U-boat arm of the *Kriegsmarine*. Timothy Mulligan argues, “by drawing upon specific professions from all regions, the *Kriegsmarine* established itself as truly national in character.”¹¹⁸ Whereas in the *Kaiserliche Marine*, the social composition of the force consisted mainly of men with traditional familiarity with maritime activities from the northern regions of Germany, the *Kriegsmarine* represented a more even distribution from the other regions of the Reich. Another aspect of this was the fact that northerners, who were more aware of the risks associated with U-boat service, avoided U-boats and opened up more room for the men from central and south Germany who did not necessarily know any better. The U-boat arm itself, which out of the 17.9 million Germans called to service for the war only consisted of 41,500 men, was a very elite corps.¹¹⁹ The men of the U-boat corps “received the material benefits of their branch—higher pay, better food, and greater opportunity for advancement—as well as the prestige and publicity accorded a combat elite.”¹²⁰ Regarding the political makeup of the *Kriegsmarine* officer corps, although

¹¹⁸ Timothy Mulligan, “German U-boat Crews in World War II: Sociology of an Elite,” *The Journal of Military History* 56, no. 2 (April 1992): 261–282. JSTOR(1985799).

¹¹⁹ Mulligan, “German U-boat Crews in World War II,” 261.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 281.

leaders, such as Raeder and Dönitz, adamantly claimed that the navy was for the most part an apolitical organization, some studies indicate a “close identification of the navy’s traditional goals with those of Hitler’s in the pre-war period, and as a result of the demands of total war, a growing ‘politicalization’ of the navy.”¹²¹

Despite Hitler’s desire to avoid a maritime conflict with Great Britain, his invasion of Poland incited Britain to declare war on Germany. Deist quotes the primary source *Lagevotrage des Oberbefehlshabers der Kriegsmarine vor Hitler 1939–1945* saying, “As far as the navy is concerned, it is of course by no means ready for the big war against Britain in the autumn of 1939 . . . The surface ships are so few and so weak compared with the British fleet that, even if fully committed, they would only be able to show that they know how to die with honor and are resolved in this way to lay the foundation for a new build-up later.”¹²² Once Hitler realized that avoiding conflict with England was impossible, he accepted the idea of attacking England’s supply lines. As it was becoming evident that the war would not be a short one, he also realized that ore shipments from Scandinavia would need to be secured in order to guarantee adequate resources for the Wehrmacht and the Kriegsmarine. In this way, the Kriegsmarine not only had to disrupt English seaborne communication, but also had to protect its own seaborne communications from Norway, where Swedish ore shipments were exported to Germany. To improve Germany’s geostrategic standing, Hitler, undertook operation *Weserübung* against Norway, thus securing his sea lines of communication and denying England the chance to gain influence over that region of the North Sea.¹²³ Bird argues, “although the battleships, Bismarck and Tirpitz, symbolize the power of the German fleet, it was the U-boat in the two World Wars which proved to be the navy’s primary weapon and was considered in both to be a ‘war winner.’ ”¹²⁴ The U-boats were quite

¹²¹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 589.

¹²² Deist,, “The Rearmament of the Wehrmacht,” 480. Taken from the primary source *Lagevotrage des Oberbefehlshabers der Kriegsmarine vor Hitler 1939–1945*, ed. Gerhard Wagner (Munich, 1972), 20–1.

¹²³ Bird, *German Naval History*, 629–32.

¹²⁴ Bird, *German Naval History*, 175.

successful in accomplishing both of these tasks up until 1943, when allied anti-submarine capability rendered the U-boats more or less ineffective.

By the end of WWII, Germany had discovered once again that any bid for world power perched on the legs of naval power was doomed to fail. Hitler's Z-plan concept, an ambitious shipbuilding program that not only required too much time to be realized, but was also built upon a strategy that was not a good fit for the realities of German sea power, was not too much different than Tirpitz's failed "risk theory" concept from the previous epoch. In the end, geographic realities prevailed and the German navy learned for a second time that it takes more than just naval equipment and men to build a strong maritime power. The reason England was able to command the seas had as much to do with the geographies of coastal access and positioning near the great lines of communication of the sea than anything else. Although Hitler was able to disrupt allied shipping for a time using the U-boat arm of the Kriegsmarine, this was inevitably merely a time-buying measure. Just as Kaiser Wilhelm II discovered with his failed bid for world power through maritime supremacy, Hitler too discovered that such ambitions were purely academic.

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IV. GERMAN NAVY REDUX: EAST AND WEST AFTER 1955

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, neither the victors nor the vanquished imagined a future scenario that portended a revival of German military or naval power. One of the stipulations of the unconditional surrender by Germany was permanent demilitarization along with denazification, democratization and decartelization.¹²⁵ The Tripartite Naval Commission set about the task of dismantling what was left of the Kriegsmarine; its ships were split up among the three occupying powers, its personnel were civilianized, and its bases and facilities were dismantled, or taken over by the victors. Although some vestiges of the Kriegsmarine sailed on under civilian employment carrying out the daunting task of removing the hundreds of thousands of unexploded mines that dotted European coastlines following the war, staffing maritime police functions, enforcing customs, and even participating in intelligence gathering operations, the organizations responsible for these tasks had no institutional link with the Wehrmacht, which had ceased to exist as an institution in the spring of 1945.

As the Cold War began to gather steam in the epoch 1948-9, and the existential threat of an expanding Soviet sphere of influence loomed large in the minds of Western leaders, plans for some form of West German rearmament within the context of Atlantic alliance collective defense began to emerge. Spurred on by the fear that the Korean war was a pattern for Europe in 1950, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's government in concert with the Western occupation leaders were undertaking preliminary work to lay the foundations for a new West German military, and a navy that could support Western multilateral alliance structures. In the East, the Soviets had already been covertly laying the groundwork for their own navy that would serve within the context of Warsaw Pact security systems. In the years 1955-56, the long process of preparation led to the advent of the German-German armies, and two new German navies emerged, the Bundesmarine in the West, and the Volksmarine in the East.

¹²⁵ In the immediate aftermath of WWII, the Western powers had a "Four Ds" policy apropos their vanquished enemy: Demilitarize, Denazify, Decartelize, and Democratize.

The two navies were raised along conflicting economic, political, and ideological lines. Despite sharing a common past, the ways in which the two navies connected with this past differed, resulting in a separate naval identity, esprit de corps, and political order to say nothing of conflicted concepts of naval tradition in the two different institutions. Strategy in the West centered on supporting NATO, and the role of the navy within state and society was that of a constitutionally founded armed institution within a democracy. In the East, although supporting the Soviet led Warsaw Pact alliance was part of the navy's strategic purpose, its role within state and society was much different from in the West due to the communist system in which it resided. The following chapter takes a closer look at this lesser-known epoch of German naval history, specifically as pertains to the formation of two ideologically divergent naval institutions that served their states and societies in diametrically different ways.

A. THE ROLE OF THE INTERMEDIARY NAVAL ORGANIZATIONS

As a prelude to the navies of the 1950s, several intermediary maritime organizations existed in both Western and Soviet occupation zones following the war. Although these organizations employed former Kriegsmarine personnel, they were administered as civilian agencies and did not provide social or strategic linkages from the Kriegsmarine into the Bundesmarine and the Volksmarine. The period between 1945 and 1955 was essentially a decade of discontinuity within the German naval experience as part of the security vacuum of the epoch in the post war era and the long haul of defense institution building that marked this time, but Peifer argues the maritime organizations in place during this period “reflected the beginning divergence between East and West German institutions,”¹²⁶ and served to shape the political, strategic and operational character of the soon-to-be German navies.

The maritime organization employed by the Western powers immediately following the war was the German Mine Sweeping Administration (GMSA). Led by a combined British and American staff headquartered on the St. Pauli Landing, Hamburg, the organization employed former Kriegsmarine equipment and personnel in the

¹²⁶ Peifer, “Origins of the East and West German Navies,” 6.

clearance of mines around Schleswig-Holstein, Denmark, Holland, Western Germany, and Norway. Manning for the GMSA consisted of over 27,000 former Kriegsmarine officers and 840 vessels at its peak.¹²⁷ Though administered by the occupation governments, the employment of former Kriegsmarine personnel and equipment raised suspicion and criticism from the Soviets, who saw this as counter to the Potsdam principles.¹²⁸ To alleviate these concerns, the GMSA was disbanded in 1948 and replaced by the Cuxhaven Minesweeping Group, which carried on the task of sweeping Germany's coasts for mines, but in a smaller capacity using equipment that belonged to the Royal Navy, and staffed by civilians (albeit, former Kriegsmarine officers in a civilian role).¹²⁹

The Cuxhaven Minesweeping Group was disbanded in 1951, at which point the U.S. Navy established three Labor Service Units (LSUs); the most significant of which was LSU (B) in Bremerhaven. LSU (B) not only continued the task of sweeping the North Sea and Baltic approaches of mines, but also more importantly provided a framework for the future establishment of the Bundesmarine. The Labor Service in the U.S. forces was a long-lived institution and a reservoir of ex-Wehrmacht personnel, as well as displaced persons in their number. Peifer points out that, in the epoch from 1950 until about 1956 “off the record, U.S. naval officers admitted that the organization would be put at the disposal of the West German government once clarity emerged about the role of the Federal Republic in the European Defense Community and NATO.”¹³⁰ Gradually, the LSU (B) shifted from undertaking minesweeping duties, to training Germans in a broad spectrum of naval subjects to prepare them for the formation of a new German navy. Confiscated Kriegsmarine vessels were appropriated to the LSU, which would eventually be put under German command. The West German *Seegrenzschutz* (Maritime Border Guard) was concurrently patrolling the coastline and

¹²⁷ Peifer, *The Three German Navies*, 68–9.

¹²⁸ University of Wisconsin-Madison, “Protocol of Proceedings of the Berlin Conference,” August 1 1945,” <http://images.library.wisc.edu/FRUS/EFacs/1945Berlinv02/reference/frus.frus1945berlinv02.i0036.pdf>. The Protocol called for “The complete disarmament and demilitarization of Germany,” to include “All German land, naval, and air forces.”

¹²⁹ Peifer, *The Three German Navies*, 97.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 157.

inland waterways, staffed by civilian personnel but employing West German equipment and falling under West German command.¹³¹ Both the LSUs and the Seegrenzschutz would contribute to the formation of the Bundesmarine in 1955, and the progression from GMSA to Cuxhaven Minesweeping Group to LSU and Seegrenzschutz provided the soon-to-be Bundesmarine with a small cadre of experienced former Kriegsmarine officers who were carried through the disarmament period by these civilian maritime organizations.

A number of significant intelligence organizations contributed to the formation of the Bundesmarine as well by providing a pool of institutional knowledge and experienced personnel. The Klose group, for instance, employed refitted Kriegsmarine S-boats with German crew to collect intelligence deep behind the Iron Curtain in the Baltic.¹³² The famous Reinhard Gehlen Organization employed former Kriegsmarine officers in Army Intelligence and then CIA sponsored maritime intelligence gathering operations, and the Naval Historical Team (NHT)—which worked with the U.S. armed forces as a reservoir of former staff officers who went from imprisonment to collaborative labor—was instrumental to the planning process of building the Bundesmarine.¹³³ Albeit indirectly, these intelligence services were where the first vestiges of a West German Naval institution took root. As David Snyder points out, “although the United States did derive practical benefits from the NHT and LSUs, it had a goal other than immediate exploitation: creating a pool of men and vessels that could be transformed swiftly into a West German naval force.”¹³⁴

In East Germany, the pre-runners to the Volksmarine began with the Volkspolizei that formed in the fall of 1945. The Soviets engaged in a process of creation and expansion of the Volkspolizei into a paramilitary and then regular army in the years from 1948 until 1956, the latter more or less taking shape in the epoch 1952–1955. The establishment of the Hauptverwaltung der Seepolizei in 1950 came next, which then

¹³¹ Peifer, *The Three German Navies*, 161.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 103.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹³⁴ David R. Snyder, “Arming the ‘Bundesmarine’: The United States and the Build-up of the German Federal Navy, 1950–1960,” *The Journal of Military History* 66, no. 2 (April 2002): 477–500. JSTOR(3093068).

became the Volkspolizei-See. This VP-See was primarily concerned with minesweeping and coastal defense, and like the LSUs and Seegrenzschutz in the West, was the breeding ground for an East German naval cadre.¹³⁵ Peifer points out, “[w]hile the force had to be termed a ‘police’ organization for political reasons, its uniforms, training procedures, and regulations were to be devised along naval rather than police lines.”¹³⁶ In this way, East Germany had essentially begun rearmament by another name directly after the war and not in response to the creation of a West German Navy in 1955, as was the socialist myth of the day that the East German forces were a riposte to the militarism and revanchism of the American led camp. Many of the standard coast guard duties were handled by Mecklenburg’s Maritime Security Police, which although tasked with police and customs duties in the inland waterways, did not initially poses any vessels. In the East German intermediary maritime organizations, and subsequently in the Volksmarine, selection criterion was based on an individual’s communist ideology, and key posts were filled only by devote communists from the SED (East Germany’s Socialist-Communist party). Peifer points out that few former Kriegsmarine officers were drawn to the SED, and consequently the preponderance of experienced Kriegsmarine officers ended up filling the ranks of the Bundesmarine, leaving the Volksmarine with a dearth of naval experience at its inception.¹³⁷

B. HERITAGE IN CONFLICT: THE CONSTRUCTION OF NAVAL TRADITION IN EAST AND WEST

Despite sharing a common history, East and West connected with their naval heritage in quite different ways. The Bundesmarine and the Volksmarine derived different lessons from their shared past and developed disparate narratives, fostering naval traditions that reflected the nature of the two ideologically divergent governments. Peifer argues “both Volks- and Bundesmarine reacted to a common German past, but interaction with the Western powers and the Soviet Union during the period 1945–1956 resulted in two German navies formed along different principles and reflecting two

¹³⁵ Bird, *German Naval History*, 761.

¹³⁶ Peifer, *The Three German Navies*, 116.

¹³⁷ Peifer, “Origins and East and West Germany Navies,” 171.

diverging German societies.”¹³⁸ In developing a usable past, both East and West turned more so to sociopolitical anecdotes, and less so to tales of great battles or feats of derring-do; a phenomenon that can be attributed to the fact that neither institution cared to glorify the Kriegsmarine or the others before it. Specific “memory beacons” (a term coined by Douglas Peifer but which is actually from Admiral Ruge) stick out in German Naval history as points of divergence between East and West. The naval mutinies of 1917–8, and the attempted coup against Hitler on the 20th of July 1944 are two prominent ones that demonstrate how interpretations of history reflected the political culture and order of the two Germanies in the cold war.¹³⁹

For the Volksmarine, writing a historical narrative centered around events that could be considered socialist, “progressive” or “revolutionary,” and thus tying together German and Soviet history along the common thread of the proletarian struggle by men and women at arms in the epoch from the 18th century until the 20th century. The mutinies of 1917 and the naval revolution of 1918 were identified as heroic examples of progressive Germans fighting against their imperial masters. As Peifer points out, “East German accounts equated mutinous sailors with communist revolutionaries, and emphasized how Germany’s Red sailors had acted out of class consciousness.”¹⁴⁰ For the SED, this memory beacon served to legitimize the socialist state and its common legacy with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), as well as the origins of communism in 1918–1919. The West identified with these events much differently, associating them with the defeat of the Empire and the negative aspects of communism. Western interpretations also tended to acknowledge the more pragmatic origins of the mutinies—Sailors revolting in response to poor living conditions, sparse rations, and ineffective leadership. East German interpretations glossed over such practical considerations, and placed much more emphasis on the role of class-consciousness and revolutionary ideology.

¹³⁸ Peifer, “Origins of the East and West German Navies,” 9.

¹³⁹ Douglas C. Peifer, “Commemoration of Mutiny, Rebellion, and Resistance in Postwar Germany: Public History, and the Formation of ‘Memory Beacons,’ ” *The Journal of Military History* 65, no. 4 (2001): 1013–52. JSTOR(2677627).

¹⁴⁰ Peifer, “Memory Beacons,” 1020.

The 20th of July 1944 attempt on Hitler's life, led by German colonels and civilians, unlike the mutinies of 1917–18, did not serve the SED's revolutionary historical narrative in any useful way. The Soviets identified only with the fact that the attempted coup had failed, and that it was the Red Army that ultimately came in to topple the Nazi regime.¹⁴¹ This stood in contrast to the West, where the government found "enduring functional utility" in the event.¹⁴² Early interpretations by West Germany treated the conspirators of July 1944 as traitors, and gave an overall negative assessment of the ordeal—consistent with the anti-Wehrmacht rhetoric of the day. Once the FRG began rearmament, however, its leaders used those involved in the coup as examples of how the Wehrmacht had not been fully subverted by Nazi ideology.¹⁴³ Peifer points out "[p]oliticians, journalists, and experts supporting rearmament could point to Stauffenberg, Beck and others as examples of Wehrmacht officers who had tried to uphold military codes of honor and patriotism."¹⁴⁴ There was great utility in changing negative public perceptions regarding the role the Wehrmacht and the Kriegsmarine played within Nazism and the Third Reich because once the time came to rearm; the western allies and the FRG had to draw on former officers from those ranks in order to construct a functioning military. Even to this day, the 20th of July serves to "link modern Germany and the Bundeswehr to a military past of which it can be proud."¹⁴⁵ To be sure, the continuities between the Volks- and Bundesmarine and the Reich- and Kriegsmarine before them were more pronounced in the West than they were in the East.

The Volksmarine was a tool of the SED, as such the party could simply create whatever narrative it chose. Moreover, the Volksmarine viewed the Kriegsmarine as diametrically opposed to itself along political and ideological lines, and thus severed its connection with this precursor organization to a much greater degree than ultimately occurred in the West. The Bundesmarine on the other hand, due to its role as a

¹⁴¹ Peifer, "Memory Beacons," 1032.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 1035.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1038.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1039.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1052.

constitutionally founded institution within a democratic state, was required to incorporate a deal more realism into its historical narrative. The institution was faced with finding a usable past through a process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (reckoning with the past), and that involved embracing aspects of the Kriegsmarine and the others before it, fostering a healthy naval tradition among the officer corps, and repairing the damaged civil-military relationship brought on by past military excesses and adventurism. Abenheim argues, “soldiers still had a sense of their own honor and professional ethos despite all that had happened around them,”¹⁴⁶ the task then was to somehow retain this sense of tradition and honor while rejecting the unfavorable historical bits. The Bundesmarine took great care in “selecting the appropriate traditions and military virtues from its past.”¹⁴⁷ For the Volksmarine, identifying with the past simply meant inventing a narrative that supported progressive, revolutionary ideals while in some way linking German and Soviet histories together.

C. THE ROLE OF NAVAL INSTITUTIONS WITHIN STATE AND SOCIETY

Even before the buildup of East and West German military capabilities, the occupation zones of the respective powers were diverging along political, economic, social, and ideological lines. Despite sharing a common origin, the Bundesmarine and the Volksmarine approached their ethos, their connection to the past, and their strategic purpose in different manners along these divergent lines. As Bird points out, “both the Bundesmarine and the Volksmarine became members of opposing military alliances in 1955, NATO and the Warsaw Pact respectively, and defined their strategic mission within the objectives established by these organizations.”¹⁴⁸ One of the key concepts shared by both institutions was that of the “citizen in uniform,” but the two institutions had differing ideas of what it meant. For the FRG, the “citizen in uniform” represented the crowing achievement of a constitutionally founded military within a democracy—the

¹⁴⁶ Donald Abenheim, *Soldier and Politics Transformed: German-American Reflections on Civil Military Relations in a New Strategic Environment* (Berlin: Hartmann, Miles-Verl., 2007), 89.

¹⁴⁷ Bird, *German Naval History*, 725.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 723.

melding of state, society, and the military, and the parliamentary control over its employment. The “citizen in uniform” in West Germany, guided by the principle of *Innere Führung*, served to guarantee no military junta or caste could form by ensuring a close bond between the civil population and those in uniform. In the GDR, on the other hand, the “citizen in uniform” pertained to how “the NVA is to be the army of the Party (SED) and serve the aims of the SED.”¹⁴⁹ In this way, the two governments took a very different view of the role of the navy and its service to the state. In the FRG, the military was integrated into society and the state, and was not merely a tool of the party as was the case in the GDR.

1. **Bundesmarine: A Navy Within a Democracy**

From the very start, the concept of a West German Navy centered on being built into a multilateral alliance framework. From the original (but ultimately stillborn) French idea of a supranational military force operating within an European Defense Community (EDC), to Germany’s accession into the Western European Union (WEU) in 1948 and ultimately the formation of the West German Navy within the command structure of NATO, the Bundesmarine has always existed within the context of a constitutionally founded institution, serving a democratic state, with an obligation to an alliance system. The Cold War, and NATO, provided West Germany with the opportunity to rearm and prove to its allies that it could be a responsible partner—but the process provided challenges for the new republic, as it demanded new forms of strategy and military practice that were not attempted in Germany’s first Republican adventure during the Weimar epoch. In its early years, the Bundesmarine was more concerned with finding its place within democratic society than it was with developing its combat effectiveness.¹⁵⁰ The 1949 Basic Law, especially articles 12a, 24, and 87a, “banned the waging of a war of aggression, made collective security through the United Nations (UN) the highest goal of statecraft, and limited the mission of the armed forces to defense.”¹⁵¹ This constitution,

¹⁴⁹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 764.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 726.

¹⁵¹ Abenheim, *Soldier and Politics Transformed*, 125.

taken together with the guiding principles of *Innere Führung* provided the needed framework and assurance against some replayed “stab in the back” scenario for the new Navy to exist in this as yet fragile democracy.¹⁵²

The concept of *Innere Führung* is central to the life of the armed forces in today’s Germany, and has been since its inception in 1953. Having no direct translation into English, Michael Lux succinctly defines it as meaning “that the soldier in democracy—the citizen in uniform—must *not* serve or defend any regime, ruler, or ideology with unconditional obedience against the best of ones knowledge.”¹⁵³ Broadly speaking, it is a leadership philosophy for the Bundeswehr, based on the values of the Basic Law, which was embedded from the start as an assurance to citizens both in and out of uniform that the past would not be repeated. The 2006 White Paper on German Security defines *Innere Führung* as “leadership development and civic education,” a definition shared by the 2009 Field Manual ZDv 10/1 on *Innere Führung*.¹⁵⁴ This institution of command, obedience, morale, education, and soldiering in a democracy ensures that those who command and those who follow have mutual respect, and cultivates an educated military force that is aware of its past, its government, and its people. It has its origins in the problems FRG leaders faced in the early 1950s getting a divided nation that was opposed to the idea of rearmament to accept the idea of a new West German military, and ensured said military would never again become the “school of a nation.” As Lux points out, there was great danger “of a restoration of a military caste as an anti-democratic force, as well as bogus revival of military honor at the expense of pluralism was a real threat in the early 1950s.”¹⁵⁵

Wolf Graf von Baudissin, a leading figure in *Innere Führung*—and one of the pivotal planners for the West German Army—said in 1955 regarding his vision for the

¹⁵² Constitution Society, Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, August 17, 1993, <http://www.constitution.org/cons/germany.txt>, Article 12a: Compulsory Military and Alternative Civilian Service, Article 24: Transfer of Sovereign Powers, System of Collective Security, Article 87a—Armed Forces.

¹⁵³ Lux, “Innere Führung,” 1.

¹⁵⁴ German Federal Ministry of Defense, “White Paper 2006,” 59. Also see Central Field Manual ZDv 10/1: *Innere Führung (Leadership Development and Civic Education)*, January 2008, 1–9.

¹⁵⁵ Lux, “Innere Führung,” 35.

armed forces: “Among so many spiritual changes and faltering values the German soldier must be given the feeling that he is a member of a free nation standing on the side of freedom.”¹⁵⁶ This statement embodies the idea behind the storied concept of the “citizen in uniform,” which ultimately is the goal of *Innere Führung*. Before *Innere Führung* came into being, Baudissin used the term *Innere Gefuege* (inner structure) as a framework for building the new military in a young democracy. The planners in the early West German Ministry of Defense sought to devise an ethos within the future military that centered around what Baudissin identified as the three basic things needed to create a democratic armed force: “organic integration of the army into the democratic state; devotion of its leaders to the state and its constitution; identity of values in the army and in the democratic state.”¹⁵⁷ This early conception of how the Bundeswehr would function within the new Republic was the foundation for the principle of *Innere Führung* that has been and still is the primary feature of the Bundeswehr. Baudissin envisioned *Innere Führung* as a way to “reconcile pluralism and liberal democracy with soldierly honor and service”¹⁵⁸

Up until recently, the Bundeswehr and the Bundesmarine within it have been a conscription force—an institution that the founders of the FRG saw as also assuring an integration of the soldier in state and society. Conscription, along with *Innere Führung* were key enablers of the “citizen in uniform” for the FRG. Baudissin acknowledged that military service “can rouse many young men to their first knowledge of what a system of human values and a community are all about.”¹⁵⁹ Conscription was an about-face to the apolitical or anti-democratic “state within a state” Reichswehr system that was cultivated in the Weimar Republic and transformed by the Wehrmacht into an institution of National Socialism. *Innere Führung* gave every man (and later woman) serving a stake in his/her community, gave society a deeper understanding of who and what its martial forces were, and “offered a common identity and a sense of service to a just cause” to

¹⁵⁶ Wolf Baudissin, “The New German Army,” *Foreign Affairs* 34, no. 1 (October 1955): 1–13. JSTOR(20031136).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Lux, “*Innere Führung*,” 2.

¹⁵⁹ Baudissin, “The New German Army,” 8.

those in uniform.¹⁶⁰ Conscription, and consequently the “citizen in uniform,” helped to overcome the record of the soldier under National Socialism. David Clay Large argues conscription served the vital function of countering the popular sentiment that in Germany “one could not have a military without militarism.”¹⁶¹ The Bundeswehr had to be a significant departure from the past martial institutions of Germany—*Innere Führung*, the “citizen in uniform,” and conscription were it.¹⁶²

Another key component of *Innere Führung* is the importance of superiors in educating their subordinates and setting a good example. The demands of technologically advanced naval systems demands that the enlisted men have highly specialized skills required for the operation of equipment, equipment that the leaders themselves do not possess the depth of knowledge required to operate. For this reason, it is the role of the leader to coordinate, and to provide civic and moral guidance. As such, *Innere Führung* has proved to be a useful philosophy for operating a modern, technologically advanced naval force. The Field Manual ZDv 10/1 defines the principles of *Innere Führung* as:

Integration into state and society, the guiding principle of the ‘citizen in uniform,’ ethical, legal and political legitimacy of the mission, the realization of fundamental constitutional and social values in the armed forces, the limits of ‘orders and obedience,’ the application of the principle of mission command, the observance of the statutory participation rights of soldiers, and the observance of the freedom of association guaranteed in the Basic Law.¹⁶³

A prominent American scholar has argued “[f]rom the start, *Innere Führung* had to struggle with the primacy of politics, the need for military efficiency, and the burdens of history.”¹⁶⁴ The leaders of the Federal Republic viewed the military as a “necessary evil,” but were resolved to make it a “democratic army in a democratic state” rather than

¹⁶⁰ Lux, “*Innere Führung*,” 2.

¹⁶¹ David C. Large, “‘A Gift to the German Future?’ The Anti-Nazi Resistance Movement and West German Rearmament,” *German Studies Review* 7, no. 3 (October 1984): 499–529. JSTOR(1428887).

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Central Field Manual DZv 10/1, No. 316.

¹⁶⁴ Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross*, 293.

a state within a state as was the case in earlier iterations of a German military.¹⁶⁵ Key among the questions facing the leaders of the new FRG included what were to be the martial duties of the citizen, what would be the role of naval institutions within democracy, and what were the ethical limits of command—all of which were rolled into the guiding principles of *Innere Führung*.

2. Volksmarine: A Navy As an Instrument of the Party

With a bill passed by GDR's parliament in January 1956, the National People's Army—and subsequently the Naval Forces of the National People's Army (renamed the Volksmarine in 1960)—was called into being so that East Germany could fulfill its military obligations to the Warsaw Pact. The Volksmarine had a closer integration with the Warsaw Pact than the Bundesmarine did with NATO, due to the nature of the Soviet system and the fact that the Soviet Navy exercised a “de facto degree of control under the guise of advice and assistance” over the Volksmarine.¹⁶⁶ One must only look to the official slogan of the Volksmarine to understand the extent of which it was a slave to the Soviet system: “To learn from the Soviet Union is to learn how to win.”¹⁶⁷ Further, naval ships serving the GDR flew not the GDR national flag, but rather the communist red banner as their ensign.¹⁶⁸ The Volksmarine was more politicized than the Kriegsmarine under National Socialism had ever been. The officer corps of the Volksmarine was nothing more than a “bastion of SED dominance.”¹⁶⁹ Peifer argues that “while the East German navy drew upon a number of Kriegsmarine personnel, traditions, and procedures, the discontinuities between East Germany's navy and the Reichs- and Kriegsmarine far outweighed the continuities.”¹⁷⁰ However, in the early years, the Volksmarine for sure displayed German characteristics, by the mid-1960s any vestiges of the Kriegsmarine has more or less been displaced by Soviet influence.

¹⁶⁵ Bird, *German Naval History*, 724.

¹⁶⁶ Peifer, *The Three German Navies*, 148.

¹⁶⁷ Bird, *German Naval History*, 762.

¹⁶⁸ Peifer, “Memory Beacons,” 1019.

¹⁶⁹ Peifer, *The Three German Navies*, 148.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

D. NAVAL STRATEGY AND THE COLD WAR

As previously stated, the geopolitical confrontation of the Cold War and its resulting order of battle in Eurasia drove German rearmament on both sides of the Iron Curtain. More so than merely defining the shape and character of the two new naval institutions, the Cold War also drove strategic developments. Under the aegis of NATO in the West and the Warsaw Pact in the East, the navies of the two Germanies developed strategies that took on the character of the decade's long stalemate between the Western powers and the USSR. For the Bundesmarine, its naval strategy was more or less synonymous with NATO's naval strategy—which has “traditionally been characterized as defensive (‘containing’) and ancillary to the balance of NATO’s ‘Central Front.’”¹⁷¹ As Bird argues, “it is impossible to understand the growth and development of the Bundesmarine without reference to NATO and West Germany’s involvement in the evolution of this alliance.”¹⁷² Although the Bundesmarine for sure was a component of the FRG’s sovereign military forces, it fell directly under the operational command of the NATO Northern Europe Command based in Norway, and did not receive its orders from the Defense Ministry in Bonn.

Until the 1970s, the Bundesmarine’s official NATO mandates were to maintain freedom of navigation in the Baltic littorals during peacetime, and defend the Baltic approaches, shipping, and sea lines of communication (SLOCs) in time of war.¹⁷³ The Navy provided a layered defense of a coastal area that ran from the northern tip of Norway down to Schleswig-Holstein, with surface ships on patrol in the littorals and approaches, and maritime patrol aircraft extending deeper into the Baltic.¹⁷⁴ These forces fell under the Allied Forces, Baltic Approaches (BALTAP) tri-service headquarters in Karup, Denmark, and defended the key Baltic exit routes (straits of the Sound, Great Belt, and Little Sea).¹⁷⁵ This role later expanded into the so-called “Northern Flank” of

¹⁷¹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 746.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 744.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 745.

¹⁷⁴ Stefan Nitschke, “50 Years: German Navy in NATO,” *Naval Forces* 27, no. 3 (2006): 109–117.

¹⁷⁵ Robert S. Jordan, *Alliance Strategy and Navies: The Evolution and Scope of NATO’s Maritime Dimension* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 74.

the Norwegian Sea. As Richard Hooker points out, if the Soviet's Red Banner Fleet gained control of the strategic Northern Flank, it would enable them "to exert pressure, in the form of air attacks, amphibious landings, and even conventional ground attacks, in support of operations in the Baltic, the Low Countries, and the North German Plain."¹⁷⁶ In addition to providing presence to counter a potential Soviet amphibious operation in the Baltic, the Bundesmarine was instrumental in conducting Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) patrols to deter the growing number of Soviet ballistic missile carrying nuclear submarines (SSBNs) that were present. Until the 1970s, the Northern Flank fell to the other Atlantic alliance partners to patrol and defend, but as the Warsaw Pact presence in the North grew, so too did the demand for the Bundesmarine to move out of the Baltic littorals and into the "blue water" domain of the North Sea. This shift was really just a first step in an ongoing process of role expansion that is still occurring within the German Navy today.

Although the 1954 Paris Agreements placed limits on the initial size of the Bundesmarine, NATO requirements led to revision and expansion of those limits.

Especially after the Cuban missile crisis, NATO maritime focus shifted toward countering the potential threat of a large-scale Soviet amphibious operation in the Baltic exits. This called for the Bundesmarine to expand beyond the littorals and become more of a "blue water" navy. The early Bundesmarine fleet was made up mostly of WWII era Mine Counter Measures (MCMs) and *Kriegsfischkutters* (Cutters from the former *Kriegsmarine*), and donated vessels from the other alliance partners.¹⁷⁷ Once the West German shipbuilding industry regained its footing in the early 1960s, organic West German ships, such as the *Raubmöve* class fast patrol boats and the F-120 *Köln* class frigates, began to populate the fleet.¹⁷⁸ By 1964, the Bundesmarine contributed 14 squadrons of surface, subsurface, and airborne assets (256 craft in totality) to NATO.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Richard D. Hooker, *NATO's Northern Flank: A Critique of the Maritime Strategy*, U.S. Army War College, 1989, 24–25.

¹⁷⁷ Nitschke, "50 Years: German Navy in NATO," 109.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

With expanded roles for the *Bundesmarine*, the U.S. turned over a number of the more modern Fletcher class destroyers to provide the *Bundesmarine* with a robust ASW capability, and this growing fleet was tasked with the mission to detect, identify, and engage Warsaw Pact vessels, to lay and counter sea mines if required, to patrol Germany's coastal waters, and to defend against a potential large-scale enemy amphibious landing operation in the Baltic exits.¹⁸⁰ The *Frigatte* 122 class, the first of which was the *Bremen*, was incorporated into the *Bundesmarine* in 1982 to provide it with a technologically advanced capability. Throughout the Cold War, the *Bundesmarine* participated in multilateral naval groups, such as NATO's Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT), Standing Naval Force Channel (STANAVFORCHAN), and Multilateral Force (MLF), demonstrating its role as a responsible alliance power supporting multilateral collective security systems.¹⁸¹ Rahn posed that "for the first time in her history she [The *Bundesmarine*] was obliged merely to perform that function 'which a German Navy can actually perform' (D. Hartwig) in close cooperation with maritime powers."¹⁸² That is to say, after two failed bids for World Power, the German Navy finally found a maritime strategy appropriate for a middle European power.

By the 1980s, political changes allowed the *Bundesmarine* to shift focus away from the Baltic and NATO's Northern Flank, and prepare for "a broader spectrum of maritime defense missions and tasks which were distant from German coastal waters."¹⁸³ This, of course, came with popular backlash. Deployments, such as the 1980 destroyer cruise in the Indian Ocean, were viewed with skepticism, as it fell far outside what could be considered West Germany or NATO's immediate sphere of security interest. This marked the beginning transformation of the German Navy from a Cold War era escort force toward the contemporary expeditionary force manifest in the German Navy today—a topic that will be explored in more depth in the following chapter.

¹⁸⁰ Nitschke, "50 Years: German Navy in NATO," 110.

¹⁸¹ Bird, *German Naval History*, 745.

¹⁸² Rahn, *140 Years of German Navies*, 5.

¹⁸³ Nitschke, "50 Years: German Navy in NATO," 113.

V. THE MODERN GERMAN NAVY: AN ALLIANCE POWER

The end of the Cold war and the collapse of communism in the era 1989–1991 brought not only the unexpected unification of the two Germanies, but a paradigm shift to new missions and strategic roles for the newly unified German Navy. The first of these surprises was the integration of the legacy of the East German Navy into that of a Bundeswehr in German unity, a contingency no one had anticipated twenty-four months prior to October 1990. While the challenges associated with incorporating the personnel, ethos, heritage, and equipment of the former Volksmarine into the structure of the Federal German Navy cannot be overstated, the process was rife with political hurdles as well. Stefan Nitschke argues, under the then heading of “out of area,” the political changes associated with the fall of the USSR meant “[t]he Navy’s premier task shifted from defending against a tangible Warsaw Pact threat to preparing for a broader spectrum of maritime defense missions and tasks which were distant from German coastal waters.”¹⁸⁴ Although the Bundesmarine (renamed the Deutsche Marine in 2005—herein referred to as the German Navy) has remained on course with its legacy of operating within multilateral alliance collective security frameworks, new global challenges and a changed strategic environment in the past quarter of a century call for transformation and reform to meet new responsibilities in areas that had at one time been viewed as constitutionally banned. The security environment in the 21st century calls for a leaner force postured to support a wide range of operations ranging from crisis response and humanitarian assistance to embargo enforcement and countering transnational threats far beyond Germany’s immediate periphery. For the Federal Republic, with its unhappy experience of modern war and its reticence to use the military in a casual fashion as an instrument of policy, this transformation of the Bundeswehr and the navy within it has been anything other than routine or simple. This being said, the German Navy of today fulfills its role commensurate to the relative strength of the German Republic

¹⁸⁴ Nitschke, “50 Years: German Navy in NATO,” 109.

within the European system of states and does so with exemplary efficiency and with a single mindedness of purpose that belies the popular image of Germany as a “pacifist” nation in a state of disarmament.

A. UNIFICATION

The two Germanies were unified on October 3, 1990, and with unification the Navy was faced with the immediate task of absorbing the vestiges of the former GDR’s Volksmarine. Due to existing plans to downsize the West German Navy (the Navy 2005 plan that was drafted during the Cold War), the decision was made from the start that no vessels from the Volksmarine would be adopted by the new German Navy. Personnel from the East German ranks were selected very carefully and in small quantity. They were given a probationary period after which most were then gradually released from service, not the least because of the legacy of the GDR communist system in the ranks of the forces. Commander Jürgen Ehle recounts the long list of Volksmarine personnel and equipment that the new German Navy had to decommission: “8,300 military personnel (of a former total of fourteen thousand in October 1989) and 3,700 civilian employees; 129 facilities (headquarters, naval bases, depots, etc.); seventy-one combat vessels, forty-six auxiliary ships, and twenty-seven helicopters; forty-three thousand handheld firearms and fourteen thousand tons of ammunition; seventy-eight main battle tanks and armored infantry vehicles, 177 reconnaissance tanks, and 5,500 motor vehicles; 1800 tons of highly toxic rocket fuel; and clothing stocks for about 200,000 men and women.”¹⁸⁵ Although much of what composed the former Volksmarine was not repurposed within the German Navy, that did not change the fact that the navy’s area of cognizance now included the coastlines of the former GDR.

Peifer points out the West German Ministry of Defense having struggled with the legacy of national socialism in the Wehrmacht as well as being home to a fairly normal and not unhealthy anti communism into which it was born, dictated the NVA formed no source of tradition in the Bundeswehr in unity, despite the integration of the ex-NVA

¹⁸⁵ Jürgen Ehle, “The German Navy after the Cold War and Reunification,” *Naval War College Review* 51, no. 4 (Autumn 1998):63–84. PROQUEST(60276918).

officers and troops, and said, further, the MoD “showed little interest in integrating GDR icons into its traditions,” and the unification of the two Germanies was “the end of an era in which German naval mutinies served as a memory beacon and symbol.”¹⁸⁶ East Germany’s revolutionary historical narrative had no place in the post 1990 navy. Moreover, the enduring utility of the 20th of July proved useful again in the education of the former Volksmarine personnel as they were introduced to *Innere Führung*.

The key characteristics of the newly unified Navy were parliamentary control over the forces as an army of parliament, and a navy of parliament, too and “an aversion to ‘interventionism.’”¹⁸⁷ The reliance on NATO as the primary instrument for European defense during the Cold War, and German public opinion cultivated what Ronald Asmus called a “culture of reticence” in Germany—which is to say, one not quite pacifist, but reluctant to use armed force unlike in the U.S., the U.K. or France.¹⁸⁸ The united Germany’s first two Chancellors, Helmut Kohl, and Gerhard Schröder, and now Angela Merkel, all have realized Germany’s responsibility to expand its role in global operations and provide military forces to alliance security systems commensurate to the economic and physical size of Germany, even if this policy remains unpopular and no object of celebration as is the case elsewhere. As Susanne Koelbl points out, “[w]ith reunification, the nation had not just regained full sovereignty: it also became subject to the rules that had effectively been put on ice during the Cold War.”¹⁸⁹ Germany, virtually overnight, went from being a divided Cold War nation to a strong European power with expected proportionate security contributions.

¹⁸⁶Peifer, “Memory Beacons,” 1028.

¹⁸⁷ Mary Elise Sarotte, *German Military Reform and European Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

¹⁸⁸ Ronald D. Asmus, *Germany’s Geopolitical Maturation: Public Opinion and Security Policy in 1994* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1995), 41.

¹⁸⁹ Susanne Koelbl, “The Germans: Germany’s Bundeswehr Steps Out on the Global Stage,” *Der Spiegel*, June 17, 2005, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/spiegel-special-the-germans-germany-s-bundeswehr-steps-out-on-the-global-stage-a-360869.html>.

B. FROM ESCORT FORCE TO EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Germany's naval roles in the Cold War were essentially restricted to Central Europe and were focused on countering the Soviet threat in the Baltic and the North Sea. The changed strategic environment following the collapse of communism presented new challenges for the united navy. Instability in the Balkans called for NATO and UN intervention, piracy off of the Horn of Africa became prolific and has posed a threat to German and other allied commerce, the 9/11 terrorist attacks sparked a global war on terror that required a multilateral approach; all of these events are just part of the increasingly globalized world where national interests are increasingly becoming intertwined with transnational problems. In its early years, the German Navy was faced with mounting pressure from its international partners to expand its mandates and participate unrestricted in multilateral operations in areas outside of NATO's immediate territory.

Germany's 2006 *White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr* defines German security policy as "forward-looking and multilateral," and proclaims that "[t]he strategic partnership between NATO and the EU is one of the pillars of the European and transatlantic security architecture."¹⁹⁰ This statement is paramount to understanding Germany's basic idea for providing security for itself and for its partners. German security interests are intertwined with EU and NATO security interests, and a priority is minimizing the duplication of efforts between these two institutions. Regarding NATO specifically, the White Paper identifies it as "[t]he bedrock of common security and Germany and Europe. It is the backbone of the North Atlantic Alliance, which in turn is the cornerstone of German security and defense policy."¹⁹¹ The White Paper identifies the UN as "the fundamental framework of international law that governs international relations."¹⁹² This conclusion was a landmark occasion for the Bundesmarine, for it marked the beginning of a shift from being a purely coastal and escort based force, to an expeditionary one that could support operations that had

¹⁹⁰ German Federal Ministry of Defense, "White Paper 2006," 12.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.

previously been considered outside the scope of German security interests. This shift toward “out of area” missions saw an expansion in the years following the September 11 attacks, following the tide of understanding that transnational threats such as terrorism mean that German security interests extend beyond Germany’s shores and thus as a responsible and powerful country in the region, Germany must provide forces commensurate to their geographic and economic weight within the alliance frameworks.

1. 1994 Constitutional Court Ruling

The writing of the German Basic Law in 1949 made only allowance for association with a collective security organization, that is, the UN, and contained no national security provisions. The latter were drafted amid controversy in the mid 1950s, but placed an ironclad limit of national defense in the strictest sense on the mission of the Bundeswehr. This constitutional core principle became an impediment to the making of policy in the chaos of the 1990s, and eventually, Parliament compelled the Judiciary more or less to revise the constitution. As the ex Yugoslav war deepened in its horror and the U.S. and NATO reoriented themselves in the wake of the ’90–’91 Gulf War, on July 12, 1994 the constitutional court in Karlsruhe put forth a ruling resulting in a changed interpretation: that no legal bar on the use of German armed forces abroad—in support of UN, NATO, or other collective security initiatives—actually existed. While this new interpretation of the Basic Law allowed for more leniencies regarding the deployment of German forces in out-of-area operations, it came with the stipulation that each deployment would be subject to Bundestag review and approval on a per-case basis.¹⁹³ Karl-Heinz Börner points out previous restrictive interpretations of the Basic Law “regarded as unconstitutional any international missions by German armed forces exceeding common self-defense within the geographical areas defined by NATO or the Western European Union (WEU),”¹⁹⁴ so this ruling represented a major shift in operational capabilities for the Bundeswehr and the German Navy within it.

¹⁹³ Press release issued by the Federal Constitutional Court, No. 29/94 (Karlsruhe, Germany).

¹⁹⁴ Karl-Heinz Börner, “The Future of German Operations Outside NATO,” *Parameters* (Spring 1996): 62–72, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/96spring/borner.htm>.

Basil Germond and Michael Smith point out that German doctrine is shifting to match the new emphasis on interventionist missions, citing documents like the 2003 *Zielvereinbarung für die Deutsche Marine* that state, “Beyond the traditional assets of the Navy in coastal waters, adjacent waters, and the high seas (the Escort Navy), the capacity is developing to carry out in priority enduring operations very remote from the adjacent waters within the framework of various threat scenarios (the Expeditionary Navy).”¹⁹⁵ German public opinion for out of area military operations has been a mixed bag, as there are those that believe participation in NATO operations away from German shores are more in the interest of pleasing the United States than in providing security benefits for Germany.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, since reunification, public opinion of expanded military responsibilities has certainly increased.

2. Expanding Roles in Support of Alliance Partners

As discussed in the previous chapter, the road to this revised interpretation of the Basic Law began prior to unification as the international community began to place demands on the German Navy that pushed it first out of the Baltic and into the North Sea, and eventually into the Eastern Mediterranean. The 1990 Gulf War brought increased pressure from the international community for Germany to pull its weight financially and militarily through UN peacekeeping missions; then Chancellor Helmut Kohl recognized “[w]e [Germany] have to face up to our responsibility, whether we like it or not.”¹⁹⁷ A united Germany did pay many of the bills in 1990–1991, but was restricted from all out participation in that Gulf campaign by custom, by Soviet pressure, and by the lack of forces suited to the role. Although Germany was constitutionally barred from participating in the war itself, the German Navy aided in the cleanup of mines following the war with a contribution of five minesweepers, augmenting a capability that the US

¹⁹⁵ Basil Germond and Michael Smith, “Re-Thinking European Security Interests and the ESDP: Explaining the EU’s Anti-Piracy Operation,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 30, no. 3 (2009): 573–593. Doi 10.1080/13523260903327741.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 584.

¹⁹⁷ Stephen Kinzer, “War in the Gulf: Germany; Germans Are Told of Gulf-war Role,” *The New York Times*, January 31, 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/31/world/war-in-the-gulf-germany-germans-are-told-of-gulf-war-role.html>.

had a noted lack of experience with.¹⁹⁸ Then commander of American naval forces in the gulf, Vice Admiral Stanley Arthur, stated, “[m]ine warfare has never been one of our big priorities, because we’ve always assumed that other nations would take on that mission.”¹⁹⁹ The deployment of these five German minesweepers to an area outside of Germany’s immediate periphery was a first for the newly unified German Navy, and demonstrated how German strengths could augment allied weaknesses.

Koelbl mentions the process of breaking the taboo of “out of area” with the May 1992 Bundeswehr operation in Cambodia, where German troops established a field hospital to aid victims of the Khmer Rouge. This was another major milestone for the shift toward becoming an expeditionary force. She argues that “[f]rom then on the German forces took on even bigger and more perilous assignments. But they were parceled out in such small doses that the German population accepted them.”²⁰⁰ Just later that year, the focus shifted to the Yugoslav catastrophe, as German naval units from STANAVFORLANT deployed in support of NATO Operation Maritime Monitor established off the coast of Montenegro, in support of UNSCRs 713 (calling for a cease fire in Yugoslavia) and 757 (calling for a reinforcement of the arms embargo put in place with UNSCR 752).²⁰¹ Those German naval forces then supported “stop and search” operations off the coast of Montenegro/Serbia as part of the more aggressive Maritime Guard operation that replaced the monitoring one. Some criticism of the German Navy’s role in Maritime Guard arose because due to the constitutional ban on the use of force, Germany’s ships did not actively participate in the boardings, which was perceived as Germany taking “mere bystander’s attitude.”²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Eric Schmitt, “After The War; Gulf Is Swept for Mines In the Aftermath of War,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/03/19/world/after-the-war-gulf-is-swept-for-mines-in-the-aftermath-of-war.html>.

¹⁹⁹ Schmitt, “After The War.”

²⁰⁰ Koelbl, “The Germans: Germany’s Bundeswehr Steps Out on the Global Stage.”

²⁰¹ RefWorld, “Resolution 713 Adopted by the Security Council at its 3009th meeting, on September 25, 1991, Resolution 787 Adopted by the Security Council at its 3137th Meeting, on November 16, 1992,” (n.d.), <http://www.refworld.org>.

²⁰² Hans Lüssow, “The German Navy in Deeper Water,” *NATO’s Nations and Partners for Peace III* (2001): 30–36. Proquest (274807536).

Support of the 1994 UN *Operation Southern Cross* in Somalia not only brought naval units far outside of German waters, but also presented the navy with the opportunity for its first joint operation in a more or less expeditionary role. Participation in NATO's *Operation Deny Flight* over Bosnia from 1993–5, the 1996 exercise *Baltic Sweep* in the Gulf of Riga assisting Latvia with development of its own MCM force, the contribution of German ships from STANAVFORMED and STANAVFORLANT to the 1999 *Operation Allied Force* over Serbia, and the employment of over 8,000 German troops to the UN Kosovo Force (KFOR) stability operation following conflict there in 2000 and the continuing naval intelligence gathering mission in support of KFOR all are part of a trend whereby expeditionary operations have become the norm for German armed forces.²⁰³

Germany's support in 2006 of the UNSCR 1701 mandated cease-fire between Israel and Lebanon, which entailed naval patrols along the Lebanese coastline, brought a historic number of German military members serving in an out-of-area mission in the postwar era. Of the approximately 10,000 Bundeswehr personnel supporting the UN mandate, 1,500 were from the German Navy. Two frigates with organic helicopters, two supply ships and four fast patrol boats supported the combined multilateral maritime task force.²⁰⁴ This is all part of a larger trend of expeditionary ops, which in 2006, Chancellor Angela Merkel publicly stated that Germany “has to meet more obligations and take on more responsibility in the world.”²⁰⁵

Germany provides forces to NATO's Standing Naval Maritime Groups (SNMGs) in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea. These squadrons are typically composed of six to 10 vessels from NATO nations, but composition is rotational and varies every four to six months. The groups provide ready forces for intervention as necessary in Europe's waters.²⁰⁶ The German Navy also contributes naval escorts to EU NAVFOR

²⁰³ Sarotte, *German Military Reform and European Security*, 9.

²⁰⁴ Claudia Rach, “German Parliament Approved UN Naval Force for Lebanon,” *Bloomberg*, September 20, 2006, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=apOI7Q4ELYPC>.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Allied Command Operations, “Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 and 2,” (n.d.), Accessed 02 December 2013, <http://www.aco.nato.int/page13615814.aspx>.

(aka *Operation Atlanta*), an ongoing CSDP mission tasked with combatting piracy off the Horn of Africa. Germany's decision to participate in counter-piracy operations through the EU-led NAVFOR rather than the NATO led *Ocean Shield* shows "domestic political preference for an EU option rather than yet another controversial US-led operation."²⁰⁷ As of 2009, Germany's contribution to EU NAVFOR consisted of two frigates, one oil tanker, and one maritime patrol craft, which was roughly equal to France, Sweden, and Spain's contributions.²⁰⁸ Germany is also a force provider for NATO's *Operation Active Endeavour*—a standing counter-terrorist operation in the Mediterranean that was established following the 9/11 attacks,²⁰⁹ and provides surface assets to the Mine-Countermeasure Force Mediterranean (MCMFORMED) as part of NATO's Immediate Reaction Force (IRF).²¹⁰ Clearly, the German Navy has grown immensely from the Cold War escort force confined to the Baltic and the Norwegian Sea and has demonstrated Germany's willingness to take on roles commensurate to its heft within the European system.

C. DEFENSE REFORM IN THE RECENT PAST AND THE FUTURE

Key components of military reform in Germany have been the suspension of conscription, and the reorganization of the ministry of defense and the military command structure to fit more succinctly within European and transatlantic security forces as well as reduce the size of the forces amid a period of austerity. Abenheim points out a common misconception in Western circles has been that German defense institutions are "insufficient in size and resources for a nation of Germany's strength and world role," an opinion that he argues "misses the whole point of German defense institutional reform since the end of the Cold War, the rise of the European Union (EU), and the advent of

²⁰⁷ Germond and Smith, "Re-Thinking European Security Interests and the ESDP," 585.

²⁰⁸ Germond and Smith, "Re-Thinking European Security Interests and the ESDP," 586.

²⁰⁹ Maritime Command, "Operation Active Endeavor," (n.d.), Accessed 05 December 2013, <http://www.mc.nato.int/ops/Pages/OAE.aspx>.

²¹⁰ Lüssow, "The German Navy in Deeper Water," 34.

global alliance/coalitional warfare and crisis intervention.”²¹¹ Given Germany’s relationship with its storied history and a certain skepticism of the military induced by a once incredibly fractured civil-military relationship, the incremental expansion of the German Navy’s strategic role in supporting European collective security has far exceeded what was to be expected just 20 years ago. The Federal German Republic’s approach to foreign relations has always placed more emphasis on statecraft and multilateralism over raw military capability, as such military reform comes attached with a level of domestic battles to be fought.

One major change as part of recent defense reforms is the suspension of conscription that went into effect in July of 2011. Until recently, conscription in Germany had been considered “an untouchable pillar of democracy,” or “democracy’s legitimate child.”²¹² Conscription in Germany was always tied to the concept of the “citizen in uniform,” and a major component of the guiding principle of *Innere Führung* that is so central to the life of the forces in Germany. Abenheim, an expert on the subject, argues “universal conscription has been the bedrock under the ‘citizen in uniform’ since the 1950s . . . [t]o scrap this feature of service . . . cuts deeply to the core values in the political and strategic culture.”²¹³ As previously discussed, conscription was built into the Bundeswehr from the start to ensure a durable link between soldier and society and to prevent a militant “state within a state” from forming, but Stephan Pfaffenzeller argues “today’s soldiers are not subject to the same split loyalties as the Wehrmacht, nor do they find themselves in a similar situation of political instability.”²¹⁴

This decision to become a professional force was two fold. On the one hand, it more closely aligns Germany with its European partners who all maintain professional

²¹¹ Donald Abenheim and Carolyn Halladay, “Stability in Flux: Policy, Strategy, and Institutions in Germany,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations* ed. Thomas C. Bruneau and Florina Christiana Matei (New York: Routledge, 2013), 304.

²¹² David Gordon Smith, “The World from Berlin: ‘End of an Era’ as Germany Suspends Conscription,” *Der Spiegel*, January 4, 2011, www.spiegel.de/international; Stephan Pfaffenzeller, “Conscription and Democracy: The Mythology of Civil—Military Relations,” *Armed Forces and Society* 36, no. 481 (2010), DOI 10.1177/0095327X09351226.

²¹³ Abenheim and Halladay, “Stability in Flux,” 311.

²¹⁴ Pfaffenzeller, “Conscription and Democracy: The Mythology of Civil—Military Relations.”

militaries. On the other, it is part of downsizing efforts that aim to reduce the Bundeswehr from 240,000 to 170,000 (a far cry from the 500,000 plus Cold War size).²¹⁵ The 2010 panel on defense reform, lead by Dr. Frank-Jürgen Weise, head of the German Federal Labor Agency, called for a doubling of operational forces and a massive reduction in rear-echelon manning which was to shape the Bundeswehr more appropriately for its new expeditionary roles.²¹⁶ The downsizing of the force is part of the streamlining process as the German Military continues its shift away from Cold War era strategic roles toward compact out-of-area deployments in support of multilateral coalition operations. Although conscription has been so ingrained in the military culture of Germany since 1955, public opinion of its suspension was mostly positive because there are many who feel it placed unnecessary burdens on Germany's young adults. That is not to say that suspension did not have its critics. Some argue that by abolishing conscription, the German military will have to compete against universities and lucrative private sector jobs for their recruitment pool, and if the military loses out, then the Bundeswehr will suffer for lack of quality professional personnel. Nicolas Barotte cites a *Der Spiegel* article printed in 2000 that quoted then Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping as suggesting "only Rambos, rightists, and idiots" would volunteer to serve in the armed forces, an opinion that has obviously been overcome by events but demonstrates how far Germany has come in the past ten years with defense reform.²¹⁷

Congressional analyst Paul Belkin contends "Germany appears to continue to seek a 'middle path' between NATO and the EU, promoting the development of an independent European foreign and defense policy as a compliment, rather than counterweight to NATO."²¹⁸ Germany's foreign policy preference is to operate through multilateral frameworks such as the EU, NATO, and especially the UN. For Germany, the UN is an essential institution. The expansion of German security interests beyond

²¹⁵ Smith, "The World from Berlin: 'End of an Era' as Germany Suspends Conscription."

²¹⁶ Abenheim and Halladay, "Stability in Flux: Policy, Strategy, and Institutions in Germany," 310–1.

²¹⁷ Nicolas Barotte, "German Military Reform and European Security," 24. Quote by Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping printed in "Wird sind nur bedingt einsatzfähig," *Der Spiegel*, May 29, 2000, 32.

²¹⁸ Paul Belkin, *German Foreign and Security Policy: Trends and Transatlantic Implications* CRS Report RL34199 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, March 16, 2010), 17.

NATO and into UN and CSDP missions has sparked domestic debate in Germany. *Der Spiegel* journalist Ulrike Demmer points out how German Minister of Defense Thomas de Maizière “often mentions Germany’s ‘fear of its own strength,’ which, as he says, was a welcome excuse for the Germans’ tendency to hold back on important issues after reunification, especially ‘when it was time to make their own concrete contributions to security policy.’ ”²¹⁹ With its central and powerful role in Europe, Berlin has an active role to play in steering the direction of alliance collective security systems. This role does not only include NATO, but means supporting the Petersburg Tasks established by the St Malo Accords in support of CSDP initiatives, and UN operations.

The German Navy today is a compact force postured to operate closely alongside alliance partners in peacetime through regular exercises and ongoing maritime operations combatting transnational issues such as terrorism and piracy. Operationally, its primary tasks are crisis response, although ASW remains one of its core competencies. Current fleet disposition is 19,197 personnel, 15 frigates, two corvettes, four Hunter-Killer submarines, 10 missile-armed Fast Attack Craft, two landing craft, 19 mine warfare vessels, eight tenders, one anti-submarine warfare/maritime patrol squadron, one maritime support helicopter squadron, one rotary anti-submarine warfare squadron.²²⁰ This order of battle is an appropriate size for a continental middle power supporting alliance collective security initiatives whose “place in the world is characterized above all by our interests as a strong nation in the center of Europe and by our international responsibility for peace and freedom.”²²¹

²¹⁹ Ulrike Demmer and Christoph Schult, “Germany’s Reputation in NATO Has Hit Rock Bottom,” *Der Spiegel*, May 5, 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/criticism-of-germany-s-military-role-in-the-nato-alliance-a-833503.html>.

²²⁰ Business Source Complete, “Germany Defence & Security Report.” *Germany Defence & Security Report* no. 1 (1st Quarter 2013): 37.

²²¹ German Ministry of Defense, “Defense Policy Guidelines,” May 18, 2011, 3, http://www.nato.diplo.de/contentblob/3150944/Daten/1318881/VM_deMaiziere_180511_eng_DLD.pdf.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study analyzed the politics and strategy of the German Navy throughout its history, from inception to the present. Germany has a rich naval history and tradition to be sure. Its navy today is a prominent feature of the German armed forces, yet in many ways, it no longer bulks large as an immediate concern of the U.S. Navy or of defense experts in Washington, D.C. Such a view, however, is misguided, for the fate of Germany and its military is always a worthwhile inquiry. This officer's goal has been to understand issues that are prone to misunderstanding, especially in the realm of strategy and policy, as well as civil military relations, which are always linked to the former. The significance of this study is in its exploration of the bare bones of strategy and warfare dissected in a vacuum, unhindered by narrow operational tales of feats in battle. This study has also set its sights on the imponderable features of self-purpose, tradition, morale, and strategy that are at the heart of navies, as found in the common threads woven through the various epochs of the German naval experience. The link between statecraft, national policy, and naval strategy cannot be overstated, to say nothing of the role modern society—however diffuse and confusing in its variety from the 18th century until the present—has to play in the proper functioning of a navy. This author selected the German case study to explore the origins of fleets and strategy because in its brief 150-year history, the navies of Germany have experienced both failures and successes in connection with a spectrum of statecraft spanning from *Weltpolitik* and *Weltmachtstreben* to supporting alliance collective security initiatives. The German Navy of today is the product of rebirth and a demonstration that when paired with democratic and multilaterally focused statecraft, it can be a powerful and effective apparatus.

Despite the dreams of its founders and the delusions that gripped much of its development in the 19th and 20th centuries, Germany was never destined to be one of the great maritime powers; its geographic position, and the continental focus of German statecraft precludes such a thing. During Imperial Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm's attempt at navalism in support of his ambitious foreign policy was met with failure because of a mismatch between strategy and politics. Materially, the High Seas Fleet at the onset of

WWI was impressive and technologically advanced, but the Kaiser built this navy without developing a strategy for its employment. He was drawn to the Mahanian concept of sea power, and he ultimately abandoned the *Jeune École* strategy that was a much better fit for Germany—the inferior naval power when ranked against Great Britain. Despite all of the time and money that went into constructing his fleet of *dreadnaughts*, this fleet spent the war hauled up in port under orders to remain there—a decision with catastrophic political consequences. Although the *Kaiserliche Marine* was successful in disrupting allied shipping through unrestricted submarine warfare, U-boats were viewed as ancillary to the battle fleet, and the successes of the U-boat arm were downplayed even in the strategic review following the war. The U-boat campaign brought the entry of the United States into the war, adding enough strength to the exhausted *Entente* powers and spelling the end of the second *Reich* and the disgrace of the Imperial Navy.

The *Reichsmarine* of the Weimar Republic justified its existence by promoting the idea of a German blue water ethos as part of a reversal of the defeat and a return to great power, that is, world power in a dream of tomorrow. Despite its inaction in the war, the historians of the High Seas Fleet at work on their accounts of the immediate past aggrandized what deserved censure, and its failures of policy and strategy were glossed over in the glowing accounts published officially in the 1920s and the 1930s. Any dissenting opinions that suggested the strategic blunders of the *Kaiserliche Marine's* concept of navalism were silenced in the civil military relations of Weimar that betrayed the incapacity of the first German democracy to find a path ahead with armed forces that made sense, instead of degraded into delusions. In order to guarantee a future for the then fragile navy, it was necessary to justify the past with windy claims about bravery and power. Tirpitz was dead set on reconstructing a blue water navy for Germany, but the impoverishment of strategic thinking incited by the incessant justification of a failed naval strategy doomed Germany to repeat the same mistakes all over again.

Although Tirpitz's naval ambitions were misguided, his feats in raising the first German fleet demonstrated an uncanny understanding of the role of mass politics in constructing a navy in the industrial and imperial age. Prior to his rise to head of the

Imperial Naval Office, naval planning in the *Reich* was myopic and unguided. Tirpitz was able to cement a vision for the German fleet, sell it to the *Reichstag*, and thus, secure the vast funds required in constructing technologically advanced naval equipment. Because of the long timeframes and big budgets required to raise a fleet, Tirpitz understood also that success hinged upon a national ethos of navalism. He used propaganda to sell the idea of Germany as a great maritime power to the public, thus establishing a strong civil military relationship that precluded socialist rebellions by the working class and ensured national support for the large percentage of the national economy that was required to undertake his naval construction plans. In this connection, the raising of a fleet requires a symbiosis of economic, political, social, and strategic factors.

The civil military relationship during the Weimar epoch was damaged by the failures of the navy in the war, the mutinies and naval revolution of 1917–8, and the navy’s involvement in the 1920 *putsch*. The public did not trust the navy, and the navy adopted an apolitical ethos that established the cadre as a “state within a state” in the Republic. Raeder, like Tirpitz before him, understood that long-term ship construction policies in time of peace are vital to the success of fleets in time of war. It was he who said, “[u]nder certain circumstances political constellations can change more rapidly than ships can be built.”²²² Because of this interplay between politics and fleet building, it is impossible to separate politics from naval strategy. Hitler’s world ambition became the *Kriegsmarine*’s world ambition during WWII. He transformed the “state within a state” of the military into an instrument of politics under National Socialism. By the end of WWII, what resulted was a public that was deeply skeptical of the military, a sentiment that took decades to repair through the integration of civil society and the military via the “citizen in uniform” and the military’s guiding principles of *innere führung*.

Germany was unprepared for both world wars because of an inability in both cases to come to a consensus on the direction which fleet construction should take in time

²²² Klaus A. Maier, “Securing the Northern Flank of Europe,” in *Germany and the Second World War, Vol. II: Germany’s Initial Conquests in Europe*, ed. Klaus A. Maier et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 183.

to build up the fleet. *Guerre de course* was a strategic fit for Germany, but twice it was forgone in pursuit of an unrealistic offensive strategy modeled after Mahan's sea power theories. The *Reichsmarine* attributed its failures in WWI to the revolutions and mutinies of 1918 and bad statecraft rather than to the realities of Germany's geostrategic position and British sea power that decimated the inferior German Navy. Despite the successes of the U-boat campaign in WWI, its lessons were not applied from the start in WWII.

Hitler's naval build-up focused once again on the construction of a battle fleet as predicated by the Z-plan, but with the changed strategy of employing battleships against commerce. Although Grand Admiral Dönitz espoused unrestricted submarine warfare from the start, Hitler was reluctant to pursue any provocative strategy that would bring Great Britain into the war. Great Britain joined the war regardless, and Hitler's late embarkation on a U-boat war against allied shipping served only to draw America into the war and seal the fate of the *Kriegsmarine*. By the end of WWII, Germany had learned once again that any attempt at world power perched on the legs of navalism was doomed to failure. Great Britain and the U.S.'s ability to command the seas, and Hitler's inability too, stemmed as much from geography as it did from any other factor.

In the Cold War, an epoch that stretched out over time to dwarf the record of war in 1914–18 and 1939–45, the navies of East and West Germany both were faced with the problems of adjusting to new strategic realities in which the divided Germany was a nuclear powder keg, as well as the subject of the two super powers, whose strategic ideas ranged far beyond the limits of central Europe. Nonetheless, both Germanys fitted into this Cold War system. This process also forced once more the political ethos of the navy to the forefront, a development that is more interesting when seen in hindsight than, say, in the 1950s or even 1960s. This process hinged on the selection of appropriate traditions and virtues from the past, and neither organization chose to identify with the precursor *Kriegsmarine*—at least in the beginning. For the *Bundesmarine*, extracting a usable past from a history that offered little of much use was a challenging task but a vital component of establishing tradition and a sense of professionalism among the naval cadre. Establishing the link between society and the military, and founding a naval service based on the fundamentals of the Basic Law, required the creation of a professional ethos. The

creators of the *Bundeswehr* developed the professional philosophy of *innere Führung* to meet this task. This guidance for soldiers provided the West German military with a way of establishing command, obedience, and soldierly duty within a democracy. The concept of the “citizen in uniform,” together with *innere Führung*, ensured that no military caste or “state within a state” would form again, and universal conscription gave every member of society a stake in the military and ensured a strong civil military relationship. The reconstruction of tradition and the cultivation of military professionalism in the post-war epoch were instrumental in healing Germany’s damaged civil military relations, and they laid the foundation for the socially integrated force manifest in the German Navy of today.

The German Navy’s integration into alliance structures began during the Cold War, at a time when the navy’s operational control fell directly to NATO and German naval strategy was synonymous with NATO naval strategy. Since the fall of communism, however, the fleet has shifted from escort force to expeditionary force and has increased its scope beyond the national or NATO periphery. The transition has been marked by domestic uncertainty concerning the roles that the German military should play in countering global threats, but measures, such as the 1994 constitutional court ruling on “out of area” deployments, and the reform initiatives started in 2010, have been instrumental in modernizing the German Navy, while at the same time, garnering popular support for what would have at one time been considered military adventurism.

As is to be expected with military reform, there has been a fair share of contentious issues. The German Navy, as a component of the *Bundeswehr*, has been downsizing its forces since unification. The recent suspension of conscription, which was aimed in a time of fiscal austerity at creating a more compact and professional force, has been an especially touchy subject. Conscription is a foundational aspect of the *Bundeswehr* and a component of the “citizen in uniform.” Just 10 years ago, the idea of a professional military in Germany was not realistic. Yet, to meet modern security demands, a compact and deployable force is required. The German Navy encountered trouble after unification as it took on expeditionary roles but was manned by a conscripted force that was only deployable on a voluntary basis. With the newly

professionalized manning, the navy is poised and ready to deploy where necessary in support of alliance collective security initiatives.

In contemporary Germany, the recognition of a history marred by militarism and excessive nationalism largely explains Germany's preference for seeking political rather than military solutions to problems through multilateral institutions. A certain skepticism still persists among the German public regarding out-of-area military adventures, and the domestic landscape does not support an expansion of the present-day German Navy on the scale of the United States, the United Kingdom, or France. Missions of the German Navy today run the gamut from conflict prevention and crisis management to peacekeeping and counter-terrorism. The new challenges of this changed security environment in the epoch since 1990 have demanded that Germany take on new strategic roles and push the bounds of its Basic Law, specifically the interpretation of Article 87a that states "The Federation shall establish Armed Forces for purposes of defence."²²³ In the modern, globalized world, transnational threats emanating from non-state actors, such as terrorism and piracy have displaced the Cold War-era state-on-state ideological struggle. The nature of these threats dictates that the "purposes of defense" are no longer confined to the Federal Republic's immediate borders or NATO's periphery, but rather defense requires martial forces integrated into alliance security systems poised to react in a global theater. Given Germany's history, it comes as no surprise that the public has a general skepticism of war and the potential for military excess. Yet one does ill to accept the misconception emanating from some corners of the political sphere that Germany's connection with its past has resulted in pacifism or an unwillingness to pull its weight in the alliance security structures to which it is party. The Federal Republic has been a reliable partner, and its navy is in a continual process of transformation and reform to better poise itself to support multilateral European and trans-Atlantic alliance security systems. From two failed bids at world power to settling in as a strong alliance power, the German Navy as a servant to empires and republics has evolved into a strong and efficient institution built upon democratic ideals, premised on a strong civil military relationship, and supporting cohesive and responsible statecraft.

²²³ Constitution Society, "Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany," Article 87a.

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