

In the Service of Kaiser and King:
State Sovereignty, Nation-Building, and the German Army, 1866-1918

By

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Abstract

From its creation during the Wars of Unification (1864-71) until its defeat at the end of the First World War, the German army remained a federal institution. To be sure, the imperial constitution recognized the Kaiser as commander-in-chief of Germany's land forces. Under the Kaiser's direction, the Prussian war ministry prepared the military budget and the Prussian General Staff drafted operational plans for future wars. A patchwork of military agreements nevertheless limited the authority of the Kaiser and Prussia's military leaders over nearly one-quarter of the German army. According to these agreements, separate war ministries, cadet schools, and general staffs oversaw the arming, clothing, feeding, housing, and training of Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers, while the monarchs of Germany's three smaller kingdoms determined personnel appointments, the deployment of units, and even the design of insignia and uniforms. The army's contingent-based structure ensured that Prussians and non-Prussians served alongside, but only rarely *with*, one another after 1871.

Based on research in archives and libraries in Germany, Austria, England, and the United States, this dissertation explores the means by which the smaller armies of Bavaria,

Saxony, and Württemberg were integrated into Prussia's much larger military structure after 1871 and seeks to understand why the German army, burdened by numerous loyalties and overlapping spheres of control, did not simply fall apart during the First World War. It argues that even though the decentralization of military authority and the presence of dual loyalties among Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg soldiers remained serious concerns for Prussian authorities, the German army proved remarkably durable because the empire's monarchs and their advisors preferred compromise, rather than conflict, with one another. This dissertation contributes to ongoing historiographical debates concerning the process of nation-building and the consolidation of state power across Europe since the French Revolution; the evolution of the relationship between monarchs and their militaries in a period characterized by public opinion shaped by parliamentary debates and a mass press; and the ability of multiethnic and multinational empires to mobilize their diverse societies for war at the turn of the twentieth century and on the eve of two global conflicts.

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I have accumulated numerous debts of gratitude over the past seven years. Professor James Retallack encouraged me to think about the broader political and social context in which the German army existed between 1871 and 1918 and, as a consequence, was instrumental in shifting this dissertation's focus from the procurement of weapons and equipment and the payment of army salaries in Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg into something much more. No less important were his composure when correcting errors in early drafts of chapters and his diligence in pointing out inconsistencies in the project's closing stages. This dissertation owes much to Professor Retallack's unflagging dedication to his graduate students.

I am equally grateful to Professor Doris Bergen. From this project's earliest days, she provided continuous support, while never hesitating to ask the tough questions about its focus and direction. Chapter Four is the product of her encouragement to consider loyalties beyond the three state-based contingents. More generally, Professor Bergen's enthusiasm for teaching has provided me with a model that I hope to emulate in my own career.

Although he could not see this project through to its conclusion, Professor Denis Smyth is responsible for this dissertation boasting an appropriate end point. His warnings that military history should not be written "with the war left out" may have forced me to return to the archives in 2015, but they also led me to ask the question: how could such a cumbersome fighting force survive four years of death and suffering? I am likewise indebted to Professor Jennifer Jenkins and Professor Piotr Wróbel for agreeing to read this dissertation's final draft, and to Professor Frank Lorenz Müller for flying across the Atlantic after doing so.

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Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents, John and Alexandra, and to my partner, Tracy. The former put up with their son's long journey through the Canadian post-secondary education system, from Waterloo to Calgary to Toronto. The latter endured countless off-the-cuff lectures on a range of topics in German history and patiently taught me the skills necessary to produce the maps on the following pages. Much more impressively, Tracy never complained when I opted for an afternoon in the reading room of the Bavarian war archive over a picnic in Munich's *Englischer Garten*.

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Introduction

This dissertation analyzes the organization of the German army and the distribution of military power in the German empire between the Wars of Unification (1864-71) and the end of the First World War in 1918. It does so by exploring the means by which the smaller armies of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg were integrated with the much larger Prussian military after 1871 and by seeking to understand why the imperial German army did not simply fall apart under the pressure of industrial warfare between 1914 and 1918. It argues that even though the limits placed on the Kaiser's military power and the presence of dual loyalties among Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg soldiers remained a serious concern for Prussian authorities in the decades following unification, the German army's decentralized organization proved flexible enough to mitigate the accompanying dangers. This complex and unwieldy fighting force survived until the last days of the First World War in part because Germany's monarchs and their advisors preferred compromise, rather than conflict, with one another. Until the "de-crowning" of Germany in the autumn of 1918, the contingent-based structure of the German army and the distribution of military power between the Kaiser and the empire's three lesser kings were considered by contemporaries to be necessary evils.

When Allied statesmen convened in Paris in January 1919, they were united by a common belief: the preceding four and a half years of fighting, which had resulted in the deaths of almost ten million combatants and an equal number of civilians and had devastated large swathes of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, had been the product of German, or more accurately, Prussian militarism. This belief reflected long-standing fears about the growth of

German power. In three brief conflicts between 1864 and 1871, the kingdom of Prussia had expanded its control over much of German-speaking Europe, becoming in the process the continent's foremost military power. Benefitting from rapid industrialization and encouraged by the imperial projects of other leading states, the Prussian-dominated German empire soon sought recognition on the global stage. These global ambitions were personified by Wilhelm II, the head of Prussia's House of Hohenzollern and German emperor, or Kaiser. In the final decades before the First World War, Wilhelm II oversaw a foreign policy that combined bellicose demands with a massive expansion of naval and, from 1912, land armaments. This foreign policy, the Allied statesmen argued, had been responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914. Article 227 of the Treaty of Versailles, which was imposed on Germany in June 1919, therefore promised to prosecute Wilhelm II for launching aggressive war, while Article 160 abolished the German army's war planning institution, the Prussian General Staff.¹

But how much power did the Kaiser exercise over military affairs within Germany before and during the First World War and to what extent was the German army that marched off to the battlefield in the summer of 1914 a product of Prussia's military structures and traditions? There is little doubt that Wilhelm II should be held formally responsible for Germany's entry into the First World War. According to the imperial constitution of 1871, the Kaiser possessed almost complete control over Germany's foreign policy, including the ability to declare war and conclude peace. He also enjoyed far-reaching and ill-defined powers of military command, or *Kommandogewalt*. The Kaiser was the German army's commander-in-

¹ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 157-79. For the articles of the Treaty of Versailles, see "The Treaty of Peace between the Allied & Associated Powers and Germany (with amendments) and other Treaty Engagements, signed at Versailles, June 28, 1919" (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1925).

chief in war and peace, and the political authorities, even the imperial chancellor, exercised little influence over military decision-making.² Responsible only to the “supreme warlord” and thereby shielded from civilian oversight, the officers of the Prussian General Staff at the same time dedicated themselves to developing an operations plan that would enable them to fight and win a two-front war against France and Russia. The product of their efforts, the famous Schlieffen Plan, envisioned an invasion of neutral Belgium and Luxembourg and a lightning victory over France that would be followed by a redeployment against the slowly mobilizing Russians. As Germany’s only war planning institution, the Prussian General Staff determined the strategy that the Kaiser’s soldiers would put into action following the outbreak of war.³

Yet officers who had spent large parts of their careers beyond Prussia’s borders and who had sworn oaths of allegiance to one of the German empire’s less-powerful monarchs made some of the most important decisions during the First World War. On September 8-9, 1914, Colonel Richard Hentsch, a staff officer in the Supreme Command, conducted a tour of the German armies that were advancing towards Paris. His conversations with senior officers led to the German withdrawal from the Marne River and, in the following months, a system of trenches took shape between the North Sea coast and the Swiss border. Just over four years later, on November 9, 1918, General Wilhelm Groener, recently named the deputy chief of the Supreme Command, informed Kaiser Wilhelm II that Germany’s exhausted and demoralized

² Wilhelm Deist, “Kaiser Wilhelm II. als Oberster Kriegsherr,” in *Der Ort Kaiser Wilhelms II. in der deutschen Geschichte*, ed. John C.G. Röhl (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1991), 26-33. For the constitutional basis of the Kaiser’s authority, see “Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871,” in Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., *Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1986), 2:384-402. Article 11 gave the Kaiser almost unlimited control over foreign policy, while Articles 63 and 64 provided the foundation for his *Kommandogewalt*.

³ Holger H. Herwig, “Through the Looking Glass: German Strategic Planning before 1914,” *The Historian* 77 (2015), 295-6, 305-8. More generally, see Arden Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian War Planning* (New York: Berg, 1991), especially Chapters 3-5.

soldiers would no longer follow the orders of their supreme warlord. Groener's bluntness shocked the Kaiser, who soon afterwards fled to Holland. Two days later, Germany signed an armistice. Neither Hentsch nor Groener had begun his career as a Prussian soldier. Although Hentsch was born in the Rhineland, he had joined the German army's Saxon contingent in 1888. After completing his training at the War Academy in Berlin, Hentsch alternated between service in the Prussian General Staff and with Saxon units. A few months before the war's outbreak, he was appointed chief of the General Staff's intelligence section. Groener, by contrast, was not even Prussian. Born in Württemberg, he had entered that kingdom's contingent in 1884. After attending the War Academy and moving between assignments in Berlin and with the Württemberg XIII Army Corps, Groener was named chief of the General Staff's railway section in 1912 and given responsibility for the army's deployment plan.⁴

The careers of Hentsch and Groener reveal an important and frequently overlooked feature of the imperial German army: it was not a unitary, but rather a federal institution. Of course, the Kaiser stood at the pinnacle of Germany's military hierarchy. Yet around one-quarter of German soldiers owed their loyalty to a second monarch. Between the empire's foundation in 1871 and its collapse in the autumn of 1918, the three smaller German kingdoms of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg recruited, organized, equipped, and trained their own contingents. Soldiers from these kingdoms were not sent to far-flung corners of the empire to serve in "imperial German" regiments. They instead completed their military service within

⁴ Friedrich Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen, "Groener, Wilhelm," *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 7 (1966), 111-14; Thilo Vogelsang, "Hentsch, Richard," *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 8 (1969), 566. For Hentsch's tour of the German front lines in early September 1914, see Holger H. Herwig, *The Marne, 1914: The Opening of World War I and the Battle that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2009), 266-86. For Groener's own account of the events at General Headquarters on November 9, 1918, see Wilhelm Groener, *Lebenserinnerungen. Jugend, Generalstab, Weltkrieg*, ed. Friedrich Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1972), 456-64.

the borders of their own kingdoms and as members of “royal Bavarian,” “royal Saxon,” or “royal Württemberg” units. They also swore oaths of allegiance to their own monarchs. While the Kaiser was recognized as the federal commander-in-chief, or *Bundesfeldherr*, Germany boasted no fewer than three *Kontingentsherren*, or royal commanders of contingents. These monarchs retained varying degrees of authority over personnel decisions, the deployment of units, and the design of insignia and uniforms. Only after the declaration of mobilization did these monarchs pass sole command of their soldiers to the supreme warlord and the Prussian General Staff. The contingent-based structure of the German army and the unwillingness of the non-Prussian monarchs to abandon their military authority ensured that compromise, not imperial decrees, represented the best possible means of integrating the Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg armies into the Prussian military structure in the decades after 1871.

The German army that emerged from the Wars of Unification and fought in the First World War was modelled after the Prussian military system. This system had taken shape at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. In September 1814, General Hermann von Boyen, the Prussian war minister, combined the principle of universal military service during peacetime with a short period of active duty in the standing army. All able-bodied Prussian men over twenty years of age were obligated to serve five years “with the colours,” although the final two years were spent on furlough in an active reserve. Conscripts would then pass into the *Landwehr*, a semi-independent militia whose officers, in contrast to the standing army’s noble-dominated officer corps, were drawn from the educated middle class. Service in the *Landwehr* totalled fourteen years. In wartime, the younger members of the *Landwehr*, or those between the ages of twenty-

five and thirty-two, served alongside the active soldiers, while the older members, or those up to the age of thirty-nine, performed garrison and rear-area duties. While the active reserve and *Landwehr* underwent periodic training and took part in peacetime exercises, all Prussian men could be mobilized as part of the *Landsturm*, or emergency defence force, from the ages of seventeen to fifty. This structure endured until 1860. Seeking to improve the striking power of the Prussian army, while at the same time ensuring its political reliability, Prince Wilhelm, regent for the dying Friedrich Wilhelm IV and the future King of Prussia and German Kaiser, appointed General Albrecht von Roon as war minister and tasked him with implementing sweeping reforms. Roon's reforms, which were carried out in spite of fierce opposition from the Prussian parliament, increased the strength of the field army in wartime to 367,000 men, established a permanent reserve force to replace the practice of furloughing conscripts, and consolidated the Prussian monarch's control over the citizen-soldiers of the *Landwehr*.⁵

Prussia's system of universal military service was extended across Germany between 1866 and 1871. According to Article 59 of the imperial constitution, all able-bodied German men could be called upon to serve three years with the colours, four years in the reserve, and five years in the *Landwehr*. During mobilization, reservists brought units of the standing army up to their wartime strengths, while additional reserve formations were established from the remaining reservists and small numbers of active personnel. These reserve formations served alongside active units on the battlefield, while members of the *Landwehr* were assigned duties behind the lines. If necessary, all remaining German men between the ages of seventeen and

⁵ Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 65-71, 138-48; Daniel J. Hughes and Richard L. DiNardo, *Imperial Germany and War, 1871-1918* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2018), 9-15.

forty-two could be called up as part of the *Landsturm*. This system produced a large peacetime force and an even larger pool of trained manpower. By the outbreak of the First World War, Germany's standing army numbered almost 800,000 men, with between 250,000 and 350,000 conscripts annually undergoing training in the last decade before 1914. Conscripts reported for duty at the beginning of November and, after six months of drill and instruction, entered the standing army on April 1. They then completed their service in one of the empire's eighteen, later twenty-five army corps, which for the most part drew their recruits from designated territorial districts and were organized along Prussian lines. An army corps consisted of two divisions, each of two infantry brigades, which, in turn, comprised two infantry regiments. At full wartime strength, each army corps, which also included cavalry, artillery, and other support units, numbered 1,500 officers, 43,300 enlisted men, and 17,000 horses.⁶

In view of this Prussian influence over the empire's military affairs, studies of the German army have focused primarily on the Prussian army's institutions. Foremost among these institutions was the Prussian officer corps. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, East Prussia's Junker nobility maintained a powerful tradition of military service to the kingdom's Hohenzollern monarchy. As a result, the sons of Junker noblemen dominated the officer corps, representing sixty-five percent of all Prussian officers and almost 90 percent of those above the rank of colonel in 1860. The steady expansion of the army in the second half

⁶ Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian War Planning*, 59-63; Hughes and DiNardo, *Imperial Germany and War*, 83-6; Curt Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee vom 15. Jahrhundert bis 1914* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1967), 4:326. The annual recruit contingent also contained those men from the educated middle class who entered the army as "one-year volunteers." "Nachweisung der in den Jahren 1890-1914 zum Dienst im Heere ausgehobenen Mannschaften," BA MA Freiburg im Breisgau, RH 61, file 332. For conscription in the German empire more generally, see Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), especially Chapter 4.

of the nineteenth century compelled the King of Prussia's and, later, the Kaiser's military cabinet, which was responsible for personnel decisions, to tolerate greater numbers of officers from middle-class backgrounds. Despite this dilution of its aristocratic character, historians argue that the officer corps continued to demonstrate a caste-like mentality and deep disdain for parliamentary politics.⁷ During the First World War, relations between the officer corps and Germany's civilian leaders broke down as a result of the army's unwavering support for large-scale annexations, a foreign policy that, according to Fritz Fischer, amounted to a "grab for world power." The Supreme Command's ruthless pursuit of a victory on the battlefield and creation of a "silent dictatorship" in the last years of the war are therefore frequently seen as products of the peculiar relationship between the officer corps and German society.⁸

Whereas research on the Prussian officer corps has illuminated the nature of civil-military relations in the German empire, historians interested in German armaments policy before the First World War have looked to the Prussian war ministry. Founded in 1809 and responsible for the army's administration, including the purchase of equipment and uniforms, the health and training of soldiers, and organizational matters, the Prussian war ministry played an important role in military affairs. These responsibilities increased after 1871. In the absence

⁷ Karl Demeter, *The German Officer Corps in Society and State, 1650-1945* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965); Martin Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps, 1890-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). For a broader perspective on the officer corps, including its non-Prussian elements, see the essays in Hanns Hubert Hofmann, ed., *Das deutsche Offizierkorps 1860-1960* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1980). The only study of the military cabinet is Rudolf Schmidt-Bückeberg, *Das Militärkabinett der preußischen Könige und deutschen Kaiser. Seine geschichtliche Entwicklung und staatsrechtliche Stellung 1787-1918* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1933).

⁸ Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); Martin Kitchen, *The Silent Dictatorship: The Politics of the German High Command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916-1918* (London: Croom Helm, 1976); Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany*, 4 volumes (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1969-73). For Fritz Fischer's study of German war aims, see *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (London: W.W. Norton, 1967). The debates that were generated by Fischer's thesis are revisited by the essays in Andreas Gestrich and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, ed., *Bid for World Power? New Research on the Outbreak of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

of an imperial military administration, the Prussian war minister was tasked with representing the entire German army in the imperial parliament, or Reichstag. His dual responsibilities as a minister and an active soldier placed him in an uncomfortable position. As a minister, he faced demands from nationalist pressure groups, such as August Keim's Army League, for large-scale manpower increases. As an active officer, however, he feared that numerical expansion would lead to a greater reliance on urban recruits, who, as supporters of the Social Democratic Party – the “party of revolution” – would undermine the army's ability to function as the bulwark of the conservative-monarchical order. The result, scholars argue, was an armaments policy that tended to favour quality over quantity. Only in 1912-13 did the war minister relent to public pressure, as well as the demands of middle-class, technocratic officers in the Prussian General Staff, and reluctantly support two large increases to the standing army.⁹

None of the Prussian army's institutions has received more attention from historians than the General Staff. For most of the nineteenth century, the Prussian General Staff, which was responsible for drafting war plans and organizing exercises and manoeuvres, had been a department of the war ministry. The war minister's parliamentary responsibilities nevertheless heightened fears that the Kaiser's *Kommandogewalt*, especially his authority over command and personnel decisions, might become the subject of debates in the Reichstag. In 1883, both the General Staff and the military cabinet were made independent of the war ministry. This

⁹ Stig Förster, *Der doppelte Militarismus. Die deutsche Heeresrüstungspolitik zwischen Status-Quo-Sicherung und Aggression 1890-1913* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1985); Eckart Kehr, “Class Struggle and Armament Policy in Imperial Germany,” in *Economic Interest, Militarism, and Foreign Policy: Essays on German History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 50-75; Oliver Stein, *Die deutsche Heeresrüstungspolitik 1890-1914. Das Militär und der Primat der Politik* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007). For the difficult position of the Prussian war minister, see Heinrich Otto Meisner, *Der Kriegsminister 1814-1914. Ein Beitrag zur militärischen Verfassungsgeschichte* (Berlin: H. Reinshagen, 1940). The activities of the German Army League have been studied by Marilyn Shevin Coetzee, *The German Army League: Popular Nationalism in Wilhelmine Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

decision, according to historians, had far-reaching consequences. In the following decades, the “demi-gods” of the General Staff drafted war plans – most notably the “great symphony” of General Alfred von Schlieffen – in complete isolation and in the belief that an immediate invasion of France coupled with a violation of Belgian neutrality provided the only viable means of winning a two-front war. These activities, Dennis Showalter argues, tied the hands of the civilian authorities and transformed the German army from an instrument of deterrence into a “doomsday machine.”¹⁰ For other scholars, the General Staff’s autonomy encouraged ever more radical solutions to military problems. The genocide of the Herero and Nama in German Southwest Africa in 1904-7 and the army’s occupation policies during the First World War resulted from an absence of civilian oversight and an institutional inclination towards “absolute destruction” that foreshadowed the genocidal policies of Adolf Hitler’s regime.¹¹

This research has contributed to an understanding of the German army’s responses to political and social change and the role of personalities and structures in the “great seminal catastrophe” of the twentieth century. Yet, at the same time, it has created an erroneous image of a German army shaped entirely by Prussia’s military institutions. This image has occasionally been challenged by historians. As Friedrich-Christian Stahl points out, Prussia extended its military system across Germany between 1866 and 1871, but did not succeed in

¹⁰ Dennis Showalter, “From Deterrence to Doomsday Machine: The German Way of War, 1890-1914,” *Journal of Military History* 64 (2000), 679-710. For the increasing pessimism of the Prussian General Staff and, in particular, its chief, see Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially 106-81. For the role of the Prussian General Staff in war planning and the evolution of the Schlieffen Plan more generally, see Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian War Planning*, especially Chapters 3-4; the essays in Hans Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, and Gerhard P. Groß, ed., *Der Schlieffenplan. Analysen und Dokumente* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006); Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (London: O. Wolff, 1958).

¹¹ Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). See also Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

creating a national German army. Instead, a patchwork of institutions, both Prussian and non-Prussian, characterized the new empire's army and guaranteed that the integration of soldiers from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg into the Prussian military system took place only gradually in the decades after the Wars of Unification.¹² There were numerous bumps and bruises along the way. Resenting their loss of sovereignty and subordination to Prussia, the Kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg saw considerable importance in their remaining military powers. As a result, clashes and disagreements concerning command and control of the German army regularly occurred between the supreme warlord and the *Kontingentsherren* up to the First World War.¹³ Nor were the three non-Prussian monarchs willing to put aside their differences with the Kaiser in wartime. According to Tony Cowan, the same friction that burdened Germany's military affairs in peacetime also strained relations between Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg and the Prussian-dominated Supreme Command after 1914.¹⁴

This dissertation builds on these studies. To be sure, the King of Prussia, as German Kaiser, was the empire's supreme warlord, while his military cabinet, the Prussian war ministry, and General Staff exercised enormous influence over the German army's personnel appointments, methods of training, patterns of organization, and war planning. However,

¹² Friedrich-Christian Stahl, "Preußische Armee und Reichsheer 1871-1914," in *Zur Problematik 'Preußen und das Reich'*, ed. Oswald Hauser (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1984), 181-245.

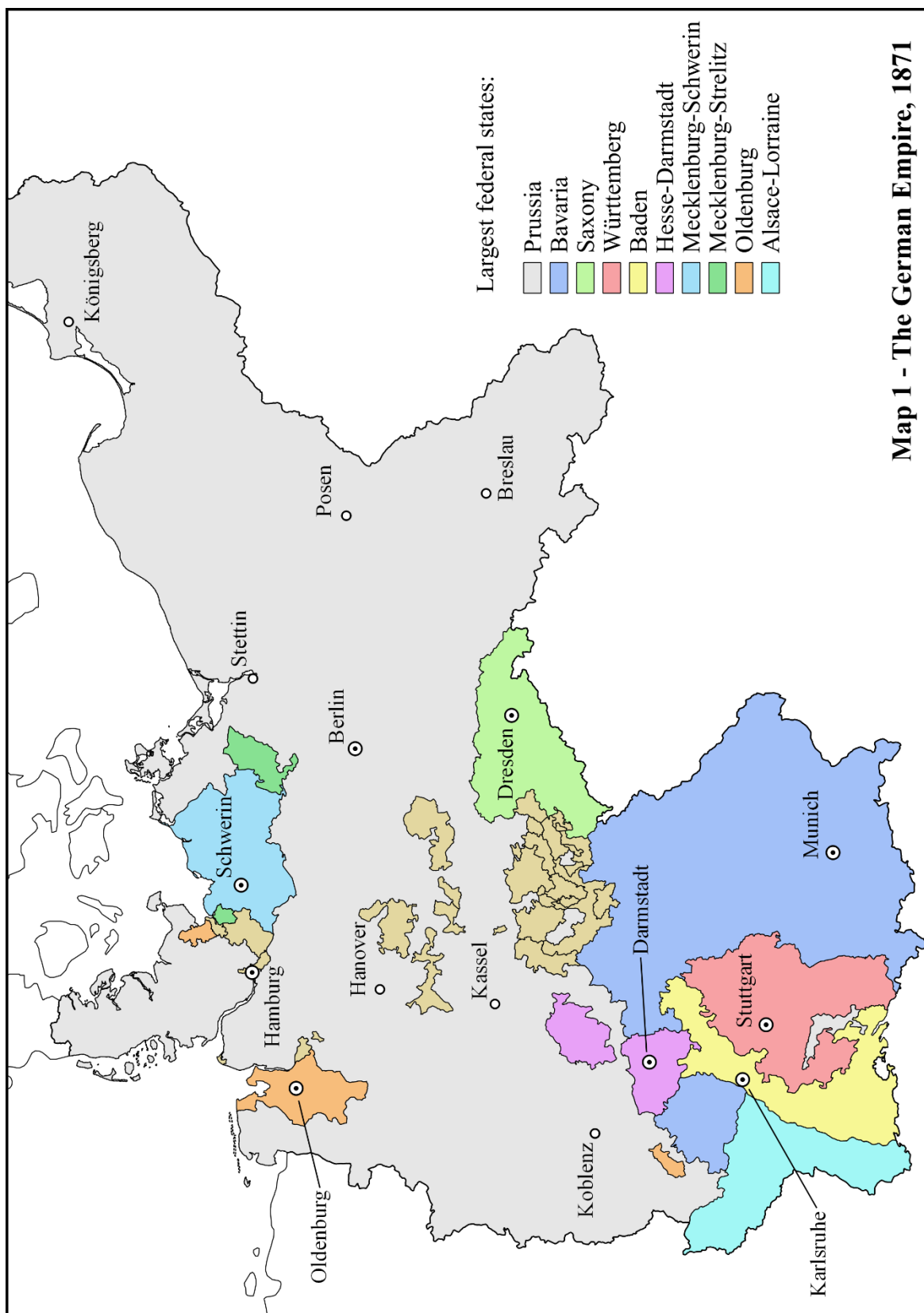
¹³ Frederick Francis Campbell, "The Bavarian Army, 1870-1918: The Constitutional and Structural Relations with the Prussian Military Establishment" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1972); Jan Hoffmann, "Die sächsische Armee im Deutschen Reich 1871 bis 1918" (PhD diss., Technische Universität Dresden, 2007); Harald Rüddenklau, "Studien zur Bayerischen Militärpolitik 1871 bis 1914" (PhD diss., Universität Regensburg, 1972); Robert T. Walker, "Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire, 1870-1918" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1974). Daniel Kirn shows that both the empire and Württemberg remained important points of reference for the kingdom's common soldiers. *Soldatenleben in Württemberg 1871-1914. Zur Sozialgeschichte des deutschen Militärs* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009).

¹⁴ Tony Cowan, "A Picture of German Unity? Federal Contingents in the German Army, 1916-1917," in *The Greater War: Other Combatants and Other Fronts, 1914-1918*, ed. Jonathan Krause (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 141-60.

Prussian influence had definite limits. Between 1867 and 1870, Otto von Bismarck, the architect of Germany's unification, concluded a series of military agreements with Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg. These agreements gave the monarchs of these three kingdoms a voice in the appointment of some of the empire's highest-ranking officers, the composition and deployment of their own contingents, and the appearance of their soldiers. They also provided for the continued existence of independent war ministries, general staffs, and cadet schools throughout non-Prussian Germany. Rather than meaningless sops to the pride of the Kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, these military powers and institutions were major obstacles to the Kaiser's *Kommandogewalt*. They were also not easily overcome by imperial decrees. Until the collapse of the empire in the autumn of 1918, the German army's internal cohesion and military effectiveness therefore hinged on the *Bundesfeldherr*'s ability to find common ground with Germany's three non-Prussian *Kontingentsherren*.

After 1871, the constraints placed on the authority of the supreme warlord and the patchwork of military institutions across the empire raised concerns about the loyalty of a large portion of the German army. Bismarck's empire had been forged from twenty-five previously sovereign states, along with the *Reichsland* of Alsace-Lorraine, which had been annexed from France after the Franco-Prussian War. These states together established "an eternal federation for the defence of the federal territory and its laws, as well as for the fostering of the prosperity of the German people."¹⁵ Recognizing the superiority of Prussia's military institutions and seeking

¹⁵ "Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:385.



to liberate themselves from the financial burden of maintaining their own armies, the smaller German states one by one renounced their military independence. Soldiers from Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, the two Mecklenburgs, the free cities of Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck, and the empire's fourteen smaller states continued to serve in their own units, but as members of the Prussian army. The same was not true for Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers. Possessing far greater leverage than Germany's grand dukes, dukes, and princes, the non-Prussian kings negotiated agreements that preserved the integrity of their armies as semi-autonomous contingents within the larger German army. These contingents could draw on a large portion of Germany's population for their recruits. In 1871, just over nine million of the empire's forty-one million inhabitants lived in one of the three non-Prussian kingdoms. Their contribution to the "defence of the federal territory" was thus significant: the two Bavarian, one Saxon, and one Württemberg army corps represented one-quarter of the entire German army.¹⁶

What heightened Prussian fears was not that Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers served in their own contingents. Regiments from Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, and the empire's smaller states also recruited from territorial districts that often corresponded to the borders of their grand duchy, duchy, or principality. Unlike the soldiers from these smaller states, however, Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers swore an oath of allegiance, or *Fahneneid*, to their own monarchs, as well as to the Kaiser. When he reported for training at the beginning of November, a conscript from Saxony therefore pledged to "always conduct himself as a brave

¹⁶ Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:268-70. In 1871, the German army was organized into eighteen army corps. The Guard, I-XI, XIV-XV Army Corps were recruited from Prussia and the smaller states, while the XII and XIII Army Corps comprised the Saxon and Württemberg contingents respectively. Two separately numbered Bavarian army corps formed that kingdom's contingent. For the population of the empire in 1871, see "Stand der Bevölkerung, Flächeninhalt, Wohnorte," *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 1 (1880), 1.

and honourable soldier” and to “obediently follow the *Bundesfeldherr*.” At the same time, he swore to “faithfully serve His Majesty the [Saxon] King” throughout his military service. These dual loyalties were a concern to the Kaiser and his advisors precisely because the three non-Prussian kings continued to exercise influence over personnel appointments and the deployment of their contingents. In theory, a soldier from Bavaria, Saxony, or Württemberg might be forced to choose between following the orders of the Kaiser, as *Bundesfeldherr*, and his own king, as *Kontingentsherr*. This scenario seemed far from hypothetical in Bavaria’s case. While Saxony’s and Württemberg’s military conventions with Prussia provided for the exchange of a small number of officers between these kingdoms, the Kaiser exercised virtually no authority over the Bavarian contingent until mobilization and the outbreak of a war. Bavaria’s federal treaty recognized its contingent as a “self-contained component of the federal army ... under the orders of His Majesty the King of Bavaria” in peacetime.¹⁷

The fault lines running through Europe’s imperial armies have been the subject of numerous studies by historians. Unsurprisingly, the tensions between nationalities in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies have received the most attention. Throughout the nineteenth century, the military authorities in Vienna sought to ensure the reliability of the Habsburg army – one of the most important pillars of the multi-national empire – through a complex deployment policy: regiments were garrisoned in provinces far removed from their recruiting districts. This policy was modified in the early 1880s. Although soldiers were

¹⁷ Article 6 of Saxony’s military convention with Prussia included the *Fahneneid*, while Article 4 of Württemberg’s military convention contained a similar formulation. Although an oath of allegiance was not written into Bavaria’s federal treaty, Bavarian soldiers pledged to follow the Kaiser’s orders following the outbreak of war. “Militär-Konvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bund und dem Königreich Sachsen vom 7. Februar 1867”; “Der Bundesvertrag betreffend den Beitritt Bayerns zur Verfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 23. November 1870”; “Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bunde und Württemberg vom 21./25. November 1870,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:292-4, 329-33, 339-42.

stationed closer to home, a system of rotation prevented them from spending more than a few years in a particular garrison. Several factors continued to create concerns for high-ranking officers. The creation of a Hungarian militia, or *Honvéd*, in 1867, the introduction of universal military service in the following year, and the rising proportion of ethnic minorities in the officer corps all appeared to undermine the “Germanness” of the Austro-Hungarian army.¹⁸ Scholars point to similar fears among Russian military authorities before 1914. In 1874, Russia’s minister of war introduced conscription to the empire. Building on Tsar Alexander II’s Emancipation Edict of 1861, this measure was intended to distribute the burden of military service evenly across the entire population. In practice, however, numerous exemptions marked the Russian empire’s “limits of reform.” Because many leading Russian officers worried that equipping certain minorities with modern weapons and training them in their use could have disastrous consequences for the Tsarist regime, the Muslim populations of the Caucasus and Central Asia were excluded from the new conscription measures.¹⁹

Historians largely agree that the First World War exacerbated the problems facing Austro-Hungarian and Russian military leaders. To the surprise of many, mobilization in the summer of 1914 did not lead to a complete collapse of the Habsburg army. Yet, as casualties mounted and food shortages became more acute, national antagonisms boiled over. In

¹⁸ Rudolf Kiszling, “Das Nationalitätenproblem in Habsburgs Wehrmacht 1848-1918,” *Der Donauraum. Zeitschrift des Instituts für den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa* 4 (1959), 82-8; Gunther E. Rothenberg, “The Habsburg Army and the Nationality Problem in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 3 (1967), 70-87; Lawrence Sondhaus, *In the Service of the Emperor: Italians in the Austrian Armed Forces, 1814-1918* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1990), especially 96-103.

¹⁹ Robert F. Baumann, “Universal Service Reform and Russia’s Imperial Dilemma,” *War & Society* 4 (1986), 31-49; Franziska Davies, “Eine imperiale Armee – Juden und Muslime im Dienste des Zaren,” *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 12 (2013), 151-72, especially 154-62; Mark von Hagen, “The Limits of Reform: The Multiethnic Imperial Army Confronts Nationalism, 1874-1917,” in *Reforming the Tsar’s Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution*, ed. David Schimmelpennick von der Oye and Bruce W. Menning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 34-46.

response, the authorities mixed Czechs, Italians, Poles, Serbs, Romanians, and Ukrainians with more reliable Croatians, Germans, and Hungarians and transferred supposedly untrustworthy nationalities to quieter sectors of the front. These policies could only stave off the army's disintegration. When Kaiser Karl requested an armistice in October 1918, large numbers of Austro-Hungarian soldiers were not in the trenches, but suppressing strikes or searching for deserters in the rear areas.²⁰ The Russian army proved just as fragile as its Habsburg opponent. As a rule, non-Russian nationalities made up only fifteen to twenty percent of the soldiers in front-line units. The war nevertheless created numerous exceptions. Attempting to subvert Vienna's authority over its subject nationalities, Czechs, Poles, and Slovaks were recruited from among prisoners of war and, after the outbreak of revolution in 1917, the Provisional Government formed ethnically homogenous units in the Ukraine. Previously untapped sources of manpower were also exploited in order to replace rising casualties. In 1916, conscription was introduced in Turkestan. This "mobilization of ethnicity" not only emboldened large sections of Russia's population to make political demands. The resulting uprisings, especially in Central Asia, diverted badly needed soldiers and equipment from the front.²¹

²⁰ István Deák, "The Habsburg Army in the First and Last Days of World War I: A Comparative Analysis," in *East Central European Society in World War I*, ed. Béla K. Király and Nándor F. Dreisziger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 301-12; Kiszling, "Das Nationalitätenproblem in Habsburgs Wehrmacht," 88-91; Karel Pichlík, "Der militärische Zusammenbruch der Mittelmächte im Jahre 1918," in *Die Auflösung des Habsburgerreiches. Zusammenbruch und Neuorientierung im Donauraum*, ed. Richard Georg Plaschka and Karlheinz Mack (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1970), 249-65; Richard Plaschka, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Überganges von Einheiten des Infanterieregiments Nr. 28 an der russischen Front 1915," in *Österreich und Europa. Festgabe für Hugo Hantsch zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1965), 455-64. For the impact of the war on the empire's civilian population, see Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), especially 122-59.

²¹ Mark von Hagen, "The Great War and the Mobilization of Ethnicity in the Russian Empire," in *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*, ed. Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder (London: Routledge, 1998), 34-57; Mark von Hagen, "The Russian Imperial Army and the Ukrainian National Movement in 1917," *Ukrainian Quarterly* 54 (1998), 220-56; Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March-April 1917)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 103-4.

Armies have tended to be multiethnic, Nándor Dreisziger and Richard Preston point out, because “nations, from their earliest beginnings, tended to be polyethnic.”²² Bismarck’s empire of 1871 was no different, and German military leaders confronted many of the same problems as their Habsburg and Tsarist counterparts. After the Napoleonic Wars, Prussia’s reformers hoped that the army would function as the “school of the nation” and that universal military service would instill loyalty to the Hohenzollern monarchy among the kingdom’s subjects. Although exemptions were provided for groups, such as the Mennonites, which objected to military service on religious grounds, conscription was applied to the large Polish population of Prussia’s eastern provinces. Attitudes changed in the first two decades after unification. The anti-Catholic sentiment created by Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* during the 1870s and a high birth rate among Prussia’s Poles created fears of an ethnic “swamping” of Germany’s eastern borderlands. Moreover, the addition of hundreds of thousands of Danish and French speakers following the annexations of Schleswig-Holstein and Alsace-Lorraine convinced the empire’s military authorities to revisit their personnel policies. Their response, several scholars show, was to introduce measures similar to those in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies. Few Alsatian soldiers completed their military service in the *Reichsland* and increasing numbers of Polish conscripts were transferred from Posen, Silesia, and West Prussia to garrisons in Brandenburg and the Rhineland.²³ The mobilization of German society during

For the uprising in Turkestan following the introduction of conscription in mid-1916, see Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 152-75.

²² N.F. Dreisziger and R.A. Preston, “Polyethnicity and Armed Forces: An Introduction,” in *Ethnic Armies: Polyethnic Armed Forces from the Time of the Habsburgs to the Age of the Superpowers*, ed. N.F. Dreisziger (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), 1.

²³ Jens Boysen, *Preußische Armee und polnische Minderheit. Royalistische Streitkräfte im Kontext der Nationalitätenfrage des 19. Jahrhunderts (1815-1914)* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2008), especially 14-57; Dan P. Silverman, *Reluctant Union: Alsace-Lorraine and Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), 71-3. For the army’s attitudes toward the Mennonite

the First World War heightened fears about the loyalty of these minorities. Beginning in the spring of 1915, Alsatian soldiers were transferred to units fighting in Eastern Europe, while Poles were distributed among regiments containing a majority of ethnic Germans.²⁴ These policies, like the infamous “Jewish census” that was undertaken by the Prussian war ministry in the autumn of 1916, were counterproductive. Rather than strengthening the German army’s cohesion, many Alsations and Poles chose to desert to the enemy, while their comrades who remained behind developed mixed feelings about continuing to serve the Kaiser.²⁵

Much less attention has been given to the tensions that developed between ethnic German soldiers during the First World War.²⁶ Even though Benjamin Ziemann convincingly demonstrates that battlefield defeats led to a pronounced and widespread “hatred of Prussia” among Bavarians, research on the German army’s durability has largely focused on the final months of the war and the sudden collapse of morale following the spring offensives in early

population of eastern Prussia, see Mark Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers: Nation, Religion, and Family in the Prussian East, 1772-1880* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

²⁴ Alan Kramer, “Wackes at war: Alsace-Lorraine and the failure of German national mobilization, 1914-1918,” in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 105-21; Alexander Watson, “Fighting for Another Fatherland: The Polish Minority in the German Army, 1914-1918,” *English Historical Review* 126 (2011), 1137-66. Although the army did not subject them to the same deployment policies, Danish-speaking soldiers were increasingly considered untrustworthy by their officers as the war progressed. Claus Bundgård Christensen, “Fighting for the Kaiser: The Danish minority in the German army, 1914-18,” in *Scandinavia in the First World War: Studies in the War Experience of the Northern Neutrals*, ed. Claes Ahlund (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2012), 267-82;

²⁵ Christoph Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten. Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914-1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 252-84; Benjamin Ziemann, “Fahnenflucht im deutschen Heer 1914-1918,” *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 55 (1996), 121-9. For the origins and devastating impact of the war ministry’s *Juden-zählung* on German-Jewish soldiers, see Werner T. Angress, “The German Army’s ‘Juden-zählung’ of 1916: Genesis – Consequences – Significance,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 23 (1978), 117-37; Brian E. Crim, *Antisemitism in the German Military Community and the Jewish Response, 1914-1938* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 8-14.

²⁶ The German army during the First World War has often been analyzed through the lens of Prussia’s military institutions. Research has focused on the ability of the Supreme Command and the Prussian war ministry to respond to the demands of industrial warfare, but has contributed little to an understanding of how the army’s state-based organization impacted German soldiers at the front. For example, see the otherwise impressive study by Dennis Showalter, *An Instrument of War: The German Army, 1914-18* (New York: Osprey, 2016).

1918.²⁷ Historians at the same time recognize that Bismarck's empire was not a finished product in 1871. Nation-building, or the means by which Germany's "imagined community" became reality, required, in the words of Eric Hobsbawm, an "invention of tradition." Before 1914, this process assumed many shapes and forms: the building of monuments to Kaiser Wilhelm I as the "founder of the empire"; the staging of "national" celebrations to mark the victory over France in 1870; and the reinterpretation of the "Battle of the Nations" in 1813 and the German "Civil War" of 1866 as necessary steps towards unification. All of these efforts sought to paper over divisions within the new empire.²⁸ Nation-building also benefitted from industrialization and the mass migration from rural to urban areas, the emergence of a single banking and financial system, and the rapid expansion of railroads and telegraph lines.²⁹

Despite being brought into closer contact with the nation, the region remained an important point of reference for many Germans. As Celia Applegate points out, the inhabitants

²⁷ Wilhelm Deist, "Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreichs. Zur Realität der 'Dolchstoßlegende'," in *Das Unrechtsregime. Internationale Forschung über den Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Ursula Büttner (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1986), 1:101-29; Hew Strachan, "The Morale of the German Army, 1917-18," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 383-98; Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For the attitudes of rural Bavarian soldiers and their families during the First World War, see Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany, 1914-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), especially 137-54.

²⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 263-307, especially 273-9; Thomas Nipperdey, "Nationalidee und Nationaldenkmal in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert," *Historische Zeitschrift* 206 (1968), 529-85. More generally, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), especially 37-46. For the reinterpretation of 1813 and 1866 as nation-building events, see Nikolaus Buschmann, "Niederlage als retrospektiver Sieg? Die Entscheidung von 1866 aus Sicht der historischen Verlierer," in *Kriegsniederlagen. Erfahrungen und Erinnerungen*, ed. Horst Carl et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2004), 123-43; Birte Förster, "Die Jahrhundertfeiern der 'Völkerschlacht.' Erinnerungskulturen und Kriegslegitimation im Jahr 1913," in *Das Jahr 1913. Aufbrüche und Krisenwahrnehmungen am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkriegs*, ed. Detlev Mares and Dieter Schott (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), 143-67, especially 157-60.

²⁹ Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany, Volume II: The Period of Consolidation, 1871-1880* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3-31; Siegfried Weichlein, *Nation und Region. Integrationsprozesse im Bismarckreich* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2004).

of the Bavarian Palatinate expressed their membership in the empire through a set of cultural and historical activities that emphasized their own locality, or *Heimat*. The state-building efforts of Germany's ruling houses likewise contributed to the persistence of small-state identities long after unification. Continuing a practice that had been started following the Napoleonic Wars, the rulers of Saxony, Württemberg, and other states of the former "Third Germany" attempted to strengthen sub-national political loyalties through press campaigns, educational systems, and even transportation networks.³⁰

This dissertation bridges the significant gap between studies of Europe's imperial armies and research on the persistence of sub-national identities in the German empire. The presence of dual loyalties among Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg soldiers remained a serious concern for Prussian authorities after 1871. However, the German army's contingent-based structure proved flexible enough to mitigate the accompanying dangers. Believing that Bismarck's concessions to the non-Prussian kings could not simply be abandoned without jeopardizing the empire's monarchical foundations, the Kaiser and his advisors preferred a cautious approach to the integration of Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers into the Prussian military structure. They pushed for centralization of command and control under the *Bundesfeldherr*, but not so much as to alienate their counterparts in Munich, Dresden, and Stuttgart. This preference for caution was shared by the *Kontingentsherren* and their ministers.

³⁰ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Jennifer Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture and Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hamburg* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003). For Bavarian particularism, see Allan Mitchell, "'A Real Foreign Country': Bavarian Particularism in Imperial Germany, 1870-1918," *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 7 (1979), 587-96.

The military conventions and treaties and the military authority of their monarchs outlined in these agreements were, they argued, the most important guarantees for the continued existence of their ruling houses within a unified Germany. The safety of limited concessions was far more appealing than the dangers of open opposition to Berlin. The German army's ability to accommodate Prussian and non-Prussian interests was invaluable during the First World War. As casualties mounted and tensions increased between Bavarians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers at the front and behind the lines, both sides were encouraged to find common ground based on the agreements that had regulated Germany's military affairs in peacetime. The German army was able to hold itself together until the final months of the First World War in part because its monarchs were willing to share the loyalties of their soldiers.

This dissertation draws mainly from source material in German archives. Among the most important sources are the reports written by the envoys who were stationed in Germany's *Residenzstädte*, or court cities, between 1871 and 1918. In addition to the Reichstag, which was elected on the basis of universal male suffrage, Bismarck had established a permanent representative institution, the Bundesrat, for Germany's twenty-five state governments. Old habits were difficult to shake, however, and relations between many of the empire's larger states continued to be the responsibility of professional diplomats in the decades following unification. The extent of this sub-national diplomatic network was largely determined by geographical proximity and political necessity. While neighbouring Bavaria and Württemberg exchanged envoys with one another until 1933, Saxony preferred to conduct its relations with the distant Grand Duchy of Baden through its envoy in Munich after 1877. By contrast, most

state governments dispatched a representative to Berlin, while Prussian envoys could be found in capitals throughout Germany. Equally important for this dissertation is the correspondence of the Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg officers sent to Berlin and the Prussian officers assigned to Munich. In the absence of an imperial war ministry, the three smaller German kingdoms attached military plenipotentiaries to their diplomatic legations in the imperial capital and tasked these officers with facilitating communication between Prussia's military institutions and their own governments. If necessary, these officers were also expected to remind the Kaiser and his advisors that the empire possessed three *Kontingentsherren*. The Prussian military attachés sent to Munich served a similar purpose. These officers were both a conduit for military communication between Bavaria and Prussia and a reminder that, at least in wartime, the *Bundesfeldherr* would assume command of the Bavarian contingent.³¹

Historians have long recognized the importance of these sources. Because much of the Prussian army's archive was destroyed in an Allied bombing raid at the end of the Second World War, the reports of the Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg military plenipotentiaries have provided scholars with a window into German military affairs. Analyses of the "war council" of December 1912 and the mood among high-ranking German officers in the opening months of the First World War have greatly benefitted from the wide range of information that reached the ears of these officers and the insights that they communicated to their own

³¹ Heinrich Otto Meisner, *Militärattachés und Militärbevollmächtigte in Preußen und im Deutschen Reich. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Militärdiplomatie* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1957), 43-8; Hans-Joachim Schreckenbach, "Innerdeutsche Gesandtschaften 1867-1945," in *Archivar und Historiker. Studien zur Archiv- und Geschichtswissenschaft zum 65. Geburtstag von Heinrich Otto Meisner*, ed. Staatliche Archivverwaltung im Staatssekretariat für innere Angelegenheiten (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1956), 404-28, especially 404-7. For Saxony's diplomatic relations with Baden, see Tobias C. Bringmann, *Handbuch der Diplomatie 1815-1963. Auswärtige Missionschefs in Deutschland und deutsche Missionschefs im Ausland von Metternich bis Adenauer* (Munich: K.G. Saur Verlag, 2001), 353.

governments.³² The correspondence of Germany's envoys has likewise provided historians with a large collection of invaluable source material. As Markus Mösslang and Torsten Riotte note, the emergence of mass media and popular politics and developments in communications and transportation technologies during the nineteenth century not only forced diplomats to include a wider range of topics in their reports, but also contributed to a dramatic increase in the scale of their correspondence.³³ The frequent and detailed reports of Germany's envoys have therefore shed light on the mood of public opinion, the tone of the press, and the private attitudes and beliefs of both ministers and monarchs throughout the empire.³⁴ Yet Prussian and non-Prussian envoys were not the only ones with an in-depth knowledge of the state of things "on the ground." James Retallack suggests that the reports of British and Austro-Hungarian diplomats who likewise remained in their posts in Darmstadt, Munich, and elsewhere can be analyzed together with those of their German colleagues as part of a "historical triangulation" in order to construct a "multi-level, multivariate view of German affairs."³⁵

³² John C.G. Röhl, "An der Schwelle zum Weltkrieg. Eine Dokumentation über den 'Kriegsrat' vom 8. Dezember 1912," *Militärhistorische Zeitschrift* 21 (1977), 77-134; Bernd F. Schulte, "Neue Dokumente zu Kriegsausbruch und Kriegsverlauf 1914," *Militärhistorische Mitteilungen* 25 (1979), 123-85. For an older analysis of the reports of the Bavarian military plenipotentiary, see Karl Demeter, "Politische Berichte Ludwigs Frh. von Gebssattels, des Bayerischen Militärbevollmächtigten in Berlin 1905-1911," *Preußische Jahrbücher* 231 (1933), 24-39, 116-33.

³³ Markus Mösslang and Torsten Riotte, "Introduction: The Diplomats' World," in *The Diplomats' World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815-1914*, ed. Mösslang and Riotte (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1-20, especially 4-6.

³⁴ Irmgard von Barton, *Die preußische Gesandtschaft in München als Instrument der Reichspolitik in Bayern von den Anfängen der Reichsgründung bis zu Bismarcks Entlassung* (Munich: Stadtarchiv München, 1967); Franz Herre, "Der bayerische Gesandte in Berlin, Freiherr Pergler von Perglas, und die Bismarcksche Regierung," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 74 (1955), 532-45; Hans-Jürgen Kremer, *Das Großherzogtum Baden in der politischen Berichterstattung der preußischen Gesandten 1871-1918*, 2 volumes (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1992); Hans Philippi, *Das Königreich Württemberg im Spiegel der preußischen Gesandtschaftsberichte 1871-1914* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1972).

³⁵ James Retallack, "Reform or Revolution? British Envoys to Germany and the Culture of Diplomacy, 1816-1905," *German History* 31 (2013), 550-78. For an examination of the reports of an Austro-Hungarian envoy in Germany, see Karl Josef Trauner, "Das Großherzogtum Baden im Spiegel österreichisch-ungarischer Gesandtschaftsberichte (1870-1918)," in *Baden – 200 Jahre Großherzogtum. Vom Fürstenstaat zur Demokratie*, ed. Paul-Ludwig Weinacht (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2008), 153-62.

This dissertation applies these various approaches to the study of the German army. The reports of German and other diplomats who were stationed across the empire and who, especially in the smaller court cities, were responsible for conveying information on political *and* military affairs to their foreign ministries are analyzed alongside the correspondence of the three non-Prussian military plenipotentiaries in Berlin and the instructions, cabinet orders, and memoranda of their governments in order to construct a multi-dimensional picture of the attitudes, perspectives, and prejudices that underpinned Germany's military affairs for the half a century between the Wars of Unification and the end of the First World War.

The chapters of this dissertation are organized both chronologically and thematically. Chapter One examines the transformation of military realities in German-speaking Europe between the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. The creation of the North German Confederation and Prussia's annexation of large parts of northern and western Germany in the wake of the Battle of Königgrätz guaranteed that, if it were to occur at all, unification would take place under Hohenzollern and not Habsburg leadership. Having seen the kingdom of Saxony integrated into the new Prussian-dominated North Germany, the rulers of Bavaria and Württemberg were faced with an uncomfortable choice: they could either seek to preserve their precarious autonomy with the support of France's Napoleon III or the embittered Austrians, or they could forge closer relations with the North German Confederation. Militarily, they plotted a middle course. Surprised by the speed and decisiveness of the Prussian victory, the South German monarchs approved comprehensive military reforms between 1867 and 1870. In the process, their armies discarded many, though not all, of their former distinctiveness and increasingly came to resemble the Prussian forces

that had defeated Austria in six short weeks. Although eager to replicate this military success, these rulers were unwilling to fully integrate their armies into the Prussian military structure. The victories of the Franco-Prussian War brought an end to this tightrope act. In late 1870 and as Prusso-German forces laid siege to Paris, representatives of Bavaria and Württemberg signed a series of agreements with Bismarck that cleared the way for Germany's political unification and, at the same time, established the framework for a contingent-based German army that would survive until the autumn of 1918.

As Chapter Two shows, this framework did not pave the way for a national German army. Having relinquished much of their military authority to the King of Prussia, the Kings of Bavaria and Württemberg were reluctant to yield any more ground over the following decades. The introduction of Prussian equipment and uniforms among their soldiers elicited few protests from Munich and Stuttgart. It was broadly understood that military standardization was both desirable from a logistical standpoint and necessary for the safety of German soldiers on the battlefield. Prussian efforts to centralize command and control were an entirely different matter. Because Bavaria's federal treaty and Württemberg's military convention recognized the rulers of these two kingdoms as royal commanders of contingents, attempts to subordinate South German soldiers to imperial military structures or place them under the command of Prussian generals not only heightened resentment towards Berlin, but periodically sparked disputes between the *Bundesfeldherr* and *Kontingentsherren*. Unwilling to destroy one of the strongest pillars of monarchical rule, Germany's leaders sought common ground based on a division of military authority between the Kaiser and the non-Prussian kings. Chapter Three suggests that this inclination towards compromise was evident whenever the appointment of

male members of Germany's smaller ruling houses to prominent command positions strained military relations in the empire. Over the course of the nineteenth century, economic, political, and social developments encouraged monarchs across Europe to cast about for new means to strengthen their positions within a society that increasingly considered hereditary power and privilege to be anachronistic. The German army played a crucial role in these monarchical public-relations campaigns. Since it became more and more difficult for rulers to assume active military roles, the responsibility for preserving the image of the "heroic monarchy" fell to their brothers, nephews, and sons. The presence of these "warrior princes" in the German army's upper echelons created considerable anxiety in Berlin, and not simply because the Kaiser and his advisors feared that princes would make poor battlefield commanders. It was possible, they argued, that soldiers who were led by prominent members of their own ruling houses would quickly forget that they had sworn oaths of allegiance to the *Bundesfeldherr*.

Chapter Four explores these Prussian concerns about dual loyalties among German soldiers in greater depth. The Kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg were not the only German rulers to have sought military concession from the Prussian government during the Wars of Unification. Germany's smaller states could also point to military conventions that guaranteed their rulers certain military rights. Even though their armies became regiments, divisions, and even army corps within the Prussian contingent, the grand dukes, dukes, and princes of the empire retained a voice in military affairs following unification. These dual loyalties convinced the Kaiser's military cabinet and the Prussian war ministry to closely monitor the morale among the Badenese, Hessians, Oldenburgers, and others within their contingent's ranks. Potentially dangerous religious and small-state loyalties outside of the

Prussian contingent represented an even greater problem. Because the authority of the Kaiser and his advisors was not unlimited in peacetime, it seemed that there was little that could be done to prevent Catholics, Jews, and Hanoverians from undermining the loyalty of their fellow Bavarians and Saxons to the empire. Yet, as Chapter Five shows, dual loyalties could also strengthen the German army's cohesion. Within its contingent-based structure, soldiers from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg were able to construct military cultures that combined loyalty to Kaiser and king. Prussian and non-Prussian soldiers celebrated the empire on the Kaiser's birthday, while raising their glasses to their kingdoms during the commemoration of battles from the Wars of Unification and regimental anniversaries. The practice of appointing members of Germany's ruling houses as ceremonial colonels provided an additional link between the contingents and ensured that allegiances to the *Bundesfeldherr* and to the three *Kontingentsherren* existed side-by-side in barracks rooms and on parade grounds after 1871.

The final chapter examines the German army during the First World War. In the summer of 1914, the contingents from Bavaria, Prussia, Saxony, and Württemberg marched off to the battlefield in self-contained formations and, for the most part, under the command of their own officers. The intensity and scope of the conflict nevertheless ensured that the army's contingent-based structure underwent far-reaching changes. In the first two years of the war, the General Staff, which assumed operational control over the entire German army, was forced to replace massive casualties and respond to rapidly developing situations on geographically distant fronts. Under these circumstances, individual soldiers and entire regiments were transferred from one contingent to another. Even though these measures were born of wartime necessity, the rulers of the empire's three smaller kingdoms were just as unwilling to accept

restrictions on their military authority as they had been in peacetime. Pressure from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg and fears that the “mixing” of personnel had severely damaged the morale of the men in the trenches eventually produced a change of course. In the autumn of 1916, General Erich Ludendorff, the newly appointed deputy chief of staff in the Supreme Command, abandoned the personnel policies of his predecessors and promised to respect the army’s peacetime structure. Ludendorff’s change of course calmed fears in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart that wartime exigencies would lead to the centralization of command and control following the conclusion of peace. It also helped the German army navigate one of the most tumultuous periods of the war. As a result, when Germany’s governments discussed postwar military reorganization, the debate turned to expansion, rather than abolition, of the army’s contingent-based structure. It could not prevent defeat in late 1918, but the framework for military relations created between 1867 and 1870 had proven remarkably durable.

Between the German empire’s foundation in 1871 and its collapse in the autumn of 1918, the German army remained a federal institution. This institution had been created in the wake of Prussia’s rapid victory over Austria in 1866 and the Prussian-led defeat of France in 1870-1. In recognition for these achievements on the battlefield, the Hohenzollern monarchy and Prussia’s military institutions enjoyed pride of place in the new empire. However, the German army was not simply the Prussian army writ large. As a result of a series of agreements with the smaller kingdoms of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, nearly one-quarter of German soldiers completed their military service in their own semi-autonomous contingents, while three *Kontingentsherren* took their places alongside the Kaiser at the army’s apex. While these royal commanders of contingents had transferred much of their powers of command to

the *Bundesfeldherr* during unification, they were more than mere military figureheads. Supported by a patchwork of non-Prussian ministries of war, general staffs, and cadet schools, they retained a voice in the empire's military affairs that could not be ignored. The Kaiser's *Kommandogewalt* was therefore limited. The authority of the kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg and the German army's contingent-based structure at the same time ensured that compromise, not imperial decrees, characterized Germany's military affairs in the decades after 1871. This willingness to compromise proved invaluable during the First World War. Because the distribution of military power between the Kaiser and the empire's three lesser kings could accommodate Prussian and non-Prussian interests, neither side was prepared to abolish the military relationships that had existed since the Wars of Unification. Until defeat, revolution, and the "de-crowning" of Germany in 1918 brought the empire's military and political structures crashing down, this complex and unwieldy fighting force survived four years of industrial warfare in part because contemporaries viewed it as a necessary evil.

Chapter One

Coming together: The Wars of Unification and the creation of the German army

On the morning of July 3, 1866, the 240,000 Austrians and Saxons of General Ludwig von Benedek's Army of the North stirred in their bivouacs to the west of the Elbe River. Because much of the Austrian supply train had already crossed to the river's eastern bank, many of Benedek's men awoke with empty stomachs. Few had managed to get much sleep: without tents or adequate shelter, the Austrians and Saxons had simply collapsed from fatigue on the cold, wet ground. Several kilometers away, the 135,000 Prussians of Prince Friedrich Karl's First Army and General Karl Herwarth von Bittenfeld's Elbe Army had fared little better. Supplies had only sporadically reached the troops over the previous week. On the morning of July 3, some regiments had assembled shortly after two o'clock in order to continue their march eastward in the driving rain. Speed was nevertheless paramount. Both Friedrich Karl and the chief of the Prussian General Staff, General Helmuth von Moltke, saw an opportunity to encircle Benedek's army between their own forces to the west, the Elbe River to the east, and the 110,000 men of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm's Second Army to the north.¹

The ensuing Prussian attack very nearly resulted in a catastrophe. Although they inflicted staggering casualties among the Austrians and Saxons with their breech-loading needle guns, Prince Friedrich Karl's and Herwarth von Bittenfeld's infantry soon found themselves pinned down by intense Austrian artillery fire along a small stream east of the

¹ Dennis Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification* (London: Arnold, 2004), 175-81; Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War: Austria's War with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 196-221.

village of Sadowa. Desperate attempts to capture the Austrian positions were repulsed with heavy losses. Victory was soon snatched from the jaws of defeat, however. Shortly after eight a.m., Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, whose troops began the day some thirty kilometers to the northeast, had issued orders for his Second Army to march toward the sound of the guns. Around eleven o'clock, he caught his first glimpse of the battlefield and, directing his columns towards two large linden trees, launched his infantry against Benedek's exposed right flank. The key to the entire Austrian position, the village of Chlum and the surrounding heights, was captured by mid-afternoon following bitter fighting between the Austrians and the Prussian Guards. Demoralized and with their line of retreat endangered, the remnants of Benedek's army streamed across the Elbe towards the safety of the fortress of Königgrätz. The Prussian crown prince was nearly brought to tears as he surveyed the battlefield that evening: "war is something frightful," he wrote, and anyone "who brings it about with the stroke of a pen from his armchair has no idea what he conjures up." The carnage was indeed dreadful. Twenty-four thousand Austrians and Saxons lay dead or wounded and another 20,000 had become prisoners of war. The Prussians had suffered over 9,000 casualties.²

Prussia's victory at the Battle of Königgrätz dramatically transformed political realities in German-speaking Europe. In the weeks after the battle, Prussian Minister-President Otto von Bismarck redrew boundaries that had remained untouched since the Napoleonic Wars. The German Confederation, which had been created over half a century earlier at the Congress of

² Friedrich Wilhelm's diary entry for July 3, 1866, in *Kaiser Friedrich III. Tagebücher von 1848-1866*, ed. Heinrich Otto Meisner (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler, 1929), 450. For the course of the battle and its aftermath, see Gordon A. Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz: Prussia's Victory over Austria, 1866* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott, 1964), 87-169; Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 181-95; Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 221-76.

Vienna as a barrier to French and Russian expansion, was dissolved. In its place, Bismarck established the North German Confederation. The new confederation comprised many of the small and medium-sized states of the “Third Germany” and was dominated by its largest and most-populous member, Prussia. It also excluded Austria, which was henceforth barred from meddling in German affairs. The Battle of Königgrätz at the same time resulted in the territorial expansion of Prussia. Although Bismarck successfully resisted the demands of King Wilhelm I for sweeping annexations of Austrian and Saxon territory, a number of the smaller states that had sided with the Habsburgs against the Hohenzollerns, including Hesse-Cassel, Nassau, the free city of Frankfurt, and the kingdom of Hanover, disappeared from the map of Germany. Their sovereigns, whose domains became provinces in the kingdom of Prussia, were forced into foreign exile.³ In the aftermath of the Austro-Prussian War, it was clear to observers that Prussia had replaced Austria as Germany’s leading power.

There were, however, obstacles to Prussia’s continued expansion. Astonished by the speed of the Austrian defeat and frightened by the prospect of a territorially enlarged Prussia on his eastern frontier, France’s Emperor Napoleon III worked feverishly in the weeks after the Battle of Königgrätz to establish the Main River as the border between North and South Germany. It was in the interests of France, he believed, that the South Germans retain their independence and remain potential allies in a future war against Prussia. On the surface, these efforts were successful. According to the Treaty of Prague, which was signed in August 1866,

³ William Carr, *The Origins of the Wars of German Unification* (London: Longman, 1991), 137-9; Richard Dietrich, “Das Jahr 1866 und das ‘Dritte Deutschland’,” in *Europa und der Norddeutsche Bund*, ed. Richard Dietrich (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1968), 102-6. When the Austro-Prussian conflict over reform of the German Confederation and the joint occupation of Schleswig-Holstein reached its climax at the beginning of June 1866, only the rulers of northern Germany sided with Prussia.

the South German states – the kingdoms of Bavaria and Württemberg and the grand duchies of Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt – remained outside the North German Confederation. Yet the independence of these states was illusory. At the same time that they concluded peace with Prussia, their governments signed defensive alliances with Bismarck that would place their armies under the command of the King of Prussia in a future war.⁴

Prussia's victory over Austria in the summer of 1866 therefore transformed military realities across Germany as well. Some states adapted, or were forced to adapt, more quickly than others. Because part of Hesse-Darmstadt had been incorporated into the North German Confederation, and because Baden, whose sovereign was married to the daughter of King Wilhelm of Prussia, had far more to fear from France than its northern neighbour, the two grand duchies immediately sought closer relations with Prussia. In contrast, the kingdom of Saxony found itself in desperate circumstances. In the opening days of the war, King Johann had made the momentous decision to withdraw the entire Saxon army to the southeast in order to link up with Benedek's army in Bohemia. Almost as soon as the king and his soldiers departed, Prussian troops occupied Saxony. Even though Bismarck guaranteed the kingdom's territorial integrity after Moltke's victory at Königgrätz, Saxony remained at Prussia's mercy in the following months. In October 1866, the two governments finalized a peace treaty that prepared the way for Saxony's entrance into the North German Confederation.⁵ Despite these desperate circumstances, King Johann refused to compromise on one important issue: the

⁴ Otto Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1958), 187-94. For the defensive alliances between Prussia and the South German states, see Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:287-9.

⁵ Richard Dietrich, "Der Preussisch-Sächsische Friedensschluss vom 21. Oktober 1866. Ein Kapitel aus der Vorgeschichte der Norddeutschen Bundesverfassung," *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 4 (1955), 109-56.

integration of Saxon soldiers into Prussian army. After its impressive performance during the campaign in Bohemia, it was simply inconceivable to him that the Saxon army could cease to exist as a distinct, self-contained fighting force. At least one observer agreed with the king. After all, Bavaria's envoy in Berlin noted, without an independent army and the unconditional loyalty of his soldiers, how could Johann continue to wear a crown?⁶

Bavaria and Württemberg were in far more favourable positions. Although both South German kingdoms had mobilized their armies against Prussia, neither government followed the King of Saxony's example by sending its soldiers to Bohemia. Instead, the Bavarian army took up defensive positions along the Main River. The Württembergers, forming part of an unwieldy collection of contingents led by a Hessian prince in Habsburg service, remained in their encampment near Frankfurt for most of the war.⁷ As a result, and unlike in Saxony, Prussian troops did not march into the South German capitals in the summer of 1866. The Treaty of Prague nevertheless produced anxiety in both Munich and Stuttgart. Although Prussia's expansion had been halted at the Main, the exclusion of Austria from German affairs had destroyed the delicate great power dualism that had safeguarded the independence of the small and medium-sized states of the Third Germany since 1815. No longer could Bavaria and Württemberg wield influence out of proportion to their populations and territories by backing either Austrian or Prussian proposals in the parliament of the German Confederation. Nor could they seek support from France. In the months following Königgrätz, the liberal and nationally minded middle class in South Germany began clamouring for unification and the

⁶ Ludwig von Montgelas, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, October 22, 1866, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2646. See also Oskar von Soden to the Württemberg minister-president, Karl Varnbüler von und zu Hemmingen, August 30, 1866, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/06, file 70.

⁷ Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 72-9.

establishment of closer ties to Prussia and the North German Confederation. Under these circumstances, the two kingdoms sought to salvage as much as possible. If some form of national unification were unavoidable, the governments of Bavaria and Württemberg were determined to ensure that their dynasties emerged from the process intact. Far-reaching political and military reforms appeared necessary in the summer and autumn of 1867 in order to strengthen the positions of the two kingdoms and ensure that their voices were not ignored in Berlin.⁸

The policies adopted by the leading ministers of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg after the Austro-Prussian War amounted to charting a middle course between annexation and autonomy. As Bavaria's minister-president, Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, wrote in February 1867, immediate incorporation into the North German Confederation would likely have resulted in the "mediatization" of his kingdom and the disappearance of the Wittelsbach dynasty. At the same time, history had proven time and time again that the independence of the smaller German states was "not incompatible with a constitution for all of Germany" and that this independence had, in contrast, never been "more seriously endangered than in times when this [political connection between states] had ceased to exist."⁹ In the calculations of Hohenlohe and his Saxon and Württemberg colleagues, armies played an important role. In Saxony's case, the military had symbolic importance. Although the Saxon government had resigned itself to surrendering much of their kingdom's sovereign powers in the autumn of

⁸ Ludwig von der Pfordten, Bavarian minister-president, to August von Reigersberg, Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, November 5, 1866, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, Bayerische Gesandtschaft Stuttgart 230; Varnbüler to Ferdinand von Degenfeld-Schonburg, Württemberg envoy in Munich, November 17, 1866, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 75, file 276.

⁹ Hohenlohe to Riegersberg, February 24, 1867, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, Bayerische Gesandtschaft Stuttgart 231.

1866, the monarch's relationship to his army was considered essential to the continued existence of the Wettin dynasty within a Prussian-dominated Germany. Even in the South, which had largely been spared occupation during the war and, with Napoleon III's support, enjoyed a somewhat precarious independence after the Battle of Königgrätz, armies offered the most effective means to ensure the future of the Bavarian and Württemberg ruling houses. Military reforms would not only better prepare the two kingdoms to navigate the new and uncertain landscape of Central Europe. These reforms would also increase their value as allies of Prussia and enable their governments to extract greater concessions for their dynasties in the event of the political unification of northern and southern Germany.

Integration and reform: Saxony and the South German states, 1866-7

On June 16, 1866, the three divisions of Herwarth von Bittenfeld's Elbe Army had crossed the border and entered the kingdom of Saxony. Two days later, King Johann watched as nearly the entire Saxon army – over 30,000 men – entered the Austrian province of Bohemia.¹⁰ The Prussians thereafter wasted little time in making themselves disliked in the kingdom. In his first meeting with the provisional government that had been formed in Dresden after the king's departure, the civilian commissioner appointed to oversee the Prussian occupation warned the Saxons that any official who disregarded his instructions or submitted false reports would be shot. Over the following week, Prussian officers routinely confiscated the cash boxes from town halls and other public buildings throughout Saxony and made exorbitant demands of the

¹⁰ Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 39-40; Wolfgang Gülich, *Die Sächsische Armee zur Zeit des Deutschen Bundes 1815-1867* (Beucha: Sax-Verlag, 2011), 205-8.

civilian population. Even though the provisional government quickly agreed to transfer 10,000 Thaler to the Prussians for each day of the occupation, confiscations and requisitions continued throughout the summer of 1866. King Wilhelm's orders that a system of fortifications be built in Dresden's beautiful *Großer Garten* – issued in order to make the errors of the Saxon monarch's foreign policy clear to his subjects – only created additional friction between the Prussians and the provisional government. The Prusso-Saxon peace treaty of October 1866 put an end to the most onerous aspects of the occupation. In place of contributions, Saxony agreed to pay reparations amounting to ten million Thaler. The king and his army were allowed to return home, but Saxon soldiers were placed under the command of a Prussian general and Prussian troops continued to occupy Dresden. The fortress of Königstein, which had remained in Saxon hands during the war and had therefore threatened Moltke's lines of communications along the Elbe River to Bohemia, was also occupied by the Prussians.¹¹

The peace treaty also paved the way for Saxony's political integration with North Germany. In their negotiations with Bismarck and his subordinates, the Saxon representatives had agreed to most of Prussia's demands. Control over the kingdom's postal and telegraph systems was transferred to Berlin and, in return for a reduction in the amount of reparations, Prussia assumed control over a portion of the Saxon railway network. King Johann would remain on his throne, but foreign policy would henceforth be formulated in Berlin, not Dresden. It proved more difficult to reach an agreement over military affairs. Bismarck had opened the negotiations by declaring that the Saxon army would have to be dissolved and its

¹¹ Richard Dietrich, "Preussen als Besatzungsmacht im Königreich Sachsen 1866-1868," *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 5 (1956), 273-85; James Retallack, "King Johann of Saxony and the German Civil War of 1866," in Retallack, *Germany's Second Reich: Portraits and Pathways* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 107-37, especially 110-24.

regiments transferred to Prussian garrisons. Despite these haughty demands, the contours of a military convention between the two kingdoms had begun to take shape by mid-September. These negotiations eventually broke down over three issues: the Prussian demands that all Saxon soldiers swear an oath of allegiance to the Prussian monarch; Berlin's proposal that the King of Prussia determine the location of garrisons and deployment of Saxon regiments in peacetime; and King Johann's insistence that he retain control over the appointment of Saxon officers. As a stopgap solution, the Saxon war ministry agreed as part of the peace treaty to begin the reorganization of the kingdom's army along Prussian lines.¹²

Without a military agreement with Berlin, but having committed Saxony to political integration into the North German Confederation, the government in Dresden adopted a two-track approach throughout the winter of 1866-7. First, Saxon ministers hoped that rapid completion of the army's reorganization would convince the Prussians to withdraw their remaining occupation forces from the kingdom. Second, they worked to safeguard the Saxon king's remaining military rights during the drafting of the new confederation's constitution. On this point, there was some optimism in Dresden. As the newly appointed Saxon minister of war, General Alfred von Fabrice, wrote in December 1866, Bismarck and Prussia's King Wilhelm would have little choice but to take Saxon wishes into account: none of the other North German states could offer the Prussians a complete army corps.¹³

¹² Mirko Buschmann, *Zwischen Bündnis und Integration. Sachsens militärpolitischer Eintritt in den Norddeutschen Bund 1866/67* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2004), 67-90; Dietrich, "Der Preussisch-Sächsische Friedensschluss," 117-52. For King Johann's expectations for the peace treaty with Prussia and the integration of the Saxon army into the future North German army, see his instructions to the Saxon negotiators, August 14, 1866, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11248, file 53.

¹³ Fabrice to Colonel Carl von Brandenstein, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, December 18, 1866, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11248, file 7587. For the government's hopes that completion of the Saxon army's reorganization would put an end to the Prussian occupation, see Maximilian von Gise, Bavarian envoy in Dresden, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, November 11, 1866, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2841.

The negotiations over a military convention had broken down in the autumn of 1866 as a result of Berlin's unwillingness to concede too much autonomy to Saxony in the sphere of military affairs. One of the most important motivations for demanding that Saxon soldiers swear allegiance to the King of Prussia and that control over personnel appointments and the deployment of units rest in Berlin, not Dresden, had been the desire to guarantee the centrality of command. Although each member of the old German Confederation had been required to maintain contingents in peacetime, the army's commander-in-chief had been appointed at the beginning of a war and only following a majority vote in the federal parliament. In the decades before the Austro-Prussian War, Prussian efforts to reform this unwieldy system by creating a permanent command structure and standardizing the equipment, organization, and training of German soldiers had confronted strong Austrian resistance.¹⁴ In the wake of Königgrätz, however, Prussia was free to correct the confederation's shortcomings. These desires to centralize command mixed with fears about the reliability of the Saxon army. Because Saxon soldiers had recently fought against the Prussians in Bohemia, both the Prussian king and Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm were eager to receive assurances of Saxon loyalty.¹⁵

Such assurances appeared necessary in the months following the signing of the peace treaty in October 1866. In November, both Saxony's war minister and the Prussian military governor were compelled to issue stringent guidelines for relations between the Prussian occupation forces and Saxon soldiers. Following the return of King Johann's army from

¹⁴ Elmar Wienhöfer, *Das Militärwesen des Deutschen Bundes und das Ringen zwischen Österreich und Preussen um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1815-1866* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1973), 60-2, 94-8. See also Hellmut Seier, "Der Oberbefehl im Bundesheer. Zur Entstehung der deutschen Bundeskriegsverfassung 1817-22," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 1 (1977), 7-33.

¹⁵ Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 206-8.

Bohemia, Prussian and Saxon regiments were garrisoned together in several cities and towns. Especially in the cramped confines of Königstein, fistfights broke out between the troops.¹⁶ There were also fears that the Saxon government's willingness to forge closer political and military ties to Prussia would not last. In mid-January 1867, one Prussian official in Dresden reported that, despite the apparent eagerness to negotiate with Berlin, there were few Saxon officers, courtiers, noblemen, and bureaucrats who viewed the kingdom's subordination to its northern neighbour as anything more than a temporary and "unpleasant necessity."¹⁷

By the end of 1866, Prussian reluctance to make concessions to Saxony had almost completely evaporated. Although the king and crown prince continued to voice their concerns, high-ranking Prussian officers began to support a compromise. Already in September 1866, Prince Friedrich Karl and General Albrecht von Roon, Prussia's war minister, had expressed their admiration for the Saxon army. Roon even remarked to one Saxon official that Prussia did not seek revenge for Königgrätz and that "nothing would happen in the peace or otherwise that would damage the honour and national identity of the Saxon army."¹⁸ Bismarck also adopted a conciliatory attitude. Seeking to divide Prussia's opposition in the discussions over the North German Confederation's constitution and hoping to produce a more favourable impression in the South German capitals, whose governments were in the process of carrying out their own military reforms, Bismarck revived the negotiations with Dresden over a military convention at the end of 1866. The Saxons immediately took up the offer. Fabrice, who briefly

¹⁶ Gise to the Bavarian foreign ministry, November 22, 1866, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2841. See also Dietrich, "Preussen als Besatzungsmacht im Königreich Sachsen," 285-7.

¹⁷ Prussian legation in Dresden to Bismarck, January 12, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 3192.

¹⁸ Robert Schneider, Saxon minister of justice, to Crown Prince Albert of Saxony, September 19, 1866, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 12562, file 27. See also Buschmann, *Zwischen Bündnis und Integration*, 115-16.

considered the advantages of consulting the smaller North German states, firmly believed that that Saxony, because of its size and population, had far more to gain in cooperation with Berlin than in opposition to the Prussians. The discussions, which began in early January 1867, ran into familiar obstacles: the oath of allegiance, the appointment of Saxon officers, and the location of garrisons. Over the following weeks, both Bismarck and Fabrice, who, along with the Saxon foreign minister, personally took part in the negotiations, were able to overcome the concerns of their monarchs and, on February 7, King Johann gave his consent to the military convention. On the same day, the agreement was signed in Berlin.¹⁹

The convention represented a compromise between the principle of centrality of command and the consultative leadership structure of the army of the German Confederation. According to Article 1 of the military convention, the Saxon army would henceforth form the XII Army Corps of the North German Confederation. This army corps would be reorganized along Prussian lines by October 1867, but Saxon regiments would continue to carry their own colours and wear their own insignia. In order to ensure uniformity in military education, Articles 3 and 4 foresaw the admission of Saxon officers to Prussian war colleges and training institutions and the temporary transfer of personnel between the two armies. As commander-in-chief, or *Bundesfeldherr*, the King of Prussia was also given the right to inspect the Saxon army corps, either personally or through an appointed inspector-general, at any time and at least once per year. Additional articles addressed the most divisive issues that had hamstrung negotiations since the previous summer. Whereas Article 63 of the confederation's constitution enabled the *Bundesfeldherr* to determine the North German army's garrisons, Article 5 of the

¹⁹ Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 338-46; Buschmann, *Zwischen Bündnis und Integration*, 117-26.

military convention placed a somewhat vague limitation on this power: in peacetime, Prussia's king would only relocate Saxon regiments in exceptional circumstances and if the interests of the confederation demanded it. Articles 6 and 7 concerned the loyalty of Saxon soldiers and the appointment of officers. Saxon soldiers would be required to swear an oath of allegiance, or *Fahneneid*, to both the *Bundesfeldherr* and the King of Saxony, while the commander of the XII Army Corps, as well as his brigade and division commanders, could only be appointed after agreement between the two monarchs. Each of these officers would be required to make an additional declaration of loyalty to the King of Prussia before assuming his post.²⁰

There were more than a few opponents of the Prusso-Saxon military convention. Fabrice's willingness to make concessions, especially in regards to the oath of allegiance and the appointment of officers, was viewed with suspicion by some at the Saxon court. At one point during the negotiations, Bavaria's envoy in Dresden criticized the war minister's "excessive eagerness to make himself likeable in Berlin." At the same time, Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia and his supporters condemned the agreement as having left too much military authority in the hands of the King of Saxony. The future North German army, these critics lamented, would suffer from the same deficiencies as the federal army before 1866.²¹ Moreover, the smaller states of northern Germany resented the selfishness of the Saxon government. Saxony's military convention ensured that the articles in the North German constitution concerning military affairs, which aimed to establish centralized command and

²⁰ "Militär-Konvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bund und dem Königreich Sachsen vom 7. Februar 1867," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:292-4. See also Buschmann, *Zwischen Bündnis und Integration*, 127-35.

²¹ Gise to the Bavarian foreign ministry, January 24 and March 5, 1867, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2842.

control in peacetime, did not apply to the confederation's second-largest kingdom. Without Saxon support and unable to bring sufficient pressure to bear on Bismarck, the smaller states failed to secure meaningful changes to the new confederation's constitution in the winter of 1866-7. In the months following the constitution's acceptance by the North German constituent Reichstag in April, a number of the smaller states, including Anhalt, Oldenburg, the free cities of Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck, and the Thuringian states, scrambled to salvage their former autonomy by signing their own military conventions with Prussia. Both Mecklenburg grand duchies concluded similar agreements in the summer of 1868.²² The fate of the smaller states, one Saxon officer crowed at the end of February 1867, would lead many observers to wonder how Saxony, despite finding itself on the losing side in the Austro-Prussian War, had managed to acquire such an independent position for its army corps. The same officer nevertheless acknowledged that public discussion of Saxony's military convention would, in light of the widespread resentment across northern Germany, be "very uncomfortable for us."²³

Whereas defeat and occupation shaped military affairs in Saxony following the Austro-Prussian War, the reorganization of the South German armies took place under much different circumstances. In Bavaria, the poor performance of the army in the summer of 1866 produced numerous calls for military reform. At the beginning of September, the wartime commander of the Bavarian troops, Prince Karl of Bavaria, submitted a report to King Ludwig II that

²² Klaus-Dieter Kaiser, "Die Eingliederung der ehemals selbständigen norddeutschen Truppenkörper in die preussische Armee in den Jahren nach 1866. Eine Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Verfassungsnorm und militärischer Wirklichkeit" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1972), 72-7. For the negotiations between Bismarck and the governments of the North German states over the confederation's constitution and its acceptance by the constituent Reichstag, see Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification, 1815-1871* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 351-61. The integration of the contingents from these smaller states into the North German army is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

²³ Colonel Carl von Brandenstein, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon war ministry, February 25 and March 9, 1867, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 84.

outlined the kingdom's most glaring military deficiencies. The poor organization of the Bavarian general staff and the omission of large-scale peacetime manoeuvres had produced confusion during the mobilization and concentration of the troops. The performance of the officer corps had also been disappointing and new personnel policies were urgently required in order to ensure that the most talented and qualified officers advanced into the army's upper echelons. One month before Prince Karl submitted his report, Ludwig II had already taken the first major step towards a comprehensive reform of his army. At the beginning of August, the king appointed General Sigmund von Pranckh as Bavaria's minister of war. Pranckh set out immediately to reorganize the Bavarian army according to the Prussian model.²⁴

At the end of October 1866, the war minister composed a lengthy memorandum that laid out his proposals for the king. In place of the kingdom's existing system of recruitment, which enabled wealthy members of the middle class to purchase substitutes from the poorer sections of society, compulsory military service would be introduced in Bavaria. All males would be liable for military service following their twentieth birthday. Having completed six years in the active army and five years in the reserves, conscripts would pass into the *Landwehr*, or militia. Through these reforms, Pranckh hoped to raise the army's strength to around 72,000 men. In the event of war, Bavaria would thereby be able to mobilize nearly 200,000 soldiers, including reservists, or slightly more than three percent of its population. King Ludwig II approved his war minister's proposals in early December 1866.²⁵

²⁴ Eugen von Frauenholz, *Geschichte des Königlich Bayerischen Heeres von 1867 bis 1914* (Munich: Verlag Max Schick, 1931), 5-6; Rolf Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund (1867-1870)* (Husum: Matthiesen Verlag, 1978), 17-18.

²⁵ Pranckh to King Ludwig II, November 27, 1866, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 24653; "Denkschrift die Reorganisation des Wehrsystems des Königreichs betreffend," October 1866, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, Alter Bestand A II, file 76. In early November, Prussia's envoy in Munich, Prince Heinrich VII zu Reuß, expressed his disappointment with the progress of military reform in Bavaria, but

Military reform in Württemberg took a completely different course. As in Bavaria, the performance of the Württemberg army during the Austro-Prussian War inspired loud calls for reform in the autumn of 1866. Many in the Württemberg parliament, especially the democratic People's Party, demanded that the government introduce a militia system that would make every male Württemberger eligible for military service, but at the same time limit the financial burden on the kingdom's population. By the beginning of December 1866, the war minister, General Oskar von Hardegg, had completed work on such a military law. Hardegg, who had commanded the Württemberg division in the previous summer, proposed to abolish the existing system of recruitment, including the practice of substitution. In its place, he proposed combining the Swedish system of physical exercises for youths with the Swiss model of short-term service. From the ages of ten to fourteen, Württemberg's youths would participate in three hours of gymnastics each week. Between fourteen and twenty, they would undergo military drills. Following their twentieth birthday, each Württemberg male would serve one year in the active army, though his presence with the colours would be spread out over six years, after which he would pass into the *Landwehr*.²⁶ This system, the British envoy in Stuttgart estimated, would more than double the size of the Württemberg army to around 50,000 men and enable the kingdom to mobilize twice that number immediately following the outbreak of war. More importantly for middle-class democrats, the new system would cost the Württemberg taxpayer as little as half the amount required to introduce Prussian conscription to the kingdom.²⁷

acknowledged Pranckh's efforts to introduce compulsory military service. Reuß to the Prussian foreign ministry, November 4, 1866, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, III. Hauptabteilung MdA I, file 10515.

²⁶ Paul Sauer, *Das württembergische Heer in der Zeit des Deutschen und des Norddeutschen Bundes* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1958), 205-9; Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 19-20.

²⁷ George John Robert Gordon, British envoy in Stuttgart, to the British Foreign Office, December 5, 1866, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 124.

It is little wonder that fears quickly developed, both in Prussia and southern Germany, that Bavaria and Württemberg might pursue radically different military reforms that would complicate their cooperation in a future war. Hardegg himself had been quick to recognize this danger. In early October 1866, the war minister sent a memorandum to the foreign ministry recommending that Baden, Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstadt, and Württemberg work to standardize the equipment, organization, and training of their armies. Just as the Prussians hoped to create a centralized command structure for the North German army, Hardegg pressed for the appointment of a South German commander-in-chief in peacetime. This general would be supported by a general staff consisting of officers drawn from the four South German armies, while common training institutions would also be established and all four states would introduce some form of recruitment system based on compulsory military service. Lastly, South German soldiers would be equipped with the same weapons and wear common insignia. Finding little enthusiasm for his project in Stuttgart, Hardegg travelled to Munich. Pranckh, who at the time was working on his own reform project, was just an unwilling to cooperate with his Württemberg colleague. Hardegg therefore returned home empty-handed.²⁸

Hohenlohe's appointment as Bavarian minister-president in December 1866 breathed new life into these efforts to standardize the South German armies, though not in the sense Württemberg war minister would have preferred. Hohenlohe, the Prussian envoy in Munich reported, feared that if Hardegg were left to his own devices, he would forge ahead with the

²⁸ Sir Henry Francis Howard, British envoy in Munich, to the British Foreign Office, October 30, 1866, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 177; Reuß to the Prussian foreign ministry, November 4, 1866, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, III. Hauptabteilung MdA I, file 10515. See also Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 19. For the war minister's proposals for the standardization of the South German armies, see Hardegg to the Württemberg foreign ministry, October 3, 1866, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 40/72, file 435.

“most adventurous reforms” that could only later be reversed “with great difficulty.” In other words, the Württembergers had to be saved from themselves. In January 1867, Hohenlohe issued invitations to Darmstadt, Karlsruhe, and Stuttgart for a military conference of the four South German states.²⁹ Hohenlohe’s invitation was quickly accepted by Württemberg’s minister-president, Karl von Varnbüler. Although initially opposed to Hardegg’s proposals for a common South German military system, Varnbüler had grown concerned about the broad support in the kingdom for the war minister’s reform and hoped that the four governments could instead agree to military standardization along Prussian lines. Hohenlohe’s suggestion that Stuttgart should host the conference likely made Varnbüler’s decision easier.³⁰

There was far less enthusiasm in Karlsruhe, however. Unlike its southern neighbours, Baden’s government did not begin the process of military reform in the autumn of 1866. Because the ministers were convinced that the grand duchy’s continued existence depended on closer relations to Prussia, the army’s reorganization was postponed until a military convention could be concluded with Berlin. When Hohenlohe’s invitation arrived, the government in Karlsruhe therefore viewed it with suspicion. It was Baden’s intention to re-equip and retrain its army according to the Prussian model, Rudolf von Freydorf, Baden’s foreign minister, declared in mid-January, and the grand duchy wished to avoid any action that might endanger this possibility.³¹ Bismarck was nevertheless unwilling to sanction Baden’s entrance into the

²⁹ For an example of the invitations to the military conference, see Hohenlohe to Konrad von Malsen, Bavarian envoy in Karlsruhe, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, Bayerische Gesandtschaft Karlsruhe 284. For Hohenlohe’s concerns about Württemberg’s military reform, see Reuß to the Prussian foreign ministry, January 9, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555.

³⁰ Reuß to Bismarck, January 17, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555.

³¹ Albert von Flemming, Prussian envoy in Karlsruhe, to Bismarck, January 12 and 15, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555. For the position of Baden’s government after the Austro-Prussian War more generally, see Oskar von Soden, Württemberg envoy in Karlsruhe, to Varnbüler, November 1866, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/04, file 101.

North German Confederation, at least for the moment. If he did so, anti-Prussian elements in Bavaria and Württemberg could drive these two kingdoms into the arms of Austria or France. Until the situation changed, it was far better if the grand duchy worked with the South Germans. At the end of January 1867, Baden accepted Hohenlohe's invitation, though with the condition that the Prussian military system form the basis for the discussions.³²

The Bavarian proposal for a conference in Stuttgart also had little resonance in Hesse-Darmstadt. The outcome of the Austro-Prussian War had placed the grand duchy in a far more uncomfortable position than the other South German states. According to the peace treaty with Prussia, the province of Upper Hesse, located north of the Main River, was incorporated into the North German Confederation. A separate contingent would henceforth be recruited from the province and Prussian soldiers would be garrisoned in the fortress of Mainz. With the grand duchy already tied to the North, the Hessian minister-president, Reinhard von Dalwigk, was forced to pursue a two-track policy. On the one hand and believing that complete integration with the North was unavoidable in the long term, he sought to safeguard as many of the grand duke's powers as possible. On the other hand, Dalwigk wished to prevent the introduction of Prussian compulsory military service to the southern Hessian provinces. The grand duchy's population, he believed, could not bear the financial burden. In January 1867, negotiations over a military convention between Hesse-Darmstadt and Prussia began in Berlin.³³ Much like their counterparts in Karlsruhe, the Hessians therefore viewed Hohenlohe's invitation with serious misgivings. After all, it was far more important to conclude an agreement with Prussia. Such

³² Flemming to Bismarck, January 26, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555; Howard to the British Foreign Office, January 26, 1867, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 181. See also Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 597-8; Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 29-30.

³³ Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 15, 23-6.

an agreement, Dalwigk informed the Prussians, should integrate the entire Hessian army, not only part of it, into the North German military structure, though on terms that would be favourable to the grand duchy and its taxpayers. Bismarck once again provided the necessary encouragement. At the end of January, Dalwigk agreed to attend the conference.³⁴

The representatives of the four South German governments met in Stuttgart at the beginning of February 1867. Differences of opinion became apparent at once. During the opening session, Freydlorf and Baden's war minister proposed two amendments to the conference's draft protocol. According to the first amendment, the four governments would recognize military reforms as a "national necessity" that would allow their armies to be integrated into a single German army in wartime. The second amendment concerned the reforms themselves. Repeating their earlier position, Baden's representatives proposed that the four states adopt Prussia's "entire military system" and increase the peacetime strength of their armies to one percent of the population. Both amendments met stiff resistance from the other participants. Whereas a weaker formulation of the conference's goals was adopted, the technical questions were assigned to a committee of the four war ministers. The results were mixed. The practice of substitutions would be abolished and, in its place, compulsory military service would be introduced, though the peacetime strength of the four armies would be set at a minimum of slightly less than one percent. As for army organization, Prussia would provide the model. There was little agreement in other areas. The four states simply committed to standardize communications, regulations, and training as much as possible and no agreement

³⁴ Otto von Wentzel, Prussian envoy in Darmstadt, to Bismarck, January 26, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555; Gordon to the British Foreign Office, January 28, 1867, with an appended note from January 29, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 128. For Dalwigk's preference for a military convention with Prussia and reluctance to accept Hohenlohe's invitation, see Wentzel to Bismarck, January 16 and 23, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555.

was reached concerning a common armament for South German soldiers. The final protocol was further watered down by Baden's motion, supported by Dalwigk, that none of the agreed-upon measures would stand in the way of separate, bilateral agreements with Prussia.³⁵

The Austrian envoy to Württemberg reported shortly afterwards that the outcome of the Stuttgart conference had been "less terrible than one had justifiably feared." The envoy happily added that Hohenlohe was opposed to sacrificing Bavaria's sovereign powers in return for closer relations to the North German Confederation.³⁶ These comments were wide of the mark. Although it had not produced the outcome for which Hardegg might have hoped, the Stuttgart conference represented a watershed in German military affairs. Following the Austro-Prussian War, there was a possibility that the four South German states might pursue military reforms at odds with one another. The commitments made at Stuttgart in February 1867 instead placed all four South German states on the path towards military integration with northern Germany. Not only did the participants agree to introduce compulsory military service and commit to a minimum strength for their armies in peacetime; Badenese, Bavarians, Hessians, and Württembergers would henceforth serve in battalions, squadrons, and batteries organized along similar lines, simplifying cooperation in wartime with one another and, perhaps more importantly, with the army of the North German Confederation. Over the next three years, the South German armies would continue to gravitate towards Prussia and, in the process, lay the foundation for the contingent-based German army that would emerge after 1871.

³⁵ Protocols of the Stuttgart military conference, February 3 and 4, 1867, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 40/72, file 266; conference protocol for February 5, 1867, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 33, file 543. See also Gordon to the British Foreign Office, February 9, 1867, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 128. For the preliminary agreement between Bavaria and Württemberg and the Stuttgart conference more generally, see Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 30-3.

³⁶ Bohuslav Chotek von Chotkowa und Wognin, Austrian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austrian Foreign Office, February 7, 1867, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 31.

Between alliance and unification: Prussia and the South German armies, 1867-70

In the months before the Austro-Prussian War, Bismarck had sought guarantees that France would not intervene in a conflict between the two German powers. No agreement had been reached, though territorial compensation – the grand duchy of Luxemburg or the Bavarian Palatinate – had been discussed by the two governments as the possible price for France's neutrality. In the weeks following Prussia's victory at Königgrätz, Napoleon III focused his attention on Luxemburg. A member of the German Confederation before 1866 and home to a Prussian garrison even after the war, Luxemburg was bound to King William III of the Netherlands by personal union. The French government's efforts in the winter of 1866-7 to purchase the grand duchy, whose inhabitants spoke a mixture of French and German, thus inflamed nationalist opinion in Germany. Bismarck, who had initially encouraged Napoleon III's new territorial designs, quickly changed course and, seeking to take advantage of the popular outrage, opposed the grand duchy's sale to France.³⁷

The Luxemburg crisis, which finally subsided in April 1867, created considerable anxiety in the capitals of southern Germany. Prussia's envoy in Stuttgart wrote several weeks afterwards that a general fear still existed throughout Württemberg that the South German states would become the main theatre of war between France and Prussia. This fear was magnified by concerns about the readiness of the South German armies. While Hardegg, the kingdom's war minister, assured the Prussians that the reorganization of Württemberg's army was proceeding rapidly, the civilian ministers in Stuttgart were far more candid. The artillery

³⁷ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars of German Unification*, 154-61; Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification*, 298-303, 371-81.

and light infantry, Varnbüler informed the Prussian envoy, would likely perform well in a campaign against France. At the same time, the minister-president had “little faith” in the cavalry and believed that the infantry desperately required “better leadership.”³⁸

The Luxemburg crisis also accelerated the integration of the Badenese army into the Prussian military structure. In the first months of 1867, Baden’s ministers had been willing to make significant concessions in return for a military convention with Prussia. They not only suggested that Badenese soldiers could be placed under the command of the King of Prussia in wartime, but proposed that the entire army should be reorganized so that it might “at any time” operate alongside Prussian troops. With this in mind, Prussian equipment, military justice and service regulations, and uniforms would be introduced by the grand duchy. Baden’s army would also cease to possess its own independent officer corps. Officers above the rank of colonel would be appointed by the King of Prussia, officer candidates would be sent to Prussian military schools, and all Badenese soldiers would swear an oath of allegiance to the North German *Bundesfeldherr*.³⁹ Bismarck’s continued insistence that the South German states work together after the Stuttgart conference dashed these hopes for a comprehensive military agreement. The threat of war with France nevertheless convinced the Prussians of the need for some kind of understanding with Karlsruhe. In March 1867, the two governments finalized a military convention that brought their officer corps closer together. The Prussians agreed to train between ten and twenty officer candidates from Baden. Badenese officers would also

³⁸ Adalbert von Rosenberg, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Bismarck, April 20, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19556.

³⁹ Hermann von Thile, under-secretary in the Prussian Foreign Office, to Bismarck, January 19, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555. See also the instructions for Colonel Karl von Sponeck, who was sent to Berlin in the winter of 1866-7 in order to negotiate a military convention. “Notizen zur Instruktion des nach Berlin entsendeten Obersten Grafen von Sponeck,” December 26, 1866, GLA Karlsruhe, Bestand 48, file 5096.

attend courses at Prussian artillery and engineering institutes and the war academy in Berlin, while Baden's staff officers would be attached to the Prussian General Staff. One year later, in February 1868, the number of Badenese officer candidates sent to Prussia was increased to fifty and, in May, the doors of the cadet school in Karlsruhe were closed for the last time.⁴⁰

The heightened tension with France had a similar effect on military relations between Hesse-Darmstadt and Prussia. Because of the grand duchy's unique position – half in and half outside the North German Confederation – the discussions over a military convention that had started in January 1867 eventually resulted in a more far-reaching agreement. In early April, Hesse-Darmstadt agreed to integrate its entire army into the Prussian military structure. Compulsory military service and the Prussian military justice code would be introduced in the grand duchy and the Hessian army would be reorganized as a self-contained division within a Prussian army corps. As in Saxony's military convention, Hessian regiments would be garrisoned inside the grand duchy unless circumstances forced the King of Prussia to relocate them elsewhere, while the commander of the Hessian division could only be appointed with the understanding of the *Bundesfeldherr*. In order to ensure that Hessian officers gained the experience necessary for higher commands in the division, the military convention foresaw an exchange of officers between the two armies, the enrollment of Hessian officer candidates in Prussian military schools, and the drafting of performance reports for the grand duchy's staff officers. These reports would be reviewed by the King of Prussia's military cabinet. Finally, every Hessian soldier would be required to swear an oath of allegiance to the King of Prussia

⁴⁰ Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 37-40. See also Soden to Varnbüler, April 4, 1867, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 40/72, file 436.

who, in order to ensure uniformity with the rest of the North German army, would be permitted to inspect the Hessian division, either in its garrisons or during manoeuvres.⁴¹

Encouraged by these developments, Bismarck also worked to establish a permanent network of Prussian military representatives across South Germany. Before 1866, a military commission consisting of six officers – one each from Austria, Bavaria, and Prussia, and three from the smaller German states – had met in Frankfurt. These officers provided technical advice to the federal parliament. After the dissolution of the German Confederation, military discussions had been carried out on an ad hoc basis. Saxony's minister of war, Fabrice, had negotiated his kingdom's military convention with Prussia, while the Badenese government had dispatched a staff officer to Berlin in early 1867 for the same purpose. Formal channels for military discussions increasingly appeared necessary during the Luxemburg crisis. In April 1867, Bismarck proposed that Baden, Bavaria, Prussia, and Württemberg exchange military representatives.⁴² The three governments agreed and military plenipotentiaries took up their posts in Berlin and the southern capitals in the following weeks. These officers established permanent lines of communication between the Prussian and South German war ministries. In Karlsruhe and Stuttgart, Prussian officers also provided advice and assistance during the implementation of military reforms. The mission of General Julius von Hartmann, Prussia's military plenipotentiary in Munich, was less successful. Because the Bavarian government perceived the general's high rank as an insult rather than as evidence of the King of Prussia's

⁴¹ "Militär-Konvention zwischen Preußen und dem Großherzogtum Hessen vom 7. April 1867," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:295-9. See also Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 33-6. For Dalwigk's belief that only a military convention with Prussia could ensure the integrity of the Hessian division, see Soden to Varnbüler, January 29, 1867, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 40/72, file 435.

⁴² Meisner, *Militärattachés und Militärbevollmächtigte in Preußen und im Deutschen Reich*, 43-4; Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 45.

reverence for Bavaria, Hartmann encountered hostility at almost every turn. In October 1867, he was replaced by a junior officer. In order to avoid friction elsewhere, younger officers replaced the Prussian generals in Karlsruhe and Stuttgart in early 1868.⁴³

Despite the creation of formal channels for military discussions, the Luxemburg crisis did little to further the progress of military reform in the two South German kingdoms. Shortly after returning from the Stuttgart conference, Prantke laid a new military law before the Bavarian parliament. Two of its provisions caused particular concern among the deputies: the length of active service and the peacetime strength of the Bavarian army. In drafting the legislation, the war minister had reduced the period of service with the colours from six to three years for the infantry, while remaining four years for the cavalry. Concerned about the scale of expenditures and sympathetic to Hardegg's concept of a short-service militia, the Bavarian lower chamber sought to eliminate the fourth year of service for the cavalry and include a provision allowing the deputies to determine the size of each year's recruit contingent. The resulting struggle over the military law dragged on into the winter of 1867-8. Neither the war ministry nor the lower chamber was willing to abandon its position and a compromise was only reached at the end of January 1868: the period of active service in the cavalry was reduced to three years and the army's strength was fixed at one percent of the population for the next three years. The new military law was approved on January 30, 1868.⁴⁴

⁴³ For Hartmann's plight in Munich, see Roon to King Wilhelm I of Prussia, July 7, 1867, with Hartmann's report from July 22, 1867, and Hartmann to Wilhelm I, August 19, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19558. For the missions of the Prussian military plenipotentiaries in southern Germany more generally, see Meisner, *Militärattachés und Militärbevollmächtigte in Preußen und im Deutschen Reich*, 45-7.

⁴⁴ Howard to the British Foreign Office, January 13 and 21, 1868, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 187. See also Frauenholz, *Geschichte des Königlich Bayerischen Heeres*, 11-15.

Military reform was even more contentious in neighbouring Württemberg. Hardegg, who had supported the standardization of the South German armies the previous autumn, remained determined to introduce a militia system after the Stuttgart conference. Because a large portion of the officer corps favoured reforms along Prussian lines, opposition grew steadily against the war minister. In the spring of 1867, Major Albert von Suckow, an officer in the Württemberg ministry of war, convinced King Karl to replace Hardegg with General Rudolf von Wagner-Frommenhausen. Suckow had served as the Württemberg representative at Bavarian headquarters during the Austro-Prussian War and had therefore observed firsthand the chaos that had reigned within the federal army in the summer of 1866. He thereafter became a fervent advocate of Prussia's military system. With Suckow's assistance, the new war minister drafted a military law based on compulsory military service and a three-year period with the colours. This law met fierce opposition in Württemberg's parliament in the winter of 1867-8. In particular, the People's Party opposed the "Prussianization" of the army and remained hopeful that a militia system could be introduced to the kingdom. Its opposition was only overcome with concessions in early March. As had already occurred in Bavaria, recruits would henceforth be furloughed after only two years of active service.⁴⁵

The slow pace of military reform in South Germany and the threat of war with France magnified the divisions that still existed between North and South. In December 1868, Georg von Werthern, Prussia's envoy to Bavaria, wrote that it was a shame that the Prussian army

⁴⁵ Sauer, *Das württembergische Heer in der Zeit des Deutschen und des Norddeutschen Bundes*, 196-205, 209-16. For the resignation of Hardegg and the strength of the opposition to a militia system in Württemberg, especially in the officer corps, see also Gordon to the British Foreign Office, April 28, 1867, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 128; Chotek to the Austrian-Hungarian Foreign Office, January 2, 1868, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 32-1.

“hadn’t immediately marched on Munich and Stuttgart after Sadowa ... or made war over Luxemburg.” Ever since these missed opportunities, the international situation confronting Prussia had worsened. “Austria is becoming stronger, France has finished [its military reorganization] and we, in the North German Confederation, still have deeply wounded [allies] in Hanover and Saxony that we can’t rely on at all.”⁴⁶ No one regretted the prevailing military relationships in Germany more than General Helmuth von Moltke, the chief of the Prussian General Staff. In the spring of 1868, Moltke condemned the ungratefulness of the southern German states. Although Prussian battlefield successes had made unification possible, the press and parliaments in the South showered their northern neighbours with “hate and scorn.” Yet it was still in the interests of the southern states to seek closer military relations with Prussia. The army of the German Confederation, Moltke pointed out, had suffered from severe deficiencies. The most serious of these deficiencies had been their provisional organization, which had allowed fewer than 50,000 Prussian soldiers to prevail over twice their number in western Germany during the summer of 1866. Whereas the King of Prussia at that time had commanded a unified army, the South German states had fielded a collection of contingents. Even if such a “coalition” were forged from the “most splendid steel,” it would always consist of individual parts and remain vulnerable to the centrifugal force of particularism.⁴⁷

The Stuttgart conference had committed the South German states to pursue similar military reforms, but had done little to weld this coalition into a centralized army. This was

⁴⁶ Georg von Werthern, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Thilo von Werthern, December 5, 1868, quoted in Barton, *Die preußische Gesandtschaft in München als Instrument der Reichspolitik in Bayern*, 12-13.

⁴⁷ Drafts of two speeches that Moltke intended to, but never did, deliver in the *Zollparlament*, or German customs parliament, in early 1868. *Gesammelte Schriften und Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Grafen Helmuth von Moltke*, ed. Stanislaus von Leszczynski (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1892), 7:11-20.

especially true concerning the arming and training of soldiers. The military conventions that were signed by Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt in the spring of 1867 enabled officers from the two grand duchies to attend Prussian military schools. Soon after the meeting in Stuttgart, Badenese troops were also re-equipped with the needle gun. Württemberg's army likewise adopted the Prussian rifle. The Bavarians charted their own course. In the months following the Austro-Prussian War, Bavaria's existing muzzle-loading rifles were converted to breech-loaders and the war ministry, opposed to the introduction of the needle gun, began its search for a more modern rifle. Bavaria, along with Württemberg, was also determined to preserve its control over military education. Stuttgart's war college was reformed according to the Prussian model, thereby enabling Württemberg's officers to receive their training close to home and their families. Meanwhile, in neighbouring Bavaria, the curriculum for officer candidates was revised and a new war academy founded in Munich in the fall of 1867.⁴⁸

Despite these divergent paths, Bavarian Minister-President Hohenlohe proposed a second military conference of the South German states in the spring of 1867. Once again, enthusiasm was lacking. Baden's initial reluctance to accept the Bavarian invitation was only overcome by Bismarck, who had few illusions that Prussia could reach an understanding with Munich and Stuttgart in the near future. Bismarck therefore hoped that Baden could push the two South German kingdoms in the desired direction.⁴⁹ Finally, at the beginning of December 1867, the war ministers of Baden, Bavaria, and Württemberg met in Munich. The results of the four-day conference were unimpressive. The three ministers discussed the need to raise the

⁴⁸ Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 50-1.

⁴⁹ Richard von Könneritz, Saxon envoy in Munich, to the Saxon foreign ministry, May 27, 1867, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 3286; Flemming to Bismarck, November 29, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555.

active strength of their armies to one percent of the population, but no progress was made towards a common armament and vague commitments were given concerning the designations and insignia for their soldiers. There was “no indication at all,” one observer acidly remarked, that the conference produced anything “of practical value.”⁵⁰

Mindful that cooperation between the Prussian and South German armies would be crucial in a future war with France, Moltke worked to build upon the shaky foundations of the Stuttgart and Munich conferences. In the spring of 1867, the chief of the Bavarian general staff, General Max von Bothmer, visited Berlin. In meetings with Moltke and representatives of the Prussian war ministry, Bothmer discussed the possibility of integrating the mobilization and concentration plans of the Bavarian and North German armies. Moltke was disappointed by the state of Bavarian war planning. It would take four weeks for the Bavarian army to mobilize and an additional fourteen days to deploy to western Germany. Because the Württembergers, together with the Bavarians, would form the left flank of the Prusso-German armies, the former would be on their own during the first battles. In order to accelerate Bavaria’s mobilization, Moltke promised to make Prussian staff officers available to Bothmer. There was also a political dimension to the Bavarian chief of staff’s visit to Berlin. Bismarck, who met with Bothmer in early May, suggested that a military convention with Prussia could bring Bavaria out of its isolation and further the progress of military reform in the South German kingdom. Hohenlohe remained staunchly opposed to closer relations with the North. Having received

⁵⁰ Ferdinand von Trauttmannsdorff-Weinsberg, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Munich, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, December 6, 1867, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA IV Bayern, box 37-1. See also Major von Grolman to the Prussian ministry of war, December 4, 1867, PA AA Berlin, R 19555; Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 51-2.

assurances from Minister-President Varnbüler that Württemberg would not pursue a more comprehensive military agreement with Berlin, Hohenlohe declined Bismarck's offer.⁵¹

Two considerations shaped Hohenlohe's and Varnbüler's attitudes. First, both were convinced that the integration of the armies of northern and southern Germany would unnecessarily provoke France. When Bismarck suggested transforming the Prussian military convention with Baden into a more extensive agreement in the spring of 1867, Hohenlohe hastened to warn Berlin that such a move would surely result in war. These fears did not disappear with the peaceful resolution of the Luxemburg crisis. In early October 1868, the British envoy to Bavaria observed that Hohenlohe "lived in dread" of an expanded military convention between Baden and Prussia; he above all feared, "and I believe not without reason, that France might be disposed to consider it as a *Casus belli*." As a result, Hohenlohe had tirelessly worked to include Baden in his plans.⁵² Second, and unlike the Grand Duke of Baden, the Kings of Bavaria and Württemberg saw little reason to relinquish their military rights in the years after the Austro-Prussian War. The power to appoint officers was perhaps the most important of these rights. In February 1868, Friedrich I of Baden appointed General Gustav von Beyer, the Prussian military plenipotentiary in Karlsruhe, as the grand duchy's war minister. King Karl of Württemberg was furious. Not only was the appointment a "vote of no confidence" in the military abilities of Baden's officers, but Beyer's new position placed the grand duke in a difficult situation. As a "subordinate and subject," King Karl fumed, a

⁵¹ Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 43-4. See also Howard to the British Foreign Office, April 30, 1867, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 181. For Bothmer's meeting with Bismarck, see Bothmer to Prankh, May 10, 1867, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 65972.

⁵² Howard to the British Foreign Office, May 7, 1867, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 182; Howard to the British Foreign Office, October 10, 1868, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 189. See also Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 599.

Badenese officer could be dismissed by Friedrich “at any time” and without any thought for the wishes of another monarch. The same was not true with a Prussian general. Even foreign observers recognized the significance of the grand duke’s decision. It would perhaps be better, France’s envoy in Karlsruhe caustically wrote, for the Badenese to stop deluding themselves of their military independence and simply “relocate the war ministry to Berlin.”⁵³

Further discussions over military cooperation in a future war therefore did not occur until 1868. In May, Moltke shared the Prussian operations plan for a campaign against France with Suckow, now the adjutant to the Württemberg war minister, and the Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin. Moltke revealed Prussia’s plan to launch a large-scale offensive against France immediately after the completion of mobilization. Because the South German armies, together with two Prussian corps, would form the left flank of this offensive, their troops would have to reach the frontier no later than three weeks following the outbreak of war. Bothmer, the Bavarian chief of staff, had already made it clear to the Prussians in the spring of 1867 that military preparations in southern Germany left much to be desired. Moltke therefore recommended that the general staffs in Munich and Stuttgart work together in order to improve their mobilizations.⁵⁴ The principal result of these discussions was the conference of South German chiefs of staff in Karlsruhe in late June 1868. Over two days of discussions, Bothmer, Suckow, and Baden’s general staff chief, who, like the war minister, was a Prussian, reached an agreement to begin work on a common mobilization plan for the three South

⁵³ Eduard Riederer von Paar zu Schönau, Bavarian envoy in Karlsruhe, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, February 13, 1868, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2047. For King Karl of Württemberg’s views on Beyer’s appointment as Badenese war minister, see Rosenberg to Bismarck, February 24, 1868, with a report by Carl von Dönhoff, secretary in the Prussian legation, February 23, 1868, PA AA Berlin, R 2614.

⁵⁴ Moltke’s notes from the conference with Major von Freyberg, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, on May 13, 1868, composed on May 14, 1868, PA AA Berlin, R 19559.

German armies. In order to guarantee that the assembling troops would have access to the necessary supplies and support services, the three southern states agreed to establish hospitals and magazines in peacetime. Moreover, the railways and rolling stock of the South German states would be placed at the disposal of the Prussian General Staff in the event of war.⁵⁵

Over the following months, representatives of the three South German and Prussian general staffs met several times. Moltke could therefore breathe a sigh of relief that steps had finally been taken towards common German military preparations. There was still palpable hostility to permanent military cooperation in the southern capitals, however. In November 1868, Hohenlohe expressed his views concerning the staff conferences to the Bavarian war minister. Although he believed that the conferences were absolutely necessary for the security of South Germany against France, they should remain informal, private discussions. Under no circumstances would Hohenlohe permit the emergence of a permanent military commission containing representatives of North and South and whose deliberations might only create a sensation in the press, thereby causing embarrassment for the Bavarian government.⁵⁶ Fearing France's reaction to closer military cooperation between Prussia and the South German states and faced with Ludwig II's stubborn refusal to relinquish his military powers, Hohenlohe had little choice other than to continue to plot a course between autonomy and integration.

⁵⁵ Protocol of the conference between the representatives of Bavaria, Baden, and Württemberg, June 25, 1868, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 271c, file 2896. See also Moltke to Suckow, June 29, 1868, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 271c, file 2896; Captain von Lepel, Prussian military plenipotentiary in Karlsruhe, to the Prussian ministry of war, June 30, 1868, PA AA Berlin, R 19561. See also Wilhelm, *Das Verhältnis der süddeutschen Staaten zum Norddeutschen Bund*, 113-16.

⁵⁶ Hohenlohe to Pranckh, November 23, 1868, Pranckh to Hohenlohe, December 1, 1868, and Pranckh to Hohenlohe, December 11, 1868, with Pranckh's instructions to Bothmer, December 11, 1868, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 24672. For the tensions between the minister-president and war minister, see also Colonel von Leszczynski, Baden's chief of staff, to Moltke, November 25, 1868, PA AA Berlin, R 19561; Damian von Ingelheim, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Munich, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, December 4, 1868, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA IV Bayern, box 38.

By the spring of 1870, progress had been made towards the integration of non-Prussians into the Prussian military system. This was most apparent in Saxony. In July 1868, the Prussian legation in Dresden reported that two Saxon officers had recently been assigned to Berlin in order to familiarize themselves with Prussian organization and regulations. These two officers had departed Saxony with the “firmest prejudices” against their northern neighbours, but had returned with dramatically changed attitudes. One month later, Prussia’s representative again remarked on the mood in the Saxon officer corps. Although some officers longed “for a return of the old casualness” of military service before 1866, the conviction had increasingly gained ground that “the Saxon army’s salvation depends on the closest possible convergence with the Prussian army.”⁵⁷ By contrast, much of South Germany remained beyond the control of King Wilhelm, at least in peacetime. Of course, Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt had drawn closer to Berlin in the months after Königgrätz. Yet the two largest South German states, Bavaria and Württemberg, remained unwilling to sign military conventions with Prussia. The defensive alliances with Munich and Stuttgart and the commitments made by the two governments at Stuttgart and Munich had eliminated some of the most glaring deficiencies in the South’s “coalition” army. That still more needed to be done to ensure the reliability of the southern Germans in a future war was clear in the spring of 1868. Catholic recruits in rural Bavaria protesting the introduction of Pränckh’s military law had refused to swear the oath of allegiance and shouted: “we don’t want to be Lutherans, we don’t want to be Prussians!” Eight hundred recruits had to be formed into a punishment battalion and sent to Ingolstadt.⁵⁸ When

⁵⁷ Friedrich von Alvensleben, secretary in the Prussian legation in Dresden, to Thile, July 12 and August 4, 1868, PA AA Berlin, R 3192.

⁵⁸ Grolman to the Prussian ministry of war, April 21, 1868, PA AA Berlin, R 2700.

the Franco-Prussian War erupted in the summer of 1870, neither the Prussians nor the South Germans marched into battle with full confidence in their newfound comrades.

The Franco-Prussian War and the creation of the German army, 1870-1

In the summer of 1870, the conflict that had simmered between France and Prussia since the Austro-Prussian War reached a boiling point. Two years earlier, revolution had toppled Queen Isabella II of Spain from her throne. In the search for her replacement, the Spanish provisional government looked to the fertile dynastic ground of Germany, which had routinely furnished Europe's vacant thrones with new sovereigns throughout the nineteenth century. In February 1870, following tentative discussions with Bismarck, Spanish officials offered the crown to Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, a member of the Catholic branch of the Prussian ruling house. The prince, despite an initial lack of enthusiasm, accepted. The accession of a Hohenzollern to the throne of Spain sparked a crisis between Berlin and Paris in the summer of 1870. After the French ambassador clumsily insisted that Prussia's King Wilhelm personally assure Napoleon III that Prince Leopold would never again seek the Spanish throne, Bismarck edited and made public the famous "Ems dispatch," thereby inciting outrage in the French capital.⁵⁹ On July 15, the French chamber of deputies approved war credits. Four days later, France declared war on Prussia. Within a few weeks, over one million men had reported to barracks across Germany and 500,000 had been transported by rail to the French frontier. The British envoy described the scene in Dresden at the end of July: "regiment after regiment

⁵⁹ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars of German Unification*, 183-203; Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification*, 451-69; Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 230-9.

follow one another now in quick succession” and “in a short time the whole Saxon army will be concentrated in the South.” The departure of the Saxon XII Army Corps, he wrote, had been accompanied by the “greatest enthusiasm” from the city’s inhabitants.⁶⁰

As a member of the North German Confederation, Saxony had little choice but to join the war. Hesse-Darmstadt’s precarious situation likewise presented its ruler with an obvious, though unpleasant, decision. Pro-Prussian sympathies in Karlsruhe all but guaranteed that Badenese troops would also be mobilized against France. By contrast, the attitudes of Bavaria and Württemberg caused Bismarck a few anxious moments. In the end, both kingdoms joined the war. On July 17, 1870, King Karl of Württemberg ordered mobilization and, five days later, the parliament approved war credits. Only one deputy dissented. Although several members of the Bavarian government had initially favoured neutrality, the minister of war, enjoying the support of King Ludwig II, pressed for mobilization. On July 20, Bavaria agreed to honour its defensive alliance with Prussia.⁶¹ In Munich and Stuttgart, as in Darmstadt and Karlsruhe, there appeared to be no feasible alternative to war. The South German governments were frightened by the consequences of diplomatic isolation and conscious of their own military weaknesses. In Württemberg, these considerations resulted in desperate overtures for Prussian support in late July. Before the war, many of the kingdom’s junior officers had expressed their preference to be led by a Prussian general in a future campaign. Suckow, who was appointed minister of war on July 19, agreed. Shortly after the outbreak of war and with King Karl’s approval, he

⁶⁰ Joseph Hume Burnley, British envoy in Dresden, to the British Foreign Office, July 29, 1870, TNA Kew, FO 68, file 151. For the Prusso-German mobilization in the summer of 1870, see Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870-1871* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 57-60; Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 245-50.

⁶¹ Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification*, 490-1.

requested a Prussian commander for the Württemberg division. Württembergers, Suckow argued, could never defend their kingdom's borders by themselves against the anticipated French invasion and, since the Prussians would not consent to placing their troops under a South German commander, such a request was unavoidable. The Prussians were happy to oblige. There was only one condition: the Württembergers, especially the older officers, must not cause the Prussian general any trouble.⁶²

As the British envoy in Stuttgart noted, Suckow's request had been made "in the absence of any suggestion on the part of the Prussian government."⁶³ This unilateral request would return to haunt the Württemberg court in the decades after unification. Yet, in the summer of 1870, the dismal performance of the South German troops in the Austro-Prussian War was still fresh in the minds of many Württemberg officers, while the painfully slow progress of military reform in the South only fuelled concerns that Prussia would have to shoulder much of the burden against France. As a result, there could be no question that the commanders of the three armies assembling on the Franco-German frontier would be Prussians. All three were veterans of the campaign in Bohemia. Prince Friedrich Karl's Second Army, consisting of seven corps, including the Saxon XII Army Corps, was the largest of the three. The seventy-four year old General Karl von Steinmetz took over the much smaller First Army and its three corps. Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, the "victor of Königgrätz," commanded the Third Army. With two Bavarian corps and the Badenese and Württemberg

⁶² Suckow to Baumbach, July 18, 1870, and Faber du Faur to Suckow, July 19, 1870, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 271c, file 949. For the preference of Württemberg officers for a Prussian commander in wartime, see Chotek to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, January 2, 1868, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 32-1.

⁶³ Gordon to the British Foreign Office, July 26, 1870, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 145.

divisions under his command, Friedrich Wilhelm's task was the most politically sensitive.⁶⁴ He therefore delayed taking up his new command in order to visit the South German courts in late July. During his travels, the widespread enthusiasm for the war beyond Prussia's borders astonished the crown prince. Passing through Leipzig on his way to Munich, he marvelled at the "enthusiastic cheering" that greeted "the commander of the South German army" at every railway station. "Who would have ever previously thought," he later wrote, "that Bavarians or Saxons would so boisterously welcome a Prussian prince!"⁶⁵

The excitement across Germany and the warm reception that he received in Karlsruhe, Munich, and Stuttgart made a deep impression on the crown prince. He nevertheless retained doubts about the reliability of the soldiers under his command. Having learned in mid-July that he would lead the Third Army, Friedrich Wilhelm lamented that he had been given "the most difficult assignment of all." The South Germans, he wrote, had little affection for their northern neighbours and, more importantly, had not been trained "in our school." It was regrettable that fate had chosen him to command such an "unreliable army" that was better suited to a reserve or supporting role.⁶⁶ But the Third Army was not destined to linger on the flanks or to the rear of the other two armies. In early August, Friedrich Wilhelm's troops crossed the border into

⁶⁴ Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 60-1; Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 250-1.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm's diary entry entries for July 20 and 26, 1870, in *Kaiser Friedrich III. Das Kriegstagebuch von 1870/71*, ed. Heinrich Otto Meisner (Berlin: K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1926), 7-10. See also Howard to the British Foreign Office, July 28, 1870, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 202; Gordon to the British Foreign Office, July 30, 1870, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 145.

⁶⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm's diary entries for July 16 and 24, in Meisner, *Kaiser Friedrich III. Das Kriegstagebuch von 1870/71*, 5, 8-9. Although less critical of the South Germans, the Third Army's chief of staff, General Leonhard von Blumenthal, admitted that the crown prince had been given the "most difficult assignment" of the three army commanders. Blumenthal's diary entry for July 22, 1870, in *Tagebücher des Generalfeldmarschalls Graf von Blumenthal aus den Jahren 1866 und 1870/71*, ed. Albrecht von Blumenthal (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1902), 63-4.

Table 1 – The Prusso-German armies, August 1870⁶⁷

| | North German Confederation ^a | Bavaria | Württemberg | Baden | Total |
|---|---|---------|-------------|--------|-----------|
| Infantry battalions | 396 | 50 | 15 | 13 | 474 |
| Cavalry squadrons | 320 | 40 | 10 | 12 | 382 |
| Artillery batteries | 214 | 32 | 9 | 9 | 264 |
| Strength of the field armies | 433,600 | 55,500 | 16,500 | 13,500 | 519,100 |
| Number of artillery pieces | 1,284 | 192 | 54 | 54 | 1,584 |
| Total mobilized strength^b | 982,064 | 128,964 | 37,180 | 35,181 | 1,183,389 |
| % of total mobilized strength | 83.0 | 10.9 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 100.0 |

^a Including Hesse-Darmstadt, whose contingent formed the 25th (Grand Ducal Hessian) Division of the North German army

^b Combined strength of the field armies, rear-area formations, and replacement units

⁶⁷ Kriegsgeschichtliche Abteilung des Großen Generalstabes, *Der deutsch-französische Krieg 1870-71. Erster Teil. Geschichte des Krieges bis zum Sturz des Kaiserreichs* (Berlin: E.S Mittler, 1874), 1:67.

Alsace. Within days, the Prussians and South Germans ran into stubborn French resistance. These encounters seemed to confirm the poor opinions of Prussian officers for their southern comrades. Because the ranks of General Ludwig von der Tann's I Bavarian Army Corps had been so depleted by stragglers in the preceding days, Friedrich Wilhelm was compelled to keep its remaining soldiers in reserve during the Battle of Weissenburg on August 4, 1870. Two days later, during the Battle of Wörth, Tann's reluctance to advance elicited an uncharacteristic display of anger from the crown prince. After three couriers failed to persuade the Bavarian to move forward, Friedrich Wilhelm lost patience. In a tersely written message, he ordered Tann, "in the name of His Majesty the King of Bavaria" to attack, "without further delay."⁶⁸

Despite these inauspicious beginnings, Prussian officers, including Friedrich Wilhelm, developed a grudging respect for their South German comrades. On September 1, 1870, both Bavarian corps played a crucial role during the Battle of Sedan. For much of the day, the Bavarians pinned down French forces around the village of Bazeilles, allowing neighbouring Prussians and Saxons to envelop the enemy's flanks. The battle was a decisive German victory: 100,000 French soldiers, along with Emperor Napoleon III, became prisoners of war the next morning.⁶⁹ The other non-Prussian contingents likewise fared well. Two weeks before the Battle of Sedan, the Saxons had rescued the Prussian Guard Corps – and Friedrich Karl's entire Second Army – from its desperate situation in front of the town of St. Privat. After a frontal assault had led to 8,000 Prussian casualties in less than half an hour, the Saxons skillfully

⁶⁸ Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 252-4; Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 95-107, 121-37.

⁶⁹ Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 208-23; Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 279-84. For the treatment of the inhabitants of Bazeilles, several of whom were executed after picking up arms and joining the fighting, and the French civilian population more generally by the Bavarians during the Franco-Prussian War, see Mark R. Stoneman, "The Bavarian Army and French Civilians in the War of 1870-1871: A Cultural Interpretation," *War in History* 8 (2001), 271-93.

deployed against the enemy's right flank, forcing the French army to retreat. Having played a supporting role in the first months of the war, the Württembergers had to wait until the Siege of Paris to distinguish themselves. When, in late November 1870, the French garrison launched a desperate attempt to break out of the capital, the South Germans, heavily outnumbered and suffering from the bitter cold, clung to their positions around Champigny and Villiers for three days. The father of one Stuttgart family, a colonel, was mortally wounded in the fighting, while one of his sons was killed and another seriously wounded. When reports of the heavy casualties reached the royal palace, King Karl of Württemberg burst into tears.⁷⁰

While many, like the King of Württemberg, regretted the human cost, the victories of the armies in France aroused patriotic sentiment across Germany. This popular enthusiasm appeared to point to only one possible outcome to the war: unification. Three days before the dramatic events at Sedan, Baden's foreign minister, Freydtorf, circulated a memorandum to the grand duchy's diplomats that outlined the future structure of Germany. Because of its people's insatiable desire for glory, France represented a constant and existential danger to the German states. The entire left bank of the Rhine, comprising Alsace and German-speaking Lorraine, would have to be annexed in order to create a defensive barrier in the West. The war would also have to lead to the creation of a united Germany, either through the entrance of the South German states into the North German Confederation or through the formation of a "new, narrower confederation with a strong central administration and parliament." Concessions could be made to the largest states, but German unity would have to be ensured through the

⁷⁰ As reported in Rosenberg to King Wilhelm I, December 20, 1870, PA AA Berlin, R 3352. For the role of the Saxon XII Army Corps at the Battle of St. Privat and the stubborn resistance of the Württemberg division at Champigny-Villiers, see Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 167-82, 340-7; Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 270-2, 310; Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 169-85, 276-8.

existence of a common executive, perhaps an emperor.⁷¹ Saxony's foreign minister likewise believed that the present moment was favourable from a monarchical standpoint. Unlike in 1848, the national movement was not revolutionary. Germany's rulers therefore had no reason to fear that unification would deprive them of their thrones. On the contrary, there was every indication that, in the euphoria of victory, the population would accept a new political structure that preserved many of the existing rights of the smaller German dynasties.⁷²

The governments of Bavaria and Württemberg remained far more hesitant to commit themselves to unification. After the Battle of Sedan, both governments came to recognize that war would bring sweeping and irreversible changes to Germany's political structure. Yet neither the Bavarians nor Württembergers were willing to abandon their policies in the fall of 1870.⁷³ This position became clear at the end of September 1870 when Rudolf von Delbrück, Bismarck's chief aide, travelled to Munich for discussions with the South German ministers. Otto von Bray-Steinburg, who had replaced Hohenlohe as Bavaria's minister-president in the spring, and Hermann von Mittnacht, who had followed Varnbüler as Württemberg's leading minister only a few weeks earlier, sought to negotiate South Germany's unification with the North. The price for Prussia would be high, however. The Bavarians were willing to agree to a unified army in wartime and the creation of a national parliament. In return, the kingdom would retain its own military administration and prepare its own military budget. Bavaria

⁷¹ Freydlorf to Mohl, August 31, 1870, GLA Karlsruhe, Bestand 49, file 2009. The memorandum, written by Jolly, was also sent to Baden's envoy in Berlin. With the grand duke's permission, it was presented to Bismarck, who characteristically gave an evasive reply. Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 696-7.

⁷² Friesen to Könneritz, September 10, 1870, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10722, file 78.

⁷³ Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 697-711. As early as mid-September 1870, Suckow had travelled to the King of Prussia's headquarters in France to hold preliminary negotiations for Württemberg's entrance into the North German Confederation. Gordon to the British Foreign Office, September 19, 1870, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 146.

would also continue to send its own diplomats abroad and the government in Munich would control the postal and telegraph networks and the railway system. Finally, the North German Confederation would have to be dissolved and a new constitutional relationship negotiated between the northern and southern states. King Ludwig II's behavior added weight to these demands: he avoided Munich throughout the conference, and when he received Delbrück at his castle on the shore of Lake Starnberg, he refused to even discuss unification.⁷⁴

Bavaria's minister had made a crucial mistake during the Munich conferences: he overestimated the strength of his kingdom's position. Returning from holiday in early October, Bray was greeted with letters from across Germany expressing hope that the recent discussions with Prussia would lead to unification. This outpouring of enthusiasm made little impression on him. At the end of a victorious war, he refused to contemplate Bavaria's entrance into the North German Confederation on the same humiliating terms as Saxony in 1866. Even if the Bavarian government could accept such terms, Bray's hands were tied by King Ludwig II's uncompromising attitude towards his sovereign powers. It was therefore important for the two South German kingdoms to cooperate in order to extract the greatest possible concessions from Berlin.⁷⁵ Like Bray, Württemberg's government was under considerable pressure to negotiate an agreement that would preserve the kingdom's independence as much as possible. Before Mitnacht departed for Munich in late September, one member of the parliament's pro-Austrian faction had warned him against sacrificing the King of Württemberg's rights in the name of

⁷⁴ Howard to the British Foreign Office, September 28, 1870, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 203; Soden to the Württemberg foreign ministry, September 30, 1870, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 51, file 137. For the Munich conferences more generally, see Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 711-16; Karl Bosl, "Die Verhandlungen über den Eintritt der süddeutschen Staaten in den Norddeutschen Bund und die Entstehung der Reichsverfassung," in *Reichsgründung 1870/71. Tatsachen, Kontroversen, Interpretationen*, ed. Theodor Schieder and Ernst Dauerlein (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1970), 156-7.

⁷⁵ Soden to the Württemberg foreign ministry, October 8, 1870, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 51, file 138.

unification: if he did, the public could not be expected to maintain “what would then be the farce of a sovereign and the cost of a civil list for the sake of being what is termed second class Prussians, when by getting rid of such burdens they might become real Prussians.”⁷⁶ Despite having similar objectives, Württemberg’s government learned of Delbrück’s visit at the last minute, and Mittnacht only secured an invitation to the conference with the help of the Prussian and Württemberg envoys. Moreover, after he arrived in Munich, the Württemberg minister was presented with Bavarian proposals that reflected that kingdom’s lack of regard for its neighbour’s interests. Mittnacht was indignant. Instead of a common South German front against Prussia, there was “much talk of Bavaria’s special rights.”⁷⁷

The lack of coordination between Munich and Stuttgart enabled Bismarck to negotiate separately with the South German states. Rejecting Bray’s demand that the North German Confederation be dissolved and a new constitutional arrangement reached between North and South, Bismarck first reached out to Karlsruhe in late September 1870. Baden’s ministers eagerly accepted an invitation to the King of Prussia’s headquarters at Versailles and, once there, were quickly joined by Mittnacht and Suckow. Faced with no choice, Bray travelled to join the other South German ministers in late October. Over the following weeks, the contours of an agreement with Bavaria emerged and, on November 23, Bray signed the “federal treaty.”⁷⁸ Bavaria entered into an “eternal association” with the North German Confederation. In return for accepting the confederation’s existing constitution, Bavaria was exempted from

⁷⁶ Gordon to the British Foreign Office, September 29, 1870, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 146.

⁷⁷ Ferdinand von Dusch, Baden’s envoy in Stuttgart, to Freydorf, October 5, 1870, GLA Karlsruhe, Bestand 49, file 58; Mittnacht to the Württemberg foreign ministry, November 8, 1870, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 51, file 139.

⁷⁸ Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 717-22, 750-64.

many of its provisions. The most far-reaching exemptions concerned military affairs. The Bavarian army was henceforth recognized as “a self-contained component of the federal army” under the command of the King of Bavaria in peacetime. Unlike in Saxony, Bavaria’s war ministry retained complete control over personnel matters and the Bavarian parliament determined the military budget, though not the total amount of military expenditures for each year. There were, however, a number of concessions to the principle of centrality of command. The Bavarian army would be reorganized and trained along Prussian lines and a common mobilization plan would be worked out with the Prussian General Staff in Berlin. In order to ensure that the Bavarians fulfilled their obligations, the King of Prussia, as *Bundesfeldherr*, was granted the “duty and the right” to periodically inspect the Bavarian contingent. Finally, because command of the Bavarians would pass to the *Bundesfeldherr* following the outbreak of war, the kingdom’s soldiers would swear an oath of allegiance to the King of Prussia.⁷⁹

The discussions between Bismarck and Württemberg’s representatives had initially progressed much more rapidly than those with Bavaria. However, Württemberg’s inability to cooperate with the Bavarians enabled Bismarck to limit concessions to the smaller of the two South German kingdoms. Annoyed that Bavaria was on the verge of acquiring a privileged position in the new Germany, King Karl suddenly instructed his representatives in mid-November 1870 to secure similar rights for Württemberg. Mittnacht and Suckow were forced to hurry back to Stuttgart for instructions. One week later, and having convinced the king of the weakness of Württemberg’s position, the two ministers arrived in Berlin just in time to

⁷⁹ “Der Bundesvertrag betreffend den Beitritt Bayerns zur Verfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 23. November 1870,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:329-33. See also Campbell, “The Bavarian Army,” 53-5.

learn that the Bavarians had finalized the federal treaty at Versailles.⁸⁰ Compared to King Karl's lofty expectations, the resulting military convention was a disappointment. In many respects, it resembled the agreement that the Saxons had signed almost four years earlier. Württemberg's army would be reorganized as a Prussian-style army corps – the XIV, later XIII Army Corps – and its soldiers would continue to carry their own flags and wear their own insignia. Personnel matters would be handled by a separate ministry of war in Stuttgart, although, unlike in Saxony, only the commanding general's appointment required the approval of the *Bundesfeldherr*. Whereas Saxony's military convention included a vague promise to respect the peacetime garrisons of the XII Army Corps, the transfer of regiments into and out of Württemberg required the explicit approval of that kingdom's monarch. There were, however, other similarities with Saxony's convention. According to Article 4, soldiers from Württemberg were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the *Bundesfeldherr*, while Article 8 foresaw the temporary transfer of officers between Prussia and the South German kingdom. Lastly, as in both Bavaria and Saxony, the *Bundesfeldherr* possessed the right to inspect the Württemberg contingent, either in person or through a representative.⁸¹

The military convention with Württemberg set the stage for the final act of German unification. During the negotiations at Versailles, Bismarck had made it clear to Bray and the other Bavarian representatives that there would be a price attached to the concessions in the federal treaty: King Ludwig II would have to consent to the creation of a hereditary imperial

⁸⁰ Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 733-6, 764-7. For the expectation in early November that Bavarian intransigence would delay the completion of unification, see Baden's foreign ministry to Mohl, November 7, 1870, GLA Karlsruhe, Bestand 49, file 58.

⁸¹ "Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bunde und Württemberg vom 21./25. November 1870," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:339-42. See also Walker, "Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire," 32-5.

title for the House of Hohenzollern. Bismarck believed that such a title, with its historical connotations, would assuage the fears of Germany's sovereigns and their populations about Prussia's dominating position in the new empire. Recalling Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV's rejection of the "imaginary crown baked from mud and clay" offered to him by the Frankfurt Parliament in 1849, Bismarck also insisted that the King of Bavaria, the staunchest opponent of a Prussian-dominated "little Germany," personally invite Wilhelm I to assume the Kaiser's crown on behalf of his fellow rulers. In this way, an agreement between monarchs, not an initiative of a liberal-minded parliament, would pave the way for the creation of the imperial monarchy. Graft soon overcame Ludwig II's lack of enthusiasm. In late November 1870, the king's Master of the Horse and trusted confidante, Max von Holnstein, travelled to Versailles. After negotiating an annual payment of 300,000 Marks from the secret "Guelph Fund" for his sovereign, Holnstein returned to Munich with the *Kaiserbrief*, a letter drafted by Bismarck inviting King Wilhelm to assume the imperial crown. At the beginning of December, Prince Luitpold of Bavaria, Ludwig II's uncle, personally delivered the letter, now furnished with the Bavarian monarch's signature, to the King of Prussia. Six weeks later, King Wilhelm I was proclaimed German Kaiser in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.⁸²

The boundaries of the German empire and the political institutions that would govern its inhabitants were finalized over the following months. In late February 1871, Bismarck and the representatives of the French assembly in Bordeaux signed the peace preliminaries at Versailles and, in early May, the Treaty of Frankfurt brought an end to the Franco-Prussian

⁸² Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification*, 498-505. For Bismarck's negotiations with Holnstein, the payments from the Guelph Fund, and the delivery of the *Kaiserbrief*, see Dieter Albrecht, "König Ludwig II. von Bayern und Bismarck," *Historische Zeitschrift* 270 (2000), 49-60; Stewart A. Stehlin, "Bismarck and the Secret Use of the Guelph Fund," *The Historian* 33 (1970), 32-5.

War. In addition to imposing a crushing indemnity on France, almost all of Alsace and a large part of Lorraine were annexed by Germany. The *Reichsland* joined four kingdoms, six grand duchies, three free cities, and twelve smaller states in Bismarck's empire.⁸³ In April 1871, the Reichstag, or imperial parliament, approved the empire's constitution. Prussia, as the largest and most populous of the federal states and the driving force behind unification, enjoyed a dominating political position. The King of Prussia, as Kaiser, appointed the chancellor and convened the Reichstag. Neither the Reichstag nor the federal council, or Bundesrat, was destined to become a genuine decision-making body, however. The Reichstag, whose 397 deputies were elected on the basis of universal male suffrage, exercised important, though carefully circumscribed, powers. The most important of these powers was the power of the purse, which the deputies also exercised over the expenditures for the army and navy. The Bundesrat, by contrast, consisted of representatives appointed by the state governments. Yet, without a bureaucracy of its own, the federal council was entirely dependent on the Prussian ministries to draft legislation, while Prussia's delegation, wielding seventeen of fifty-eight votes, possessed a veto over changes to the imperial constitution. After 1871, the real centres of power in the German empire remained Prussia and the Hohenzollern monarchy.⁸⁴

Prussia at the same time possessed a hegemonic position in military affairs. Article 63 of the imperial constitution defined the "entire land forces of the empire" as a "unified army

⁸³ Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 300-5. For the background to the peace negotiations, including the elections to the assembly in Bordeaux, and the lengthy discussions between Bismarck and the French representatives, see Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 432-53.

⁸⁴ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "A delaying compromise: The division of authority in the German imperial constitution of 1871," in Mommsen, *Imperial Germany 1867-1918: Politics, Culture, and Society in an Authoritarian State*, trans. Richard Deveson (London: Arnold, 1997), 20-40. For the provisions of the imperial constitution of April 1871, see "Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:384-402. Only fourteen votes were required to block changes to the imperial constitution in the *Bundesrat*.

which remains under the orders of the Kaiser in war and peace.” Although the agreements with Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg nullified or superseded many of the constitution’s articles, they also acknowledged the superiority of Prussia’s military system and the supreme command of the Kaiser, at least in wartime.⁸⁵ However, no national military institutions equivalent to the Bundesrat or Reichstag were created in 1871. Responsibility for maintaining the connection between the German army’s contingents instead rested, like it had between 1867 and 1870, with military plenipotentiaries. The number of these officers decreased following the Franco-Prussian War. Because Baden’s army ceased to exist as an independent force, Prussia saw little reason to station an officer in Karlsruhe. While the Prussian officer in Stuttgart was also withdrawn, Württemberg, alongside Bavaria and Saxony, continued to maintain a military plenipotentiary in Berlin. Unlike their colleagues attached to German embassies abroad, these officers were not subordinated to the resident diplomats and sent their reports directly to their war ministries. Prussia’s officer in Munich was the exception. Downgraded to an attaché, his reports were routinely read by the Prussian envoy before being transmitted to Berlin.⁸⁶

The non-Prussian military plenipotentiaries in Berlin and the Prussian military attachés in Munich were the glue that bound together the German army’s contingents. They kept their

⁸⁵ Article 63, “Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:399. According to Part Three, Article 5, Subsection III, Bavaria’s contingent, which enjoyed the most autonomy within the German army, stood under the orders of the Kaiser following the declaration of mobilization. “Der Bundesvertrag betreffend den Beitritt Bayerns zur Verfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 23. November 1870,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:331.

⁸⁶ Meisner, *Militärattachés und Militärbevollmächtigte in Preußen und im Deutschen Reich*, 47-8. For the relationships between the non-Prussian military plenipotentiaries in Berlin and the Prussian military attachés in Munich on the one hand and their civilian counterparts on the other, see, for example, the instructions sent by the Bavarian foreign ministry to Maximilian von Pergler von Perglas, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, March 18, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, Bayerische Gesandtschaft Berlin 1007; General Paul Bronsart von Schellendorff, Prussian war minister, to Major Ludwig von Wildenbruch, the newly appointed Prussian military attaché in Munich, October 23, 1885, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, III. Hauptabteilung MdA, Rep. I, file 2427.

governments informed on a range of military-political issues, such as the implementation of Prussian training standards in Bavaria and the latest outbursts of Kaiser Wilhelm II, and acted as the primary channels of communication between the Prussian and non-Prussian military authorities. The Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg officers in Berlin were also expected to remain vigilant against any Prussian attempts to weaken the military authority of their monarchs.⁸⁷ Because of their important role in the German army's structure, candidates for these positions needed to check a number of boxes. As the Bavarian minister of war told Prussia's military attaché in the autumn of 1884, Colonel Emil von Xylander was the perfect choice to replace his elder brother as Bavaria's military plenipotentiary. Not only had the younger Xylander been attached to the General Staff between 1874 and 1876, he had more recently served for two years as a department chief in the Bavarian war ministry. As a result, he was familiar with military circumstances in North and South Germany. Xylander would need to establish contacts at court and among high-ranking Prussian officers. It therefore helped that he had converted to Protestantism before marrying the daughter of an English officer and that his personal wealth would allow him to lead an active social life in Berlin.⁸⁸

The dispatch of military representatives to Berlin had a symbolic, as well as practical, importance for the three non-Prussian kingdoms. Following the creation of the empire, these officers were a constant reminder that the German army was a federal institution and that the rulers of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg were permitted to exercise a degree of military

⁸⁷ Stahl, "Preußische Armee und Reichsheer," 232-3. For a detailed discussion of the activities of the Bavarian military plenipotentiaries in Berlin after 1871, see Campbell, "The Bavarian Army," 101-34.

⁸⁸ Colonel Oskar von Panwitz, Prussian military attaché in Munich, to the Prussian war ministry, October 14, 1884, PA AA Berlin, R 2739. For a similar assessment of the qualifications of the proposed Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, Major Georg von Schlieben, including the benefits of his marriage to an affluent woman from Hamburg, see Carl von Dönhoff, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to Bismarck, May 3, 1883, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, III. Hauptabteilung MdA, Rep. I, file 3805.

influence not enjoyed by Germany's lesser sovereigns. The Bavarians, presiding over the army's second-largest contingent, were particularly concerned with keeping up appearances in Berlin. Unlike the officers from Saxony and Württemberg, Bavaria's military plenipotentiary sat alongside his kingdom's envoy as a permanent member of the Bavarian delegation to the Bundesrat. Except for Prussia, no other federal state maintained more than one permanent delegate in the imperial capital. This distinction, the military plenipotentiary, General Ludwig von Gebsattel, argued in the fall of 1909, was hardly meaningless. If Bavaria, as its government was then considering, replaced the military plenipotentiary with the war minister, who would only rarely be able to attend the federal council's proceedings, this would be tantamount to abdicating Bavaria's special position in the empire and willingly placing the kingdom on the level of Saxony and Württemberg.⁸⁹ For Gebsattel, rank also mattered. When, less than two months later, it appeared possible that Dresden and Stuttgart might send higher ranking officers to Berlin, he again expressed concern: what would happen if Bavaria's military plenipotentiary was no longer the most senior non-Prussian officer in the imperial capital?⁹⁰

Not everyone was satisfied with this military hierarchy. In October 1870, Richard von Friesen, the Saxon foreign minister, had hoped that the negotiations with the South German states would lead to a restructuring of relations between Prussia and Saxony. These hopes were quickly dashed. Bismarck's unwillingness to dissolve the North German Confederation and

⁸⁹ General Ludwig von Gebsattel, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Bavarian war minister, October 4, 1909, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 42. Gebsattel's fears were soon realized. In 1911, the Bavarian government appointed the war minister as a permanent member of its delegation to the *Bundesrat* and demoted the military plenipotentiary to the status of a deputy member. Wilhelm Volkert, ed., *Handbuch der bayerischen Ämter, Gemeinden und Gerichte 1799-1980* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1983), 335.

⁹⁰ Gebsattel to the Bavarian war minister, November 21, 1909, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 42. Gebsattel's outspoken approach to his duties and his efforts to preserve Bavaria's special position within the empire through the office of the military plenipotentiary are discussed at length in Campbell, "The Bavarian Army," 134-42.

the inability of Bavaria and Württemberg to create a common front with which Saxony might have aligned itself meant that Saxony's relationship to Berlin remained unchanged. More humiliating were the concessions given to the two South German kingdoms. Shortly after the conclusion of the negotiations at Versailles, Prussia's envoy in Dresden wrote that, although the Saxons had enthusiastically welcomed unification, Bavaria's "preferential position" in the new empire had elicited "many painful feelings" in the kingdom.⁹¹ In the sphere of military affairs, the Saxons had a point. The federal treaty with Bavaria and the military conventions with Saxony and Württemberg granted these kingdoms varying degrees of authority over their armies, which became contingents in a larger German army. Bavaria, whose king exercised unrestricted control over his contingent in peacetime, was the most independent. Württemberg had also sold its independence at the highest possible price and, in doing so, received some of the same privileges that had been given to its South German neighbour. By contrast, and as a result of defeat and incorporation into the North German Confederation in 1867, the Saxons enjoyed the fewest privileges. This uneven distribution of military authority became one of the defining features of the German army's contingent-based structure after 1871.

Conclusion

In the four and a half years between the Battle of Königgrätz and the end of the Franco-Prussian War, the landscape of German-speaking Europe had been dramatically transformed. Austria's

⁹¹ Eichmann to Thile, December 9, 1870, PA AA Berlin, R 3194. For Friesen's expectations for the negotiations in Versailles, see Bosl, "Die Verhandlungen über den Eintritt der süddeutschen Staaten in den Norddeutschen Bund und die Entstehung der Reichsverfassung," 157-8.

defeat in 1866 had led to the dissolution of the German Confederation and the emergence of Prussia as the most likely leader of a unified Germany. The small and medium-sized states of the Third Germany attempted to make the best of a bad situation. Some, like the grand duchies of Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt, sought closer relations with Prussia for dynastic, geographic, or strategic reasons. Others, like the kingdoms of Bavaria and Württemberg, were determined to ensure the continued existence of their dynasties and the influence of their governments over German affairs, even if unification appeared almost unavoidable in light of the expansion of Prussian power. The kingdom of Saxony found itself in a far more precarious position in the summer of 1866. Occupied by the Prussians and compelled to enter the North German Confederation, the Saxon government had little room to manoeuvre in the decisive months after Königgrätz. However, wherever possible, the ministers in Dresden worked to preserve Saxony's remaining independence within a Prussian-dominated North Germany, often with success. In the political calculations of the three non-Prussian kingdoms, armies occupied an important place. The military reforms in Bavaria and Württemberg were not only intended to eliminate the glaring deficiencies in their armies, but to provide additional leverage in the event of unification. Meanwhile, the King of Saxony viewed his relationship to his soldiers as the most important means of safeguarding the kingdom's little remaining independence.

The course charted by Hohenlohe in Bavaria and Varnbüler in Württemberg after the Austro-Prussian War paid greater dividends. Rather than establishing Prussian dominance over the armies of the South German kingdoms, Bismarck employed the military convention with Saxony as a model throughout the negotiations at Versailles. Fearing that coercion would only increase particularism in southern Germany and aware that their sovereigns were reluctant to

relinquish control over their armies, Bismarck offered Bavaria and Württemberg concessions in the sphere of military affairs. As a result, and much to the disappointment of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm and Moltke, political unification eliminated few of the deficiencies that had plagued the armies of the German Confederation and its short-lived successor, the North German Confederation. The German army that emerged from the Wars of Unification was instead a compromise between a centralized army and a coalition force. In peacetime, the Kaiser, as *Bundesfeldherr*, guaranteed uniformity in equipment, organization, and training by carrying out periodic inspections of the army's three non-Prussian contingents. In wartime, the soldiers of these contingents were placed directly under his command. Yet the monarchs of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg continued to exercise varying degrees of influence over personnel decisions, the location of garrisons, and even the design of insignia and uniforms. As the German army found its footing in the following decades, the integration of the three non-Prussian armies into the Prussian military structure therefore routinely confronted the opposition of kings who clung tightly to their remaining authority. The resulting disputes could not easily be solved by imperial decrees. Compromise was still necessary after 1871.

Chapter Two

The limits of integration: Prussia and the South German contingents

In the fall of 1873, the Prussian military attaché in Munich, Major Hermann von Stülpnagel, concluded his report to Berlin with some intriguing news. Earlier in the year, two shipments of maps had arrived in Munich from the French general staff. These shipments, the attaché wrote, marked a renewal of co-operation between France and Bavaria following the war of 1870-1.¹ Stülpnagel's report set off alarm bells in Berlin. Because the Bavarians had soon afterwards dispatched their own shipment of maps to Paris, Bismarck sought the opinion of the chief of the General Staff. Moltke's response was surprising: the maps had not been produced by general staff officers and could be bought in bookstores on either side of the frontier. As a result, there was no reason to be concerned. In fact, Moltke thought that cooperation could have certain advantages: the Bavarians would thereby acquire the latest maps from France immediately after they were produced, and without cost.²

Neither Bismarck nor his foreign secretary, Bernhard Ernst von Bülow, was convinced by Moltke's arguments. Less than two weeks later, and having conferred with the chancellor, Bülow instructed Prussia's envoy in Munich to seek a "suitable opportunity" to approach the Bavarian government about the matter. Both the chancellor and foreign secretary firmly believed that the renewal of military co-operation between Bavaria and France so soon after the Franco-Prussian War might be "wrongly interpreted" in Paris and create an unfavourable

¹ Report written by Major Hermann von Stülpnagel, Prussian military attaché in Munich, November 7, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 2708.

² General Helmuth von Moltke, chief of the General Staff, to the office of the imperial chancellor, November 25, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 2708.

impression in the German public.³ Much to Bismarck's and Bülow's relief, the Prussian envoy was soon able to put these fears to rest. In a conversation with Bavaria's foreign minister, he learned that the Bavarians had only sent their own maps to Paris after the statistical office in Berlin had agreed to exchange economic information with the French government. The Bavarian authorities, the foreign minister lamented, were now faced with the "considerable embarrassment" of having to end the recently rekindled relationship.⁴

The exchange of maps between the Bavarian and French general staffs confirmed the limits that had been placed on Germany's military integration between 1867 and 1870. Even though the non-Prussian kings had agreed to introduce Prussian standards of organization, service, and training into their armies, they and their advisors retained considerable freedom of manoeuvre in military affairs. This was true of the empire more broadly. The imperial constitution created a framework for the integration of Germany's twenty-five constituent states. Article 4 placed control over the banking system, commerce, customs, railways, and the postal and telegraph services in the hands of the imperial government. In the 1870s, the Reichstag therefore introduced a common currency, system of weights and measures, and criminal justice code, while state secretaries were appointed to oversee imperial finances, foreign affairs, the navy, railways, the postal service, and justice.⁵ Still, Bismarck's empire was a federal institution. Education, police, and religious affairs remained the responsibilities of

³ Bernhard Ernst von Bülow, state secretary of the Foreign Office, to Georg von Werthern, Prussian envoy in Munich, December 5, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 2708. That Bülow disagreed with Moltke's narrowly military assessment of the renewed Franco-Bavarian relationship is clear from his letter to Bismarck's secretary, Lothar Bucher, December 1, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 2708.

⁴ Werthern to Bismarck, December 22, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 2708.

⁵ Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany. Volume II: The Period of Consolidation*, 149-53, 511-13. For Article 4 of the imperial constitution, see "Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:386-7.

the individual states whose governments were also empowered to collect and dispose of the income from direct taxes. Moreover, Bavaria and Württemberg enjoyed “reserve rights,” or *Reservatrechte*, which in effect limited Berlin’s authority in areas such as communication, transportation, and even diplomatic representation abroad. Even though many of these rights were, in the words of George Windell, “more symbolic than substantial,” they could provide state governments with leverage in their negotiations with Berlin. This was especially the case in financial affairs. Because indirect taxes often failed to cover the needs of the imperial budget, the chancellor and state secretaries were compelled to make significant concessions in return for *Matrikularbeiträge*, or financial contributions, from the state governments.⁶

The integration of previously independent states into the new empire was therefore gradual and incomplete. It was also uneven. Defeat and occupation had compelled Saxony’s Wettin dynasty to accept entrance into the North German Confederation as the best means of ensuring its survival in the aftermath of the Austro-Prussian War. In the decades after 1871, this same political realism dictated that the kingdom avoid unnecessary confrontations with

⁶ George G. Windell, “The Bismarckian Empire as a Federal State, 1866-1880: A Chronicle of Failure,” *Central European History* 2 (1969), 291-311. For the taxation powers of the state governments and the challenges that these posed for the Imperial Treasury Office, see Peter-Christian Witt, *Die Finanzpolitik des Deutschen Reiches von 1903 bis 1913. Eine Studie zur Innenpolitik des Wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Lübeck: Matthiesen Verlag, 1970). The distribution of powers between the imperial and state governments and its impact on Germany’s political development after 1871 have been extensively studied. See Richard Dietrich, “Foederalismus, Unitarismus oder Hegemonialstaat?” in *Zur Problematik “Preußen und das Reich,”* ed. Oswald Hauser (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1984), 49-81; Abigail Green, “How did German Federalism Shape Unification?” in *Germany’s Two Unifications: Anticipations, Experiences, Responses*, ed. Ronald Speirs and John Breuilly (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 122-38; Dieter Grimm, “Was the German Empire a Sovereign State?” in *Imperial Germany Revisited: Continuing Debates and New Perspectives*, ed. Sven Oliver Müller and Cornelius Torp (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 51-65; Dieter Langewiesche, “Föderativer Nationalismus als Erbe der deutschen Reichsnation. Über Föderalismus und Zentralismus in der deutschen Geschichte,” in *Föderative Nation. Deutschlandkonzepte von der Reformation bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Dieter Langewiesche and Georg Schmidt (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000), 215-42; Karl Möckl, “Reservatrechte und föderale Ordnung – Bayerns Rolle im Deutschen Kaiserreich von 1870/71,” in *Recht im Pluralismus. Festschrift für Walter Schmitt Glaeser zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans-Detlef Horn (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003), 295-304; Thomas Nipperdey, “Der Föderalismus in der deutschen Geschichte,” in Nipperdey, *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte. Essays* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1986), 60-109.

the imperial government. When Prince Friedrich Karl of Prussia, who had commanded the Saxon troops against France, undertook an inspection tour of the kingdom in the autumn of 1875, he was thus met with a warm reception from the members of the Saxon ruling house. Although “nobody expected it to be any different,” the Prussian envoy in Dresden wrote, the prince’s “friendly relations to the royal court, which were forged in the preceding few years, had continued to develop in the most encouraging manner.” When, one year later, Kaiser Wilhelm I attended the manoeuvres of the XII Army Corps near Leipzig, the same envoy was no less effusive in praising the eagerness of Saxon officers, including the minister of war, to impress their Prussian guests.⁷ The close relationship between Prussia and Saxony survived even into the reign of Wilhelm II. The enthusiasm that greeted the young Kaiser in Dresden in September 1889, Britain’s envoy wrote, was not only as proof of Wilhelm’s mastery “of the arts of popularity,” but also evidence of “the progressive extinction of regional sentiment under the growth of the German idea.” The conversation between Wilhelm II and the King Albert of Saxony, Bavaria’s envoy added, had been “extraordinarily sincere, jovial, and loose.”⁸

This deference shown to members of the House of Hohenzollern in part reflected insecurity regarding Saxony’s military position in the empire. Unlike the agreements with the two South German kingdoms, the Saxon military convention, signed in February 1867, was not referenced in the imperial constitution of April 1871. Making matters worse, the military convention pointed to articles in the North German constitution whose sequence and wording

⁷ Eberhard zu Solms-Sonnenwalde, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to Bismarck, September 1, 1875, PA AA Berlin, R 3197; Solms-Sonnenwalde to Bülow, September 8, 1876, PA AA Berlin, R 3199.

⁸ George Strachey, British envoy in Dresden, to the British Foreign Office, September 13, 1889, TNA Kew, FO 68, file 174; Friedrich von Niethammer, Bavarian envoy in Dresden, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, September 12, 1889, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2858.

had changed greatly by the time they went into effect in mid-1867.⁹ The weak constitutional foundations of its military convention encouraged Saxony's government to adopt a cautious approach. This caution was evident in the fall of 1903. During that year's army manoeuvres, Kaiser Wilhelm II had suggested to the Saxon military plenipotentiary that, in light of a surplus of officers in Saxony, certain changes could be made to the kingdom's military convention so that Saxons could serve as generals in the far larger Prussian contingent. Wilhelm II's remarks raised deep concerns in Dresden. Ever since the creation of a second Saxon corps – the XIX Army Corps – in early 1899, the Saxons had sought to avoid all discussion of the military convention with the authorities in Berlin. Article 7 of this agreement permitted the King of Saxony to present candidates for the position of commanding general of one army corps to the Kaiser. What would prevent Wilhelm II from demanding a monopoly over the appointment of the commander of the second Saxon corps during a renegotiation of the military convention, which, according to Saxony's war minister, was “riddled with holes”? King Georg agreed. It would be better, the elderly monarch wrote, to do nothing rather than to enter into discussions that could easily result in further limitations being placed on his military authority.¹⁰

Some of King Georg's fellow rulers felt that they stood on firmer ground. Having only reluctantly accepted unification, King Karl of Württemberg and King Ludwig II of Bavaria frequently and publically chafed at the authority of the imperial government. Their successors

⁹ See the footnotes to “Militär-Konvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bund und dem Königreich Sachsen vom 7. Februar 1867,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:292-4. See also the comparison of the military convention to the drafts and final version of the North German constitution by Saxony's envoy in Berlin, Hans von Könneritz, May 17/19, 1867, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11248, file 7587.

¹⁰ King Georg of Saxony to the Saxon war minister, General Max von Hausen, November 12, 1903, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 1032a. For the concerns of the Saxon military authorities, see the memorandum written by Hausen for King Georg, September 17, 1903, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 12693, file 33; Colonel Hans Krug von Nidda, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon war ministry, October 20, 1903, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 1032a.

were little different. In contrast to Prusso-Saxon relations, nowhere was this tension more apparent than in military affairs. Of course, attempts to standardize the German army were made in the years following the Franco-Prussian War. As early as February 1872, one observer wrote that the only remaining visible differences between the Bavarians and the rest of the army were those concerning uniforms and the armament of the artillery and infantry.¹¹ These changes elicited few concerns. After all, the standardization of equipment, organization, and training had been agreed upon between Prussia and the non-Prussian kingdoms during unification. The same indifference did not greet subsequent Prussian efforts to integrate non-Prussian soldiers more closely with their North German comrades. These efforts took several forms: the creation of imperial military structures in peacetime; the placing of Württemberg soldiers under Prussian command; and the drafting of a common military justice code for the empire. Precisely because the centralization of command and control threatened the remaining military rights of the South German rulers, these efforts more often than not provoked a fierce response in Munich or Stuttgart. Events thereafter took a familiar course: Bavaria's and Württemberg's monarchs, supported by their ministers and sometimes enjoying widespread public support, dug in their heels, pointed to their military agreements, and condemned Prussian efforts to undermine the army's contingent-based structure. This resistance could be overcome, but only as long as the authorities in Berlin were willing to compromise.

¹¹ H.P. Fenton, acting British envoy in Munich, to the British Foreign Office, February 29, 1872, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 215.

The standardization of the German army and the limits of integration

Almost as soon as German soldiers returned from France in the spring of 1871, work began on the standardization of the army. Article 10 of the military convention between Prussia and Württemberg required the kingdom's XIII Army Corps to be reorganized according to Prussian guidelines. Prussian service and training ordinances and regulations were also to be introduced and Württemberg soldiers were to wear similar insignia to their Prussian comrades. The King of Württemberg made the final decision on the design of his contingent's uniforms, but these were to "take into account circumstances in the federal army as much as possible."¹² Despite this concession, Württemberg's pro-Prussian war minister, General Albert von Suckow, sought to erase all outward differences between Prussian and Württemberg soldiers after the Franco-Prussian War. King Karl found these changes especially hard to endure and, in the spring of 1871, he withdrew from Stuttgart to his countryside villa to nurse his grievance. Although he expressed concern to his entourage about his kingdom's future, Karl had little choice but to approve Suckow's reforms that, in the words of the Bavarian envoy, sought to transform the appearance of the kingdom's soldiers "from the ground up." Only the unique double-breasted tunic, which the king himself had designed several years earlier, was preserved.¹³ Suckow's claims about the experience of Württemberg's soldiers in France likely put King Karl's mind

¹² Article 10, "Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bunde und Württemberg vom 21./25. November 1870," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:341.

¹³ Rudolf von Gasser, Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, June 8 and August 23, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3031. See also Paul Sauer, *Regent mit mildem Zepter. König Karl von Württemberg* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999), 225.

at ease. Reports alleged that, because their uniforms differed slightly from those of Prussians, Württembergers had been mistaken for Frenchmen and subjected to friendly fire.¹⁴

Württembergers were not the only ones who allegedly suffered in 1870-1 because of the sartorial choices of their rulers. In support of their demands that Bavarian soldiers turn in their light blue uniforms for the dark blue tunics worn by Prussians, German nationalists pointed to postwar accounts by French generals. Because the Bavarians had suffered heavy casualties in the opening battles of the war, these generals had ordered their men to fire on the demoralized and numerically weakened South Germans. This was made all the easier by their distinct uniforms. “Though it may be a beautiful thing to die for the Great German Fatherland,” the British envoy in Munich wrote, “it is peculiarly hard to call upon the Bavarian Soldier to die an additional death for the lesser Bavarian Fatherland.”¹⁵ Much to the delight of German nationalists and especially those who advocated a centralized army, Bavaria’s federal treaty with Prussia required the kingdom’s contingent to adopt Prussian standards of organization and training. The mobilization and deployment plans for the two Bavarian army corps would also be synchronized with those worked out in Berlin. That being said, Section III, Article 5 of the treaty went much further than Württemberg’s military convention with Prussia: the King of Bavaria alone was granted the right to determine the appearance and insignia, as well as the equipment and weaponry, of his own soldiers.¹⁶ This authority frustrated efforts to pressure the Bavarian government to adhere to standards in the rest of the German army.

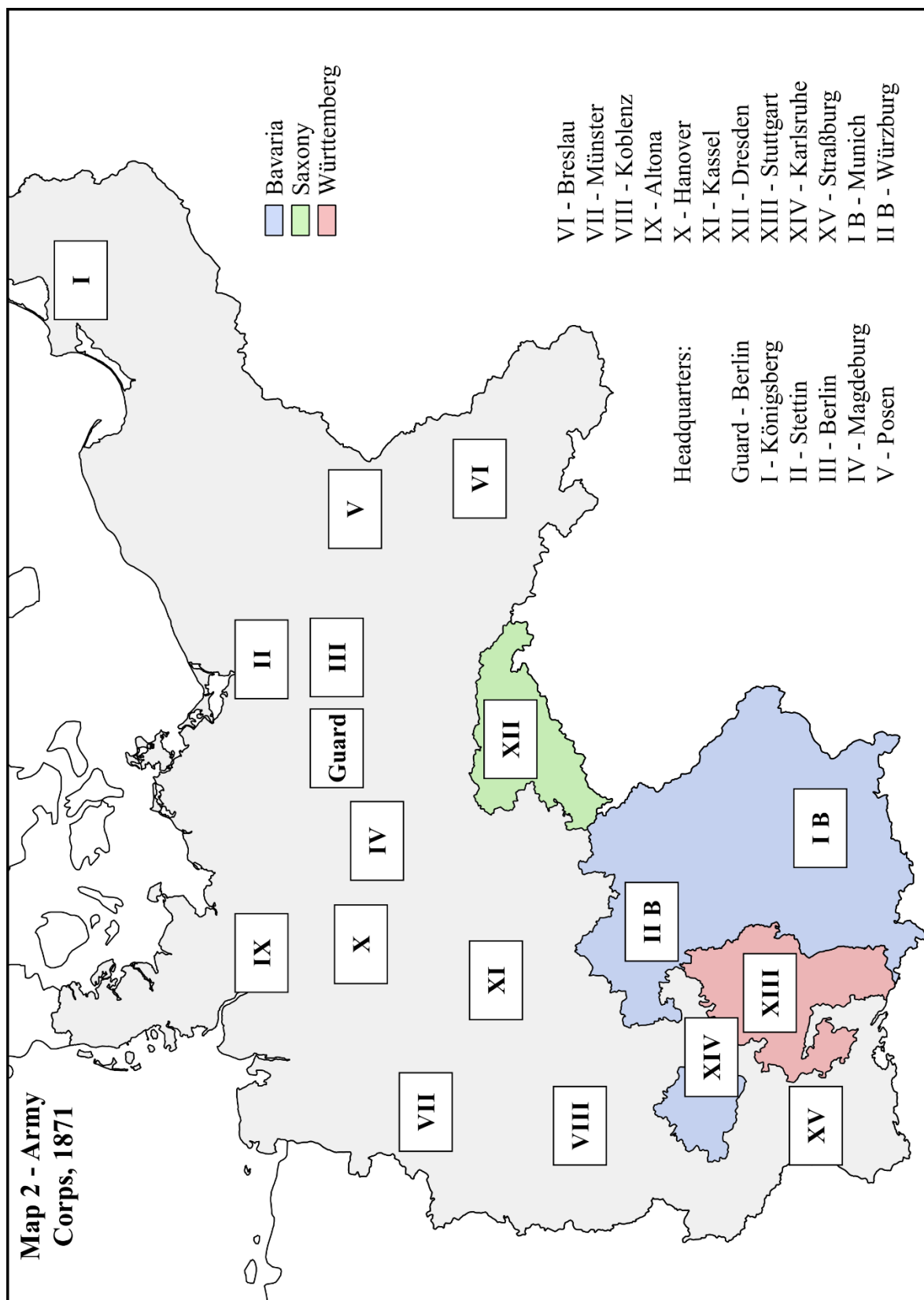
¹⁴ Adalbert von Rosenberg, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Foreign Office in Berlin, May 27, 1871, PA AA Berlin, R 3353.

¹⁵ Robert Morier, British envoy in Munich, to the British Foreign Office, February 27, 1873, in *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich, 1871-1897*, ed. Markus Mösslang and Helen Whatmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1:457-8.

¹⁶ Section III, Article 5, “Der Bundesvertrag betreffend den Beitritt Bayerns zur Verfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 23. November 1870,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:331.

There were nevertheless attempts to bring the appearance of Bavarian soldiers in line with their new comrades. In early 1872, a commission was established in the Bavarian war ministry to examine possible changes to the Bavarian soldier's uniform. Although it was widely accepted that certain features, such as the light blue tunic and the distinctive "caterpillar helmet," or *Raupenhelm*, would remain in service, some in the Bavarian war ministry favoured the adoption of the Prussian dark-grey trousers and insignia. There were even some in the Bavarian officer corps, according to Württemberg's envoy in Munich, who wished to replace the *Raupenhelm* with a helmet similar to the Prussian *Pickelhaube*. These officers argued that Bavarians would thereby be more easily recognizable as German soldiers from a great distance. Foremost among the reformists was the war minister, General Sigmund von Pranckh. Much like Suckow, Pranckh endeavoured to reorganize the Bavarian army according to the Prussian model, while also preserving its South German character as much as possible. Yet, even minor changes to the soldier's trousers and insignia were too much for some. This was especially true for King Ludwig II's uncle, Prince Luitpold, the inspector-general of the Bavarian army. It was not until after several compromises were rejected in early 1873 that the king finally bowed to pressure and approved the proposed changes to the Bavarian insignia. Both the light blue trousers and the *Raupenhelm* were retained.¹⁷ While many, including some Bavarian officers, defended Prince Luitpold's intransigence by arguing that the South Germans simply wished to

¹⁷ Oskar von Soden, Württemberg envoy in Munich, to Johann von Wächter-Lautenbach, Württemberg minister-president, December 14, 1872, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 208; Soden to Wächter, March 15, 1873, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 209. See also Frauenholz, *Geschichte des Königlich Bayerischen Heeres*, 172-3.



implement reforms at their own pace, nationalist-minded newspapers bombarded the Bavarian government with accusations that it was pursuing a particularistic *Raupenhelmpolitik*.¹⁸

Not all military rights attracted the public's attention. The Werder rifle had performed exceptionally well during the Franco-Prussian War, yet the Bavarian war ministry decided to adopt the Mauser in 1877. Unlike the Werder, the Mauser could be more easily transformed into a magazine rifle and had therefore been issued to the rest of the German army from 1873 onwards. The re-equipping of the Bavarian contingent, completed in 1882, did not provoke widespread opposition. Of far greater significance for Bavaria's public was the replacement of the symbolic *Raupenhelm* with a helmet similar to the *Pickelhaube* in 1886.¹⁹ Whereas many Bavarian officers, like those in 1873, welcomed the adoption of the Prussian-style helmet, the disappearance of the *Raupenhelm* evoked strong feelings of nostalgia in non-military circles. Following the loss of this distinctive marker of Bavarian identity, the inhabitants of Munich comforted one another, once an observer claimed, with a single thought: at least the Kaiser was only the commander-in-chief in wartime.²⁰ In early 1900, Württemberg's envoy in Munich likewise reported on the public's disapproval of the Bavarian soldier's increasingly Prussian appearance. After noting the failure of the Bavarian war ministry's latest proposals to replace the light blue trousers, the envoy lamented the overall impact of these and similar efforts: in light of what appeared to be increasing particularistic and even separatist

¹⁸ Soden to Wächter, February 25 and April 2, 1873, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 209.

¹⁹ Frauenholz, *Geschichte des Königlich Bayerischen Heeres*, 161-2, 174-5; Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:270.

²⁰ Franz de Paula Deym von Strítez, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Munich, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, April 27, 1888, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 49.

sentiments in Bavaria, it would be “politically more prudent and beneficial for the internal development of the German empire” to focus on the common achievements of 1870-1.²¹

Only the most dyed-in-the-wool Bavarian patriots could have dismissed arguments that Germans soldiers, regardless of their contingent, should be outfitted with similar uniforms. Not only would the Bavarian war ministry greatly reduce the costs of procurement, but Bavarian soldiers would be less likely to suffer from friendly or, as French generals had pointed out, selective fire in a future war. More contentious were efforts to introduce common badges and emblems alongside, or even in place of, the few remaining visual indications of subnational loyalties in the German army. According to Article 63 of the imperial constitution, the non-Prussian kings, as *Kontingentsherren*, retained the right to determine the design of cockades and other insignia not denoting a soldier’s military rank.²² In the spring of 1894, however, Kaiser Wilhelm II proposed to introduce a lanyard in the imperial colours of black, red, and white for soldiers who displayed above-average marksmanship during their military service. The lanyard, the Kaiser explained to General Hermann von Haag, the Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, would be a particular point of pride for a soldier after he returned to civilian life. More practically, it would allow for the quick identification of the best marksmen in wartime. As for the lanyard’s colours, he offered a simple explanation: “after all, we are all Germans of course and we don’t need to shy away from wearing the German colours.”²³

²¹ Soden to Hermann von Mittnacht, Württemberg minister-president, January 3, 1900, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 224. Not surprisingly, it was once again Luitpold, now prince regent, who rejected the Bavarian ministry of war’s proposed uniform changes.

²² Article 63, “Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:399.

²³ Haag to the Bavarian minister of war, General Adolf von Asch, May 3, 1894, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 43.

Neither Haag nor the Bavarian envoy in Berlin, Hugo von Lerchenfeld, interpreted these remarks as sincere. Lerchenfeld even advised caution: Wilhelm II placed such an emphasis on the adoption of the marksman's lanyard only because he had designed it himself and, considering his "fondness for such innovations, there is no telling what other requests could yet be made in the future."²⁴ The Bavarians nevertheless bore a large part of the blame for the unpleasantness that ensued. One month earlier, Prince Regent Luitpold had announced his intention to adopt a similar lanyard for the Bavarian contingent, though not in the imperial colours of black, red, and white. The Bavarian lanyard would instead be blue and white, the official colours of the kingdom. Unsurprisingly, the Kaiser had been furious. In a telegram to the Prussian military attaché in Munich, Wilhelm II vented his frustration at what he considered an ill-considered attempt on the part of the Wittelsbachs to underscore their special standing in the empire. "The prince regent does considerable damage when he exposes both himself and the Bavarian army to the suspicion of anti-German particularistic aspirations among their German comrades. He would do well to consider the consequences ... if the Bavarian troops are the only ones who have openly refused to wear our German colours."²⁵ The Kaiser's fury failed to make an impression on the prince regent and the blue and white lanyard went into service. Even the Bavarian war minister, who, from the start, had supported the introduction of the lanyard in the imperial colours as a means to "foster the German idea in the entire German army with all means," criticized the Kaiser. He above all resented the way in which

²⁴ Lerchenfeld to Krafft von Crailsheim, Bavarian minister-president and foreign minister, May 6, 1894, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77904.

²⁵ Major Kurt von Pritzelwitz, Prussian military attaché in Munich, to the Prussian ministry of war, April 6, 1894, and Wilhelm II's telegram to the Foreign Office in Berlin, intended for Pritzelwitz, May 2, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 2749.

the imperial lanyard had been proposed to Munich. Because the Bavarians had not been informed in advance, the Kaiser's proposal had appeared as a *fait accompli*. Seen in this light, the war minister felt that Luitpold's unwillingness to compromise was justified.²⁶

Whether it was to protect the German soldier on the battlefield or, as Bavaria's war minister put it, to "foster the German idea" among each year's recruitment class, it was the manner in which the standardization of the army was communicated from Berlin, and not necessarily the measures themselves, that aroused opposition in South Germany. In order to avoid unnecessary friction in the future, in 1894, the Prussian war minister agreed to consult the state governments before moving forward with similar projects.²⁷ However, this promise did not guarantee that Prussian attempts to standardize the appearance of all German soldiers were greeted with any less suspicion. After all, the military agreements with the non-Prussian kingdoms remained in effect. This was abundantly clear to the military authorities in Berlin when the Kaiser once again sought to introduce a common emblem for the German army two years later. After 1871, German soldiers wore only a cockade on their helmets in the colours of their contingent's state. Saxons boasted a green and white cockade, for example, while Württembergers wore one in black and red. The transfer of personnel between the smaller North German states and Prussia complicated this practice. In the spring of 1896, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, whose military convention with Prussia stipulated that his officers wore both the Mecklenburg and Prussian cockades, offered a solution: officers and

²⁶ Pritzelwitz's account of his audience with Asch, prepared for the Prussian ministry of war, May 29, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 2749. See also Asch's instructions to Haag, May 18, 1894, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 2.

²⁷ Haag to Asch, May 23, 1894, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 43.

men of all contingents should wear two cockades: one in their own state's colours and one in the imperial colours of black, red, and white. Wilhelm II quickly endorsed this proposal.²⁸

Aside from the brief involvement of Lerchenfeld, civilian officials had been largely excluded from the discussions over the marksman's lanyard. This was not the case after Wilhelm II endorsed the grand duke's suggestion for a "double cockade." In the summer of 1896, the Prussian minister of war, keeping his promise from two years earlier, approached Dresden and Munich with the proposed change. This new approach met with little success. Wishing to avoid offending the Kaiser, though unwilling to consent to a measure that might further undermine his own authority, Prince Regent Luitpold requested the King of Saxony's assistance in privately communicating his opposition to Berlin. The Kaiser's reaction was predictable. During a troop inspection in August 1896, he unleashed his anger at Haag, who had just returned from holiday and had not even been informed of the prince regent's stance on the matter. It was clear, the Kaiser claimed, that Bavaria wanted "nothing to do with the empire."²⁹ News of this tense exchange soon reached the public and, in the following days, several newspapers reported on Bavaria's attitude to the double cockade. This unwelcome publicity convinced the governments in Berlin and Munich to negotiate. In early September, the state secretary of the Foreign Office, Adolf Marschall von Bieberstein, met at length with Bavaria's representative in Berlin in order to find ways of containing what was increasingly becoming a public relations disaster. In the latter's view, this discussion was largely for the

²⁸ Lerchenfeld to Crailsheim, June 14, 1896, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77904. Two years earlier, the grand duke had also sought to convince Prince Regent Luitpold, without success, to agree to the adoption of a new officer's belt in the imperial colours during wartime. Asch to Colonel Theophil Reichlin von Meldegg, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, April 21, 1896, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 2.

²⁹ Colonel Paul Vitzthum von Eckstädt, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, August 28, 1896, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 124.

benefit of the Bavarians. It had become clear, he soon after wrote, that the South German kingdom “alone bears the odium for the imperial project’s failure.”³⁰

As the Kaiser had predicted in the spring of 1894, Bavaria’s exposure to accusations of “anti-German particularistic aspirations” eventually convinced Luitpold to compromise. In a face-saving letter sent from Munich to Berlin at the end of November 1896, the new Bavarian attitude towards the double cockade was sketched out. After careful consideration and having acknowledged the “considerable value” that Wilhelm II attached to the project, Luitpold was now willing to consent to this measure in the interest of friendly relations with his fellow monarch. The prince regent nevertheless wanted his “sacrifice” for the empire to be properly understood and appreciated. He therefore instructed Haag to make it clear in Berlin that any “further impositions along these lines were to be avoided.”³¹ Luitpold’s consent removed one obstacle to the introduction of the imperial cockade throughout the German army. However, the attention that the matter had attracted in the press ensured that civilian officials remained interested in the subsequent negotiations between the Bavarian and Prussian war ministries. As Marschall von Bieberstein reminded Chancellor Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst at the beginning of January 1897, this was because the matter possessed both political and military importance. The chancellor, as the only imperial minister, would have to be consulted in order to prevent further tensions between the federal states.³² In the end, Hohenlohe and

³⁰ Guttenberg, acting Bavarian envoy in Berlin, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, September 2 and 4, 1896, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77904. See also Marschall von Bieberstein to the chancellor, Prince Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, September 3, 1896, PA AA Berlin, R 789.

³¹ Asch to Haag, November 28, 1896, accompanied by the adjutant-general’s letter, written on the same date, to the Bavarian military plenipotentiary, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 2. Prussia’s military attaché in Munich suspected that the King of Saxony had also played a role in the prince regent’s sudden change of heart. Major von Krosigk to the Prussian ministry of war, November 28, 1896, PA AA Berlin, R 2753.

³² Marschall von Bieberstein to Hohenlohe, January 1, 1897, PA AA Berlin, R 772.

Marschall were able to breathe a sigh of relief in March when the Kaiser's cabinet order announcing the double cockade became public knowledge. Since it was portrayed as a common decision of the empire's rulers, the new measure was met with general satisfaction.³³

The cabinet order, published on the one-hundredth anniversary of Kaiser Wilhelm I's birth, required every German soldier to wear a black, white, and red cockade on the right side of his helmet. On the left side, he continued to wear a cockade in the colours of his state's contingent.³⁴ Even this seemingly minor change in the German soldier's appearance had evoked fierce opposition in Munich: almost three decades after unification, the reserve rights of the non-Prussian rulers, especially those concerning the military, remained sensitive and potentially explosive issues. If this fact was not clear to Prussian authorities in 1896, it was again driven home only a few years later. In the summer of 1900, German troops were sent to the battlefield for the first time since the Franco-Prussian War as part of the multi-national response to the Boxer Uprising in China. In this colonial context, the authority of the non-Prussian monarchs concerning emblems and insignia were once again placed in the spotlight. After the Kaiser issued a cabinet order that required all German soldiers serving with the expedition to wear only the imperial cockade, the outrage in the South German press was so great that the Bavarian ministry of war was compelled to offer an official explanation: the disappearance of the state cockades was solely intended as a means to simplify the logistics of

³³ Anton von Monts, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Hohenlohe, March 22 and 24, 1897, and Carl von Dönhoff, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to Hohenlohe, March 24, 1897, PA AA Berlin, R 772.

³⁴ Wilhelm II's cabinet order from March 22, 1897, forwarded by the Prussian minister of war, General Heinrich von Goßler, to Hohenlohe, February 27, 1897, PA AA Berlin, R 772. See also Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:289.

the expedition.³⁵ When it came to the standardization of the German army, there were limits on what the empire's rulers and even their populations were willing to accept.

The unlikely conqueror of South Germany: Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm

Exchanging the *Raupenhelm* for the Prussian *Pickelhaube* or wearing the imperial colours alongside a state's cockade was one thing. Centralizing command and control over the non-Prussian contingents was a different matter entirely. As *Kontingentsherren*, the Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg kings retained varying degrees of control over the organization of their contingents and the location of its peacetime garrisons. Of course, Bismarck, Moltke, and Prussia's King Wilhelm had made certain demands in the interests of military centralization. One of these was the Kaiser's constitutional "duty and right" to inspect the army's contingents. In the two decades after unification, Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm was therefore tasked with carrying out annual inspection tours of South Germany. These tours gave the authorities in Berlin an opportunity to monitor the reorganization of the non-Prussian contingents. They also expanded imperial authority over soldiers from Bavaria and Württemberg. Because the crown prince's tours appeared to threaten the most important remaining military right of the *Kontingentsherren* – the right of command over their contingents in peacetime – they created opposition. This was especially true in Bavaria, whose King Ludwig II retained more far-reaching control over his contingent following the Wars of Unification.

³⁵ Monts to Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow, March 1, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 773.

Despite having commanded the South German contingents during the Franco-Prussian War, the heir to the German and Prussian thrones was an unlikely candidate to ease Bavaria's military integration into the empire. Friedrich Wilhelm strongly disliked the narrow-minded "German-Napoleonic kings" of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, who, unlike the Prussian monarch, had only received their crowns in return for supporting the first French emperor's wars of conquest. Throughout his life, the crown prince therefore remained committed to expanding the role of both the Kaiser and the imperial government.³⁶ Conversely, Bavaria's Ludwig II never fully reconciled himself to the new political realities after 1871. Even though he had little affection for the army, the "fairy tale king" firmly believed that a monarch's authority depended on his unconstrained ability to wield military power.³⁷ Not surprisingly, the crown prince and king never developed a close relationship. During the celebrations that marked the return of the Bavarian troops to Munich in July 1871, Ludwig II became annoyed by the enthusiastic reception given to the crown prince by his subjects. The king did not speak a word to his guest throughout the military parade, thereby leaving a "painful impression" on those in attendance. Even though the two men appeared together that same evening in the *Hoftheater* and, having been greeted by a boisterous applause from the audience, joined hands in a public demonstration of the "firm and faithful association of North and South," this was as much as Bavaria's sovereign could endure. When Munich's city council hosted a banquet the following evening in honour of the army, Ludwig II failed to attend. It was unclear, one

³⁶ Frank Lorenz Müller, *Our Fritz: Emperor Frederick III and the Political Culture of Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 94-9.

³⁷ Christof Botzenhart, "Ein Schattenkönig ohne Macht will ich nicht sein." *Die Regierungstätigkeit König Ludwigs II. von Bayern* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2004), 180-3.

observer wrote, whether the king's aversion to speaking to crowds or influences at court were responsible for his regrettable and, in military circles, painfully felt absence.³⁸

Even before the Bavarians returned from France, the Prussian authorities had ensured that Ludwig II would not soon forget his antipathy for the crown prince. On June 14, 1871, Kaiser Wilhelm issued a cabinet order that created four army inspectorates throughout the empire. Before the Wars of Unification, Prussia's eight peacetime army corps had been placed under the supervision of army detachments, each headed by an inspector-general who was normally a Prussian prince. Although intended to provide a means by which the entire Prussian army could be inspected by a member of the House of Hohenzollern, these largely ceremonial positions were often left vacant. Two factors led to renewed interest in inspections after 1871. First, the annexation of Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Frankfurt, Nassau, and Schleswig-Holstein in 1866 and the integration of Saxony into the North German Confederation in 1867 created four entirely new army corps. The addition of contingents from Baden, Bavaria, and Württemberg and the creation of a fifteenth corps in Alsace-Lorraine in March 1871 meant that the peacetime strength of the German army ballooned to over 400,000 officers and men.³⁹ The second consideration was closely linked to the first. Whereas the kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg had retained rights and privileges relating to their contingents, each of the agreements signed with Prussia before 1870 contained a similarly worded article: the Kaiser, as *Bundesfeldherr*, was expected to ensure the army's uniformity in organization and training

³⁸ Soden to Wächter, July 16, 1871, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 205; Brincken, acting Prussian envoy in Munich, to Bismarck, July 19 and 23, 1871, PA AA Berlin, R 2703.

³⁹ Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:127, 243, 268-9.

Table 2 – The contingents of the German army, 1875⁴⁰

| | Prussia | Bavaria | Saxony | Württemberg | Total |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Army corps | 14 ^a | 2 ^b | 1 ^c | 1 ^d | 18 |
| Divisions | 29 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 37 |
| Officers | 13,343 | 2,093 | 1,007 | 770 | 17,213 |
| Other ranks | 311,423 | 48,244 | 24,208 | 17,784 | 401,659 |
| Total peacetime strength | 324,766 | 50,337 | 25,215 | 18,554 | 418,872 |
| % of total peacetime strength | 77.5 | 12.0 | 6.0 | 4.4 | 100.0 |
| Population (1875) | 33,062,879 ^e | 5,022,390 | 2,760,586 | 1,881,505 | 42,727,360 |
| ^a Guard, I-XI, XIV-XV ^b I-II Bavarian ^c XII ^d XIII ^e Including the empire's eighteen smaller states and three free cities, as well as the <i>Reichsland</i> of Alsace-Lorraine | | | | | |

⁴⁰ Ludwig Rüdiger von Collenberg, *Die deutsche Armee von 1871 bis 1914* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1922), 122-3; Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:268-70; Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt, *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 1 (1880), 1.

through periodic inspections of the non-Prussian contingents.⁴¹ Wilhelm, having just turned seventy-four years of age in 1871, could obviously not perform this task alone.

In convincing the Kaiser to revive the system of inspectors-general, the crown prince and the Prussian war minister, General Albrecht von Roon, were motivated by a third factor. Both men had strenuously opposed the concessions given to Bavaria during the negotiations at Versailles in the autumn of 1870. Both also believed that the subordination of the two Bavarian army corps to an army inspectorate could correct past wrongs by extending Prussia's control over the South German contingent in peacetime. Moreover, Friedrich Wilhelm was convinced that, as the wartime commander of the Badenese, Bavarians, and Württembergers, he was destined to play an important role in binding these soldiers more closely to the rest of the German army: not only had he served as a Prussian inspector-general since 1863, but the crown prince had been assured by his father in May 1871 that his accomplishments on the battlefield would be rewarded with an influential role in the empire's military affairs.⁴² The Kaiser was nevertheless unwilling to proceed without Bismarck's consent. Recognizing that the subordination of the Bavarians to one of the re-established army inspectorates contained a political as well as military dimension, Wilhelm sought the chancellor's advice. As he wrote to Bismarck, the question was not whether he had the authority to inspect the Bavarians – the federal treaty was quite clear regarding the *Bundesfeldherr*'s "duty and right" – but rather

⁴¹ Article 4, "Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bund und dem Königreich Sachsen vom 7. Februar 1867; Section III, Article 5, "Der Bundesvertrag betreffend den Beitritt Bayerns zur Verfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 23. November 1870"; Article 9, "Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bunde und Württemberg vom 21./25. November 1870," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:293, 331, 341. While Saxony's and Württemberg's military conventions referred to the Kaiser's "right" under Article 63 of the constitution, this article did not apply to Bavaria. The federal treaty instead outlined this "duty and right."

⁴² Rüddenklau, "Studien zur Bayerischen Militärpolitik," 43-5.

whether the Bavarian contingent, which was, after all, an autonomous component of the German army under the King of Bavaria's command in peacetime, could be permanently placed under the supervision of an inspector-general. This arrangement was strongly preferred by Wilhelm. Yet, unsure of its constitutionality, the Kaiser left the door open to a "looser" arrangement by which each inspection would be subject to agreement with Munich.⁴³

Bismarck likewise understood that subordinating the Bavarians to an army inspectorate headed by the heir to the Prussian throne was almost certain to provoke a fierce reaction from Ludwig II. Even if the king set aside his own personal feelings, the federal treaty would provide his ministers in Munich with a strong argument against the permanent appointment of Friedrich Wilhelm. Exploiting the Kaiser's apprehension and fearing an open conflict between Berlin and Munich, Bismarck thereafter took full control of the matter. Two days before Wilhelm's cabinet order was published, the chancellor approached Colonel Theodor von Fries, Bavaria's military plenipotentiary in Berlin and a close confidant of the Bavarian minister of war, and briefly outlined the impending reorganization of the army. At the same time, Bismarck stressed his wish to avoid any "misunderstandings" with the South German kingdom.⁴⁴ He then turned his attention to the Bavarian government. Assisted by Prussia's envoy to Bavaria, Georg von Werthern, and benefitting from an ongoing ministerial crisis in Munich, Bismarck concealed the permanent nature of the relationship between the Bavarian contingent and its designated army inspectorate and the full scope of the inspector-general's future role. One week after the publication of the cabinet order, Werthern informed the Bavarian government that the crown

⁴³ Copy of Wilhelm I to Bismarck, June 9, 1871, attached to Herbert von Bismarck, state secretary of the Foreign Office, to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, April 8, 1888, PA AA Berlin, R 917.

⁴⁴ Colonel Theodor von Fries, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Bavarian war ministry, June 12, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77688.

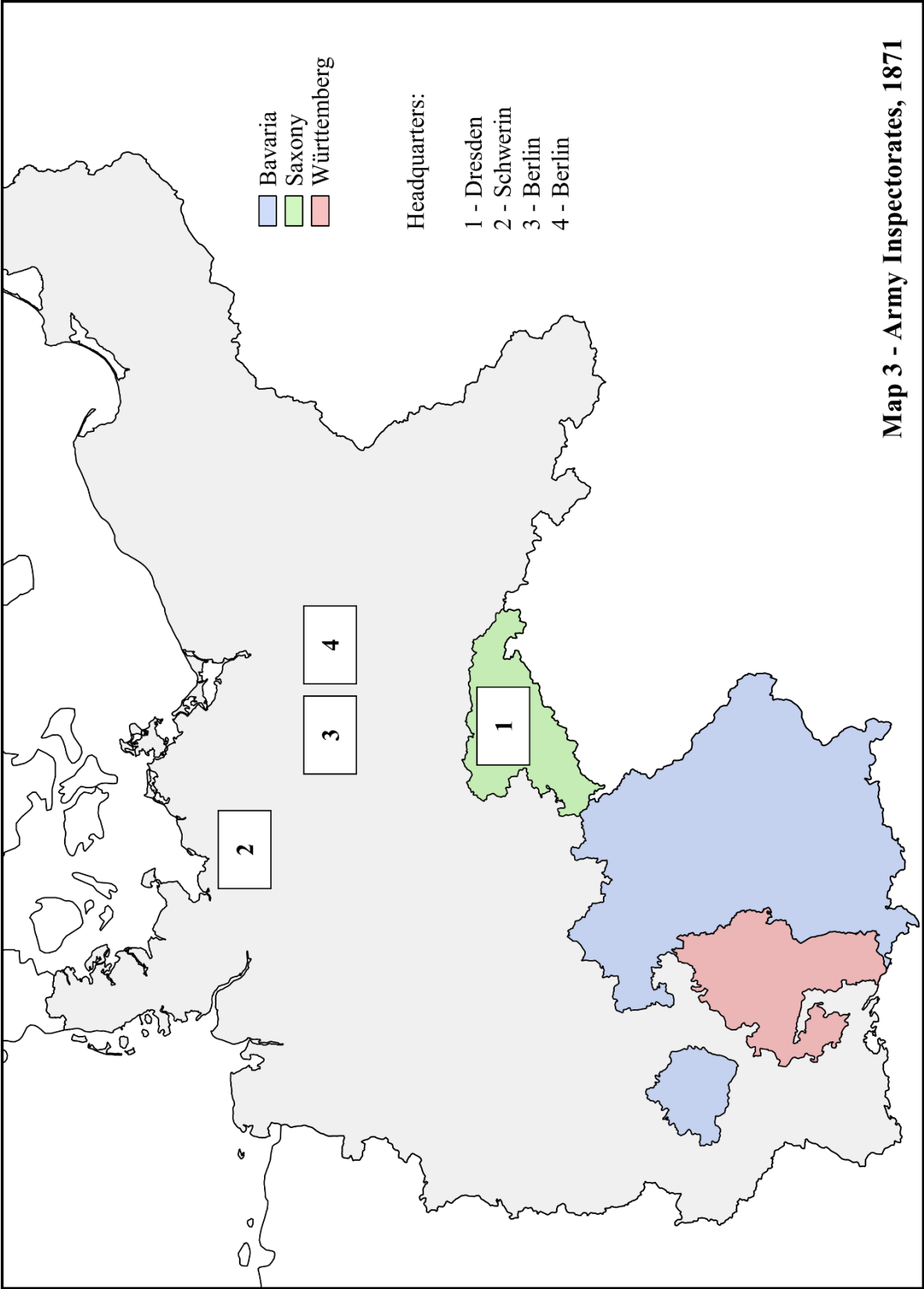
prince, whose appointment as inspector-general would hopefully be met with approval in Munich, would be entrusted with inspecting the two Bavarian army corps. “It need not even be mentioned,” the envoy added, “that, in accordance with existing treaties, each inspection will be arranged ahead of time with His Majesty the King of Bavaria.” At the beginning of July 1871, Ludwig II gave his consent to Friedrich Wilhelm’s appointment.⁴⁵

Like Werthern’s description of the army’s reorganization, the Kaiser’s cabinet order was intended to highlight Berlin’s conciliatory approach. Unlike the Prussian XI and the Württemberg XIII Army Corps, which were formally attached to the new Fourth Army Inspectorate, the two Bavarian army corps occupied a much more ambiguous position. They were required to undergo “periodic inspections,” but the Bavarians would not be subordinated, merely temporarily allocated, to the army inspectorate.⁴⁶ Pranckh, who had been satisfied with the chancellor’s assurances to Fries in June, had neither been consulted nor informed about Werthern’s discussions with the Bavarian minister-president, Otto von Bray-Steinburg. It was only during the crown prince’s visit to Munich in July 1871 that the war minister came to understand that the vaguely worded cabinet order could easily be exploited in order to undermine the King of Bavaria’s peacetime military authority. In a strongly worded protest to Bray-Steinburg, Pranckh expressed his “urgent wish” that the entire question of imperial inspections of the Bavarian contingent be reopened with the Prussians.⁴⁷ Unfortunately for the

⁴⁵ Werthern to Otto von Bray-Steinburg, Bavarian minister-president, June 20, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77688. For the chancellor’s instructions and Ludwig II’s acceptance, see copies of Bismarck to Werthern, June 14, 1871, and Werthern to Bismarck, July 6, 1871, attached to Herbert von Bismarck, state secretary of the Foreign Office, to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, April 8, 1888, PA AA Berlin, R 917. For a detailed discussion of Bismarck’s efforts, see Rüddenklau, “Studien zur Bayerischen Militärpolitik,” 46-53.

⁴⁶ Wilhelm I’s cabinet order, June 14, 1871, attached to Daxenberger, privy councillor in the Bavarian foreign ministry, to Maximilian von Pergler von Perglas, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, August 10, 1871, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, III. Hauptabteilung MdA I, file 10516.

⁴⁷ Pranckh to Bray-Steinburg, July 22, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77688.



war minister, neither Bray-Steinburg nor the officials who oversaw the government following the minister-president's retirement in late July were willing to pursue the matter. Bismarck's reassurances – that the creation of the crown prince's army inspectorate in no way infringed upon Ludwig II's military rights and that each inspection would take place in accordance with the terms of the federal treaty – were the most that could be hoped for in Munich.⁴⁸

Under these circumstances, few in Bavaria looked forward to the first inspection tour in the summer of 1872. King Ludwig II's own actions in the months following the army's reorganization did little to relieve the tension. In October 1871, the king, perhaps still believing that the allocation of the Bavarians to the Fourth Army Inspectorate was a formality, instructed Pranckh to begin negotiations with Berlin that would create a permanent agreement over the manner in which the inspections were planned and carried out. The war minister, having seen his own attempts to reopen the issue fail in the summer, could do little.⁴⁹ Ludwig II next sought to firmly establish the boundary between his own authority and Friedrich Wilhelm's duties as inspector-general. In the early summer of 1872, the crown prince informed Bavaria's king that he intended to take advantage of his upcoming holiday in South Germany to visit the officers of a Bavarian regiment with whom he had served in the Franco-Prussian War. Immediately, Ludwig II issued orders to Pranckh that, "in the interests of my exclusive military authority in peacetime," parades or military festivities scheduled to take place in towns and villages along Friedrich Wilhelm's anticipated route should be cancelled. Only those in the regiment's

⁴⁸ Daxenberger to Pergler von Perglas, August 10, 1871, Hermann von Thile, state secretary of the Foreign Office, to Bismarck, August 17, 1871, Bismarck to Thile, August 24, 1871, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, III. Hauptabteilung MdA I, file 10516. See also Rüddenklau, "Studien zur Bayerischen Militärpolitik," 54-6.

⁴⁹ Ludwig II to Pranckh, October 4, 1871, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2768. See also Rüddenklau, "Studien zur Bayerischen Militärpolitik," 56-7.

garrison in Dillingen would be permitted.⁵⁰ That the Bavarian king was deeply concerned that the inspector-general's presence might undermine his own authority as a *Kontingentsherr* was clear. Fearing that the inhabitants of Munich might once again receive Friedrich Wilhelm with embarrassing enthusiasm, as in the previous July, Ludwig II ordered Pranckh to only arrange inspections in Ingolstadt and other less prominent locations. In early August 1872, the crown prince agreed to bypass the Bavarian capital entirely during his inspection tour.⁵¹

Probably much to the dismay of the King of Bavaria, the crown prince's first inspection tour was a resounding success. Wherever he went in the South German kingdom, the British representative in Munich wrote, the population's reception for Friedrich Wilhelm was "most enthusiastic." The crown prince returned the public's favour by repeatedly expressing "his great satisfaction with the efficient condition in which he had found the Bavarian regiments inspected by him, and also with the hearty welcome he had everywhere received from the inhabitants." Predictably, the only awkward moments were created by Ludwig. Neither the king nor any other member of the House of Wittelsbach accompanied Friedrich Wilhelm during his tour. Even though the crown prince had announced well in advance his intention to spend time with his wife near Berchtesgaden before carrying out his military duties, the king withheld his offer of hospitality until the last moment. As a result, the couple were forced to seek accommodation with Prussian relatives.⁵² These royal slights, whether intentional or not, did little to dampen the public's enthusiasm. "Our Fritz," as Friedrich Wilhelm had become known in the South German press, always received a warm welcome on his annual inspection

⁵⁰ Ludwig II to Pranckh, June 29, 1872, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2768.

⁵¹ Werthern to Bismarck, August 5, 1872, PA AA Berlin, R 2704.

⁵² Fenton to the British Foreign Office, July 9 and August 29, 1872, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 216.

tours in the following years. When, in September 1875, the crown prince arrived at the train station in Augsburg, he was greeted not only by Bavaria's war minister and other prominent civilian and military authorities, but also by the members of the local veterans association. "Despite the very unfavourable weather," one Prussian observer happily noted, a large crowd remained outside the crown prince's hotel "until late into the night" and a performance by the city's choral societies forced him "to appear over and over again at the window."⁵³

While Friedrich Wilhelm's glittering wartime record as commander of the South German troops appealed to the Bavarian public, Ludwig II could never accept the annual presence of the inspector-general in his kingdom. The king's sensitivity to any real and perceived encroachments on his military authority continued to produce awkward moments. Following the crown prince's inspection tour in September 1878, one observer noted the convenient absence of members of Bavaria's ruling house. On the day before Friedrich Wilhelm's arrival, Prince Leopold, who commanded a cavalry brigade, had departed on convalescent leave, while his brother, Prince Arnulf, had likewise left his regiment before its inspection by the crown prince. It was clear, the same observer wrote, that the king himself had ordered his family members to keep a low profile during the inspection tour. These orders and the petty quarrels that arose from Ludwig's antipathy towards the crown prince were viewed "with regret" by many high-ranking Bavarian officers.⁵⁴ This internal dissent even forced the king to occasionally perform the uncomfortable role of Bavaria's *Kontingentsherr* in public. In late August 1875, the king "suddenly, and with no apparent motive" decided to

⁵³ Report of the acting Prussian envoy in Munich to Bülow, September 3, 1875, PA AA Berlin, R 2712. For the role of his military record in the crown prince's popularity, especially in Bavaria, see Müller, *Our Fritz*, 127-34.

⁵⁴ Soden to August von Üxkull-Gyllenband, privy councillor in the Württemberg foreign ministry, September 26, 1878, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 259.

personally review the soldiers of the I Bavarian Army Corps, the same formation that the crown prince was scheduled to inspect soon afterwards. Since he had not reviewed his soldiers since their return from France in the summer of 1871, Ludwig II's desire to "display himself before them as their true *Kriegsherr*" was, according to Britain's envoy in Munich, largely a product of Friedrich Wilhelm's popularity and, by extension, the king's jealousy.⁵⁵

Unlike elsewhere in the empire, Friedrich Wilhelm's inspection tours of Bavaria took place every year. There was only one exception: in 1879, the crown prince was forced to cancel his tour because of an illness. Uncomfortable moments, such as Ludwig II's rumoured order to his family members in 1878, became a rarity, however. In large part, this was because the inspector-general himself preferred to minimize the negative impact of his role. In 1880, he requested that Bavaria's government avoid hosting official receptions and elaborate festivities during his visits. These events would only be seen as provocations at the court in Munich.⁵⁶ This did not mean that he always enjoyed his military responsibilities. After reviewing two Guard *Uhlán* regiments in June 1884, the crown prince confided to his diary: "now finally an end to spring inspections, which make one completely dimwitted."⁵⁷ What it did mean was that Friedrich Wilhelm understood the military and political dimensions of his task. Ludwig II's hostility was not merely personal, but also the product of the loss of Bavaria's sovereignty in 1871. Since then, the king's remaining powers had assumed an exaggerated importance. The

⁵⁵ Robert Morier, British envoy in Munich, to the British Foreign Office, August 23, 1875, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 227. For Ludwig II's unexpected and uncharacteristic inspection of the Bavarian troops in August 1875 – his last before his death in 1886 – and the alienating impact of his personal dislike for Friedrich Wilhelm and Prussia on the men of his contingent, see also Botzenhart, "*Ein Schattenkönig ohne Macht will ich nicht sein*", 183-5.

⁵⁶ Rüddenklau, "Studien zur Bayerischen Militärpolitik 1871 bis 1914," 64-6.

⁵⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm's diary entry for June 17, 1884, in *Kaiser Friedrich III. Tagebücher 1866-1888*, ed. Winfried Baumgart (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 457.

integration of Bavaria and its contingent into the empire therefore required a delicate touch. In carrying out his duties, Friedrich Wilhelm's wartime record and resulting popularity in South Germany played an invaluable role. Considering his own aversion to particularism and the "German-Napoleonic kings," even the former crown prince might have been surprised by the expressions of heartache that accompanied his death from throat cancer in June 1888. There was, Britain's envoy in Munich wrote, a "general feeling of sincere grief for the sad end of the late Emperor Frederick throughout Bavaria, for he was looked upon as Bavaria's best friend."⁵⁸

Württemberg's contingent: A North German bridgehead in the South?

The subordination of the Württembergers to Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm's Fourth Army Inspectorate did not require a carefully prepared Bismarckian stratagem. Whereas the federal treaty protected the autonomous status of the Bavarian contingent, Württemberg's military convention merely guaranteed that its soldiers would "constitute a self-contained army corps as part of the German federal army."⁵⁹ The weakness of Württemberg's position did not mean that King Karl passively accepted imperial authority. In July 1871, and as part of the celebration that marked the return of the victorious soldiers from France, Stuttgart's mayor conferred honorary citizenship on General Hugo von Obernitz, the Prussian commander of the kingdom's division. This ceremony was spoiled by the king's behaviour. Not only did Karl

⁵⁸ Victor Drummond, British envoy in Munich, to the British Foreign Office, June 18, 1888, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 260. For a similar impression from another foreign observer who nevertheless admitted that Friedrich Wilhelm's reputation had suffered in South Germany because of the unpopularity of his wife, Empress Victoria, see Deym von Strítez to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, June 22, 1888, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA IV Bayern, box 49.

⁵⁹ Article 1, "Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bunde und Württemberg vom 21./25. November 1870," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:339.

signal his distaste for the honour accorded to the Prussian general by refusing to personally meet the returning Württembergers outside the city, as was customary; he and his wife, Queen Olga, departed the kingdom's capital for their countryside residence before the end of the festivities, thereby snubbing their Prussian guest.⁶⁰ One year later, Württemberg's minister-president, Hermann von Mittnacht, feared that Karl would once again attempt to avoid sharing the spotlight with a Prussian general during Friedrich Wilhelm's first tour of the kingdom as inspector-general. This, Mittnacht believed, was politically dangerous. Many anticipated that the public's enthusiasm would be "like nothing Stuttgart has ever seen" and, if the king failed to take up a prominent role on the occasion, it would only give the "Prussian party" another opportunity to criticize the un-German attitude of Württemberg's ruler.⁶¹

King Karl was justified in fearing that the population of his kingdom would provide a warm reception for Friedrich Wilhelm. When the crown prince arrived in Stuttgart in mid-August 1872, a dense crowd lined the streets between the train station and the royal palace. In the words of Prussia's envoy, "the desire to loudly express thanks for the victories of Wörth and Sedan, as well as for the existence of the new empire, was so unanimous that differences between the political parties disappeared and, likely out of fear of isolating themselves, even the leaders of the Ultramontanes took part in the welcome." The crown prince soon departed Stuttgart to inspect regiments in Heilbronn and Ulm. Once there, the Prussian envoy gleefully added to his report, he was met with a reception that "would rarely be given to a Württemberg

⁶⁰ Rosenberg to the Foreign Office in Berlin, July 1, 1871, PA AA Berlin, R 3353. For King Karl's behaviour during the return of the Württemberg troops to Stuttgart, see also Philippi, *Das Königreich Württemberg im Spiegel der preußischen Gesandtschaftsberichte*, 20-1.

⁶¹ Mittnacht to the former Württemberg minister of war, General Rudolf von Wagner-Frommenhausen, July 2, 1872, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 51, file 144.

sovereign.”⁶² Without a doubt, the envoy was exaggerating. Still, as in neighbouring Bavaria, Friedrich Wilhelm’s popularity and his regular inspection tours of South Germany remained a constant thorn in the side of the Württemberg court. This was acknowledged by Prussian diplomats in Württemberg’s capital. Despite the absence of an official reception for the crown prince when he visited Stuttgart in late August 1875, the city and the surrounding villages were festively decorated with flags and tree branches, and Friedrich Wilhelm was everywhere met with “tokens of grateful affection and adoration” from the local inhabitants. At the same time, the Prussian envoy was quick to add that every precaution had been taken in order to avoid anything that might offend King Karl during the inspector-general’s visit.⁶³

In contrast to his annual inspections in Bavaria, Friedrich Wilhelm did not undertake regular tours of Württemberg after unification. The Prussians believed there was little need to antagonize the court in Stuttgart for the sake of performing the Kaiser’s “duty and right.” Württemberg’s military convention provided them with two powerful instruments with which to consolidate their control over the South German contingent. The first of these instruments was a system for exchanging officers. According to Article 2, the reorganization and expansion of Württemberg’s wartime division into a Prussian-style army corps was to be completed within three years after the return of the soldiers from France. In order to expedite this process, Article 8 provided for the transfer of Prussian officers to Württemberg and Württemberg officers to Prussia for periods of one or two years. The second instrument was the Kaiser’s role

⁶² Rosenberg to Bismarck, August 22, 1872, PA AA Berlin, R 3353. See also George Petre, British envoy in Stuttgart, to the British Foreign Office, August 19, 1872, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 154. For a far less glowing description of the crown prince’s reception in the Württemberg capital, see Karl Pfusterschmid von Hartenstein, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, August 18, 1872, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 35.

⁶³ Anton von Magnus, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Bülow, September 1, 1875, PA AA Berlin, R 3356.

in naming the commander of the XIII Army Corps. The King of Württemberg could appoint, promote, and transfer almost every soldier in his contingent. Its highest-ranking officer was the sole exception: his appointment required the “approval in advance of His Majesty the King of Prussia as *Bundesfeldherr*.”⁶⁴ There was no reason for regular imperial inspections by the crown prince. Berlin’s influence over the Württemberg contingent was all but guaranteed.

Much like the crown prince’s inspection tours of South Germany, the exchange of officers between Prussia and Württemberg became a sore spot in relations between the two kingdoms. Article 8 of the military convention specified that officers could be “commanded” from one contingent to the other only following “mutual agreement” between the King of Württemberg and the Kaiser. Both the scope of these transfers – the military convention spoke of only “a few” – and their duration remained unclear. The ambiguous wording of this article enabled the Kaiser’s military cabinet to pressure Württemberg’s king into accepting an increasing numbers of officer transfers. Even though trained officers were badly needed in Württemberg – as a result of the expansion of its contingent in the years after the Franco-Prussian War, the number of officer positions in the kingdom increased from around 570 to over seven hundred by the mid-1880s – 171 Württemberg officers were sent to Prussia in the first two decades following unification. During the same period, 128 Prussian officers were assigned to regiments in the South German kingdom.⁶⁵ The presence of so many Prussians in

⁶⁴ Articles 2, 5, and 8, “Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bunde und Württemberg vom 21./25. November 1870,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:339-40. For the reorganization of Württemberg’s contingent after 1871, see Walker, “Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire,” 37-48.

⁶⁵ Memorandum prepared by Major Ernst von Schroeder in the Württemberg ministry of war, October 21, 1906, with statistical tables, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 15; Joachim Fischer, “Das württembergische Offizierkorps 1866-1918,” in *Das deutsche Offizierkorps 1860-1960*, ed. Hanns Hubert Hofmann (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1980), 114-18.

Württemberg's contingent inevitably fostered resentment at the court in Stuttgart. As early as the autumn of 1871, a rift developed between King Karl and Suckow, the pro-Prussian war minister. The king, under intense pressure from Suckow and the military cabinet in Berlin to approve officer transfers, was convinced that he would have to put up with the prevailing circumstances "for some time." Karl nevertheless insisted on telling every newly arrived Prussian that "they would do well not to forget that he still wants to remain king."⁶⁶

Much to the exasperation of leaders in Berlin and Stuttgart, some Prussian officers failed to heed King Karl's advice. In a conversation with the Bavarian envoy in October 1871, Mittnacht's predecessor as minister-president, Johann von Wächter-Lautenbach, complained bitterly about the behaviour of the "commanded" Prussians in the XIII Army Corps. A few weeks before, several Prussian officers had criticized the decision to award the colonel of a Württemberg regiment with the Iron Cross First Class for his actions during the Battle of Champigny. The colonel, these officers claimed, had not demonstrated sufficient bravery in the course of the fighting. When he was denied an audience with the war minister in order to defend himself against these accusations, the colonel, having become utterly despondent, shot himself.⁶⁷ Similar incidents, though normally without fatal consequences, were commonplace throughout the 1870s. In October 1876, the Prussian commander of the Württemberg cavalry brigade in Ludwigsburg, General Ferdinand von Massow, suddenly requested a transfer back to Prussia. During the Kaiser's recent visit to a festival near Stuttgart, one of Massow's subordinates, a Württemberger, had been invited to sit in the royal tribune. The general had

⁶⁶ As reported in Gasser to the Bavarian foreign ministry, September 16, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3031.

⁶⁷ Gasser to the Bavarian foreign ministry, October 12, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3031.

been denied the same privilege. Humiliated by this indignity, Massow believed that he could no longer carry out his duties in Ludwigsburg.⁶⁸ After the Kaiser refused point blank to approve the transfer, the Prussian envoy sought to limit the political damage. He had little success. Although he secured an invitation for Massow and his wife to a court dinner in December 1876, the general earned the lasting enmity of the royal couple by claiming to be unwell.⁶⁹

In the view of many Württembergers, no Prussian officer exhibited more arrogance and entitlement than General Ferdinand von Stülpnagel, the first peacetime commander of the XIII Army Corps. King Karl deeply resented the Kaiser's power to appoint the most senior general in his contingent. Conscious of his sovereign's reluctance to see a Prussian at the head of his soldiers and aware that General Hugo von Obernitz, the commander of the Württembergers in 1870-1, had little desire to remain in the kingdom, Suckow had sought assurances at Versailles that only Prussian generals with the "necessary understanding for the circumstances" in Stuttgart and "a tactful demeanor towards the king" would be appointed to the position.⁷⁰ Stülpnagel had neither of these two qualities. Although he used his impressive organizational talents to transform Württemberg's division into a well-structured and disciplined army corps, thereby earning a degree of respect among his subordinates, the general's behaviour created widespread animosity in Stuttgart. In addition to referring to himself as an "imperial general," Stülpnagel, along with his wife, repeatedly breached decorum at official events in the South

⁶⁸ General Emil von Albedyll, chief of the Kaiser's military cabinet, to Bismarck, December 2, 1876, together with Massow's explanation for his transfer request, November 8, 1876, and the response of General Emil von Schwartzkoppen, commander of the XIII Army Corps, to Albedyll, November 9, 1876, PA AA Berlin, R 3358.

⁶⁹ Magnus to Bülow, December 14, 1876, PA AA Berlin, R 3358. For the Kaiser's rejection of Massow's transfer request, see Wilhelm I to Schwartzkoppen, December 2, 1876, PA AA Berlin, R 3358. The affair is also discussed in Philippi, *Das Königreich Württemberg im Spiegel der preußischen Gesandtschaftsberichte*, 28-9.

⁷⁰ Albert von Suckow, *Aus Meinem Leben*, typed manuscript, 86-8, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand 660/045, file 1. An abridged version of the war minister's memoirs was later published with the title *Rückschau* in 1909.

German capital. After his wife flagrantly disregarded her rank in the order of precedence at a court ball in January 1873, Stülpnagel escorted her into the dining room and seated her – incorrectly – near his own place at the table. When, on another occasion, his wife’s assigned escort arrived late to lead her to dinner, the general responded by refusing to eat and sending all the dinner plates back to the kitchen. Stülpnagel, the Austro-Hungarian envoy to Württemberg wryly observed, was “continuously in a battle with the court marshal’s office.”⁷¹

Stülpnagel did not wear out his welcome in Stuttgart simply because he and his wife refused to follow court protocols. Much more decisive for the general’s eventual replacement was his bitter dispute with Suckow. This dispute concerned the two men’s spheres of authority. According to an agreement from the autumn of 1871, the commander of the XIII Army Corps had complete control over command matters, which included overseeing training, regulating service and leave, and ensuring discipline among the troops. In contrast, the war ministry was responsible for administration and communication between the Kaiser, the corps commander, and the King of Württemberg.⁷² This arrangement depended above all on the willingness of Stülpnagel and Suckow to cooperate with one another. This willingness did not last long. In the fall of 1873, the war minister penned a lengthy memorandum claiming that, ever since Stülpnagel’s appointment, the general had worked to “undermine the independence of the Württemberg military administration” by extending his authority and eroding confidence in

⁷¹ Pfusterschmid von Hartenstein to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, March 18, 1873, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 35; Wilhelm von Spitzemberg, adjutant-general to the King of Württemberg, to Karl von Spitzemberg, Württemberg envoy in Berlin, January 19, 1873, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 74, file 381. For Stülpnagel’s antagonistic behaviour in Stuttgart, see also Walker, “Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire,” 48-51.

⁷² Roon to the Württemberg ministry of war, October 31, 1871, with a draft of the “Regulativ über die Ressortverhältnisse zwischen dem Kriegsministerium und dem Generalkommando in Württemberg,” and Suckow’s reply to the Prussian ministry of war, November 20, 1871, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 4.

the ministry of war.⁷³ The foremost result of this memorandum was a revised agreement over spheres of authority. Finalized by the two war ministries in early 1875, this agreement permitted the corps commander to communicate directly and without the mediation of the war ministry with both the Kaiser and the King of Württemberg in command-related matters. For the time being at least, it appeared as though the governments of the two kingdoms had created a mutually agreed-upon process for the resolution of military disputes.⁷⁴

The conflict between the Württemberg war ministry and the Prussian corps commander might have remained a purely military concern were it not for the behaviour of King Karl. As early as the spring of 1873, and as a result of the continuous friction with Suckow, the Kaiser decided to replace Stülpnagel with General Emil von Schwartzkoppen. Of course, King Karl was pleased. However, the king's objectives went beyond simply getting rid of Stülpnagel. Württemberg's monarch above all wished to preserve the façade of his kingdom's military autonomy by ensuring that all future Prussian commanders of the XIII Army Corps would not only enter Württemberg service but also wear the contingent's uniform. When this request was rejected, Karl adopted an unorthodox approach. In July 1873, the king's adjutant-general was dispatched to Bad Ems with a letter for Tsar Alexander II of Russia. In the letter, Karl asked his brother-in-law to persuade the Kaiser, whom the Tsar planned to meet during his trip to Germany, to approve Schwartzkoppen's entry into Württemberg service. The Tsar justifiably refused to intervene in what he considered an internal German matter, but he did pass on the

⁷³ Memorandum composed in the Württemberg ministry of war, November 28, 1873, and thereafter submitted to the council of ministers, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 4.

⁷⁴ General Theodor von Wundt, Württemberg minister of war, to King Karl, February 23, 1875, with an outline of the changes to the agreement of 1871 and the king's approval, dated March 1, 1875, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 2. For the conflict between Stülpnagel and Suckow and the subsequent negotiations between Prussia and Württemberg, see Walker, "Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire," 51-9.

King Karl's letter to Wilhelm. The Kaiser was less than impressed.⁷⁵ Bismarck, when he was informed of the incident, was likewise outraged. The chancellor described Karl's behaviour as "a kind of treason" and expressed his disbelief that the king would solicit the assistance of a foreign ruler "in pursuit of his personal wishes and interests." The resulting ill-will was only overcome after a lengthy back-and-forth between the two governments.⁷⁶

Shortly before Schwartzkoppen left Berlin in order to take up his new position in Stuttgart in late 1873, he paid a visit to Baroness Hildegard von Spitzemberg, the wife of Württemberg's envoy. Having observed events over the preceding months, the baroness had nothing but sympathy for the general: his task, she wrote, "is truly not easy."⁷⁷ Despite the odds, the new commander of the XIII Army Corps quickly endeared himself to King Karl and the members of the Württemberg court. During a military review in the spring of 1874, Schwartzkoppen made a strong impression on the monarch when he passed command of the 6,000 assembled troops to a Württemberg general who had recently announced his retirement. By early 1875, the Prussian envoy could report to his superiors with satisfaction that the "most tactful graciousness" demonstrated by Schwartzkoppen and his wife had made the couple "universally popular." The general's wife had even appeared at a court ball in the Württemberg colours of black and red. King Karl was clearly pleased: when the guests were called into the

⁷⁵ King Karl of Württemberg to Tsar Alexander II of Russia, July 5, 1873, and Kaiser Wilhelm I to Albedyll, July 8, 1873, attached to Albedyll to the Foreign Office in Berlin, July 11, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 3354. See also Bernhard Ernst von Bülow's detailed report of the incident from Bad Ems to Hermann von Balan, state secretary of the Foreign Office, July 14, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 3354.

⁷⁶ Balan to Bülow, July 21, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 3354. For the incident and the subsequent negotiations between Berlin and Stuttgart, including the prominent role played by Württemberg's minister-president Mittnacht, see also Philippi, *Das Königreich Württemberg im Spiegel der preußischen Gesandtschaftsberichte*, 21-4.

⁷⁷ Hildegard von Spitzemberg's diary entry for December 28, 1873, in *Das Tagebuch der Baronin Spitzemberg. Aufzeichnungen aus der Hofgesellschaft des Hohenzollernreiches*, ed. Rudolf Vierhaus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 145.

dining room, he personally escorted Schwartzkoppen's wife to her seat at the table.⁷⁸ The Prussians, it seemed, had finally found an "imperial general" with a diplomatic touch.

The honeymoon was short lived. In part, this was because the improved relations with the corps commander did not stop King Karl from seeking opportunities to exercise his rights under the military convention. Although he had shown little interest in the army early in his reign, the king, regularly accompanied by Schwartzkoppen or his Prussian successor, General Hans von Schachtmeyer, conducted wide-ranging inspection tours of his kingdom throughout the 1870s.⁷⁹ At the same time, disagreements between the corps commander and the war ministry continued. The simmering conflict reached a boiling point in the autumn of 1885. According to the revised agreement of 1875, all Prussian personnel recommendations were to be discussed with the Württemberg war minister before they were presented to King Karl for approval. In September 1885, Mittnacht complained to the Prussian envoy that Schachtmeyer routinely bypassed the minister of war. Less than two months later, and after the general had forwarded another personnel recommendation directly to the king, Mittnacht lodged another complaint. Because the Kaiser's military cabinet had suggested replacing the chief of staff of the XIII Army Corps, a Württemberger, with a Prussian officer, the matter could no longer be ignored.⁸⁰ When he learned of Mittnacht's objections, the chief of the military cabinet, General

⁷⁸ Karl von Tauffkirchen-Guttenberg, Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, May 10, 1874, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3034; Magnus to Bismarck, January 31, 1875, PA AA Berlin, R 3356.

⁷⁹ For examples of King Karl's heightened interest in military affairs, see Magnus to Bismarck, May 29, 1874, PA AA Berlin, R 3355; Tauffkirchen to the Bavarian foreign ministry, June 3, 1874, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3034; Oswald von Fabrice, Saxon envoy in Munich, to Hermann von Nostitz-Wallwitz, Saxon foreign minister, May 11, 1878, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 2976; Magnus to Bülow, June 26, 1878, PA AA Berlin, R 3359.

⁸⁰ Ludwig von Wesdehlen, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Bismarck, September 25, 1885, and Wesdehlen to the Foreign Office in Berlin, November 14, 1885, PA AA Berlin, R 3380.

Emil von Albedyll, could barely contain his anger. The same process for communicating personnel decisions had been followed since 1875, he protested. Moreover, he had secured King Karl's consent during the Kaiser's recent visit to Stuttgart. Albedyll ended his tirade in dramatic fashion: going forward, Prussia should strive "to abolish the Württemberg war ministry, which I view to be the most significant obstacle to the fulfillment of a far-reaching unification of the military and which, furthermore, is a completely unnecessary authority."⁸¹

It was partially because of views like these that the Württemberg monarch and war ministry became increasingly less willing to accept Prussian officers during the late 1880s. Shortly after Schachtmeyer's replacement, General Gustav von Alvensleben, arrived in the kingdom in the spring of 1886, King Karl made a widely discussed comment to Prussia's envoy that, in the view of some observers, was an unmistakeable warning to Berlin. Even though he was content with the current state of things, the king expressed the hope that Alvensleben, who had previously commanded an army corps in Prussia, would quickly come to terms with the unique circumstances in Württemberg. After all, King Karl stressed to the envoy, "we are Swabians and want to remain Swabians."⁸²

These sentiments were shared by many of his subjects. During the winter of 1889-90, a press campaign focusing on Alvensleben's allegedly unfair treatment of his Württemberg

⁸¹ Albedyll to the Foreign Office in Berlin, November 26, 1885, forwarded to Wesdehlen, November 27, 1885, PA AA Berlin, R 3380. Although less pessimistic than Albedyll, the Prussian envoy in essence agreed that, if circumstances became more favourable, efforts should be made to dismantle the Württemberg war ministry. Wesdehlen to Bismarck, December 7, 1885, PA AA Berlin, R 3380. For the renewed friction between the two positions, see also Philippi, *Das Königreich Württemberg im Spiegel der preußischen Gesandtschaftsberichte*, 72-4.

⁸² Tauffkirchen to the Bavarian foreign ministry, June 5, 1886, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3046; Prince Nikolaus Wrede, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, June 11, 1886, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 39-3. In contrast to these two reports, Prussia's envoy recalled that the king had smiled before making the comment. Wesdehlen to Bismarck, June 5, 1886, PA AA Berlin, R 3395.

subordinates led to discussion over a possible successor. During the annual manoeuvres in September 1890, Kaiser Wilhelm II suggested that General Alfred von Waldersee, the chief of the Prussian General Staff who had recently fallen out of favour in Berlin, might become the *Vizekönig*, or viceroy, of southern Germany. Waldersee was less than enthusiastic. Arguing that public opinion and the attitude of the Württemberg court made it difficult for any Prussian commanding general to carry out his duties in Stuttgart and, at the same time, anxious to fulfill his own political ambitions, perhaps as the next imperial chancellor, he instead suggested a Württemberg general for the post.⁸³ Seizing the initiative, Württemberg's Minister-President, Mittnacht, convinced King Karl to send his nephew and heir, Prince Wilhelm, to Potsdam in order to personally discuss Alvensleben's successor with the Kaiser. The result of this meeting was a milestone for the South German kingdom. In late October 1890, General Wilhelm von Wölckern became the first Württemberger to command the XIII Army Corps.⁸⁴

The appointment of Wölckern as corps commander in Stuttgart temporarily settled a conflict that had burdened military relations between Prussia and Württemberg since the early 1870s. Yet, before Prince Wilhelm's meeting with the Kaiser, Chancellor Leo von Caprivi had made it clear to Mittnacht that Prussia was unwilling to relinquish its influence over military affairs in the kingdom: if a Württemberger were to become the commander of the XIII Army

⁸³ Waldersee's diary entries for September 9 and 24, 1890, in *Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Alfred Grafen von Waldersee*, ed. Heinrich Otto Meisner (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1922), 2:142-3, 147-9. For Waldersee's fall from imperial favour and his rejection of the Kaiser's offer, see John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser's Personal Monarchy, 1888-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 410-15.

⁸⁴ Philippi, *Das Königreich Württemberg im Spiegel der preußischen Gesandtschaftsberichte*, 74-81. With Mittnacht's encouragement, Prince Wilhelm requested an audience with the Kaiser at the end of September. Prince Wilhelm of Württemberg to Kaiser Wilhelm II, September 25, 1890, PA AA Berlin, R 3386.

Table 3 – Commanding generals of the XIII Army Corps, 1871-1895⁸⁵

| | Tenure | Contingent |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Ferdinand von Stülpnagel (1813 – 1885) | 1871 – 1873 | Prussian |
| Emil von Schwartzkoppen (1810 – 1878) | 1873 – 1878 | Prussian |
| Hans von Schachtmeyer (1816 – 1897) | 1878 – 1886 | Prussian |
| Gustav von Alvensleben (1827 – 1905) | 1886 – 1890 | Prussian |
| Wilhelm von Wölckern (1829 – 1905) | 1890 – 1895 | Württemberg |

Corps, both of its division commanders would have to be Prussian generals.⁸⁶ The acceptance of this condition by the government in Stuttgart had the effect of focusing attention back on the continued presence of Prussian officers in Württemberg. During the 1870s and 1880s, the number of officers exchanged annually between the two contingents had been more or less equal. These numbers were misleading, however. Whereas a large majority of Württembergers sent north were junior officers who received training at staff and technical schools, almost all of the Prussians who arrived in South Germany took over command positions in the XIII Army Corps. Between 1871 and 1890, the Kaiser's military cabinet transferred eight Prussian

⁸⁵ Günter Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der deutschen Heere 1815-1939* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1990), 1:73.

⁸⁶ Tauffkirchen to the Bavarian foreign ministry, October 25, 1890, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3050.

division commanders, thirteen brigade commanders, and twenty-one regiment commanders to South Germany. During the same period, only eight Württemberg regiment commanders were sent to Prussia. Only three generals from the South German kingdom led brigades in the Prussian contingent before 1888 and it was not until 1885 that a Württemberger was given command of a Prussian division.⁸⁷ The consequences of Württemberg's military convention with Prussia – the clear preference shown to Prussian officers by the Kaiser's military cabinet and the limited opportunities afforded to those from Württemberg – did not escape the South German public's attention. When, in the spring of 1883, a Württemberg general was selected to lead a brigade in Prussian Silesia, one Stuttgart newspaper offered a prediction: "one may now have to wait a long time for something similar to happen again."⁸⁸

The absence of a formal agreement regulating the transfer of officers between Prussia and Württemberg not only angered Swabian patriots. It also created career obstacles for South German officers. The expansion of Württemberg's army from a single division to a complete army corps after the Franco-Prussian War had temporarily accelerated promotion rates in the kingdom. Moreover, Württembergers transferred to Prussia in the 1870s thereafter returned to South Germany having acquired experience and training. The result was a steadily expanding pool of young, highly qualified Württemberg officers. The career prospects for these officers rapidly deteriorated from the late 1870s onwards. Not only were promotion opportunities few and far between in the small Württemberg contingent, but the Kaiser's military cabinet was reluctant to consider Württembergers, regardless of their qualifications, for command positions

⁸⁷ Memorandum prepared by Major Schroeder in the Württemberg ministry of war, October 21, 1906, with statistical tables, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 15. See also Walker, "Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire, 1870-1918," 71-4.

⁸⁸ Wesdehlen to Bismarck, June 16, 1883, PA AA Berlin, R 3380.

in North Germany for fear of causing friction with older Prussian officers of the same rank. At the same time, more and more Prussian officers were transferred southwards.⁸⁹ By the 1880s, poor career opportunities had created discontent in the Württemberg officer corps. Because they depended on their superiors for recommendations for promotions and transfers, some officers began to suspect that their Prussian superiors were writing biased assessments of their performance. In 1881, one Württemberger complained to the Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin that a “corruption of sentiment” had spread through his contingent since unification. The Saxon officer had little reason to doubt the honesty of Prussian generals. He nevertheless admitted that the temptation to consider an officer’s willingness to sacrifice “certain special interests and peculiarities” alongside his performance might prove too difficult to resist.⁹⁰

Although the formation of a common Prusso-Württemberg officer corps in which loyalty to the Kaiser would replace adherence to “special interests and peculiarities” was all but impossible during the reign of King Karl, the elderly monarch’s death in the autumn of 1891 dramatically changed the situation. His nephew, who ascended the throne in Stuttgart as King Wilhelm II, was far more willing to consider a closer military relationship with Prussia. This was not because he wished to renounce his own authority or abandon Württemberg’s military convention. The new king remained just as determined as his uncle to preserve his kingdom’s position within the empire. Nevertheless, having served in the Prussian contingent in his youth, King Wilhelm II retained a strong admiration for his northern neighbours. Despite

⁸⁹ Fischer, “Das Württembergische Offizierkorps,” 114-16; Walker, “Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire,” 74-80. For an example of the friction created by the appointment of younger Württemberg officers to senior command posts, see Pfusterschmid von Hartenstein to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, February 26, 1876, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 37.

⁹⁰ Colonel Paul von der Planitz, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, November 25, 1882, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 105.

possessing little affection for military affairs – in contrast to his namesake, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Württemberg’s monarch could regularly be seen walking the streets of Stuttgart in civilian clothing – King Wilhelm II also took a great interest in the welfare of his soldiers.⁹¹

Shortly after his accession, King Wilhelm II therefore instructed his government to begin negotiations with the Prussian military authorities over a formal regulation of officer transfers. Because Württemberg’s war minister, General Max Schott von Schottenstein, refused to meet the demands of the Kaiser’s military cabinet, these negotiations dragged on into the autumn of 1893. The war minister was isolated, however. During a visit to Stuttgart in October of the same year, the Kaiser bluntly declared to Schott that if Württemberg wanted to see its officers appointed to higher command positions in Prussia, it would have to make the necessary concessions: the negotiations “*must* now come to a conclusion.”⁹² King Wilhelm II was all too eager to oblige. In November 1893, he invited the Kaiser to his hunting lodge at Bebenhausen, south of Stuttgart, and, without the knowledge of either Minister-President Mittnacht or the war minister, gave his consent to the military cabinet’s draft agreement. This agreement became known as the “Bebenhausen Convention.”⁹³

During the negotiations over Alvensleben’s successor in the autumn of 1890, Prussia’s envoy in Stuttgart had asked Prince Wilhelm whether or not a more comprehensive integration

⁹¹ Frank Lorenz Müller, *Royal Heirs in Imperial Germany: The Future of Monarchy in Nineteenth-Century Bavaria, Saxony and Württemberg* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 169-71; Paul Sauer, *Württemberg’s letzter König. Das Leben Wilhelms II.* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1994), 39-54, 218-21.

⁹² Schott von Schottenstein to Friedrich von Moser, Württemberg envoy in Berlin, October 6, 1893, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 74, file 359. A few weeks later, Mittnacht, in a conversation with the Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin over dinner, commented on the Kaiser’s obvious eagerness to reach a formal agreement that would regulate transfers between the two contingents and thereby improve the poor promotion opportunities available to Württemberg officers. Vitzthum von Eckstädt to the Saxon ministry of war, November 15, 1893, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 121.

⁹³ Walker, “Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire,” 91-5.

of the two contingents might be achieved through changes to the military convention of 1870. Before quickly changing the subject, Wilhelm observed that Württemberg's parliament would never approve such a sweeping blow to the kingdom's sovereignty.⁹⁴ The form agreed upon for the Bebenhausen Convention – cabinet orders issued by both monarchs to their ministers of war rather than a formal agreement that would require parliamentary debate – reflected not only Kaiser Wilhelm II's firm conviction that military affairs should remain beyond the control of civilians, but also King Wilhelm II's concerns that many of his subjects opposed closer military ties between Prussian and Württemberg. Events soon demonstrated that these worries were warranted. The king's cabinet order took Mittnacht completely by surprise and, at one point, the minister of war and the corps commander, General von Wölckern, submitted their resignations.⁹⁵ Following the publication of the cabinet order in January 1894, the protests spread to Württemberg's parliament. Like the generals, Mittnacht was convinced that King Wilhelm II should have avoided such a comprehensive agreement. Yet, as the government's leading minister, he was forced to defend the Bebenhausen Convention against the furious objections of the Catholic Centre Party and the People's Party. The debate finally came to a close when, in the fall of 1900, an overwhelming majority in the lower chamber passed a resolution demanding that Württemberg's government work to ensure, as far as possible, that Württembergers would occupy the senior positions in the XIII Army Corps.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Philipp zu Eulenburg, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Caprivi, October 2, 1890, PA AA Berlin, R 3386

⁹⁵ Wilhelm von Hohenthal und Bergen, Saxon envoy in Berlin, to Karl von Metzsch-Reichenbach, Saxon foreign minister, December 8, 1893, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 121.

⁹⁶ Paul Sauer, *Württemberg im Kaiserreich. Bürgerliches Freiheitsstreben und monarchischer Obrigkeitsstaat* (Tübingen: Silberburg-Verlag, 2011), 163-5. For the resolution of the Württemberg parliament, see the telegram from Karl von Derenthall, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Foreign Office in Berlin, October 30, 1900, and the report of the lower chamber's debate in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, October 31, 1900, PA AA Berlin, R 3385.

This widespread outrage was not unjustified. The Bebenhausen Convention was the most significant military agreement signed by Prussia and one of the smaller German kingdoms since the Franco-Prussian War. Although its purpose was to improve the career prospects of Württemberg officers, it effectively dismantled many of the barriers between the two officer corps that had been preserved by the military convention of 1870. According to the terms of the agreement, Schott was instructed to enter into discussions with the military authorities in Berlin in order to create a single seniority list for the Prussian and Württemberg contingents. Since the place of each officer on this list would determine both his promotion to a higher rank and appointment to command positions, the agreement sought to eliminate the friction and frustration that had previously accompanied officer transfers. The Bebenhausen Convention went even further. With the exception of those sent to higher commands and training schools, officers who had been transferred from one contingent to the other were required to wear the insignia and uniform of the regiments to which they were assigned. Moreover, because responsibility for overseeing personnel matters had been transferred from Stuttgart to Berlin, a Württemberg officer was permanently attached to the Kaiser's military cabinet.⁹⁷ It did not take long for the impact of the Bebenhausen Convention to be felt. In December 1893, the *Militärwochenblatt*, the German army's official periodical, revealed that a Württemberger, General Johannes von Dettinger, had been entrusted with command of the 7th Division in Magdeburg, the capital of Prussian Saxony. Over the next decade, an increasing number of

⁹⁷ King Wilhelm II of Württemberg, cabinet order, December 1, 1893, sent to Schott von Schottenstein, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/1, file 58.

Württemberg officers, including four division commanders, eleven brigade commanders, and seventeen regiment commanders, joined Dettinger in the Prussian contingent.⁹⁸

Drawing a line in the sand: Bavaria, Wilhelm II, and military justice

Criticism of the Bebenhausen Convention was not confined to the southwestern corner of Germany. Both the Bavarian and Saxon governments feared that the creation of a single seniority list for the Prussian and Württemberg contingents would embolden supporters of greater military centralization. As the Bavarian minister-president, Krafft von Crailsheim, explained at the end of December 1893, the Bebenhausen Convention had, at the stroke of a pen, disturbed the “balance that exists within the empire according to the constitution.” What had been created was nothing less than a “preponderance of power” for Prussia.⁹⁹ In the short term, observers were convinced that the convention would undermine the remaining military autonomy of Württemberg. There was even a possibility, Saxony’s envoy in Munich reported in January 1894, that the XIII Army Corps might “stand on the same footing” as Baden’s contingent “in the not-too-distant future”: one of the consequences of the military convention signed by the grand duchy in 1871 was that “nearly every” Badenese officer had been sent to Prussia.¹⁰⁰ Some believed that the long-term impact of the Bebenhausen Convention could be

⁹⁸ Vitzthum von Eckstädt, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, December 30, 1893, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 121. For the number of Württemberg officer transfers to Prussia in the first decade after the conclusion of the Bebenhausen Convention, see the memorandum prepared by Major Schroeder in the Württemberg ministry of war, October 21, 1906, with statistical tables, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 15.

⁹⁹ Soden to Mittnacht, December 28, 1893, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 217.

¹⁰⁰ Oswald von Fabrice, Saxon envoy in Munich, also accredited in Stuttgart, to Metzsch, January 14, 1894, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 1545a. Over two years later, the Saxon envoy in Berlin was still

even more serious. It was conceivable that the agreement had laid the groundwork for the abolition of the ministries of war throughout non-Prussian Germany, thereby rendering the military authority of the three *Kontingentsherren* meaningless. Soon after the convention's details became public knowledge, one Prussian general fed these fears: it would be best, he said, if the "costly and superfluous" Württemberg war ministry were finally abolished.¹⁰¹

Concerned about their own kingdom's military rights, Saxony's ministers remained highly suspicious of Prussia in the decades after the Bebenhausen Convention. The unease about the state of military relations in the empire was, however, much greater in Bavaria. Bismarck's success in convincing King Ludwig II to accept the appointment of Friedrich Wilhelm as inspector-general in 1871 had taught Bavaria's government an important lesson: the Prussian authorities could not be trusted to respect the existing balance of power between the imperial government and the federal states. As a result, there was a storm of protest in Munich when the details of the Bebenhausen Convention became known in January 1894. Over the following weeks, there was little that the Württemberg envoy to the kingdom, Oskar von Soden, could do to escape criticism of his monarch's actions. Soden was repeatedly approached by members of the Bavarian court and government officials who condemned the "treachery" of King Wilhelm II and complained about the damage that the agreement had inflicted on Germany's federal structure. Even Prince Regent Luitpold personally expressed his displeasure to Württemberg's envoy.¹⁰² At the beginning of February 1893, the prince

expressing similar concerns about the autonomy of the Württemberg contingent. Hohenthal to Metzsch, April 13, 1896, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 1545a.

¹⁰¹ Alexander Okolicsányi von Okolicsana, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, January 24, 1894, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 42-1.

¹⁰² Eulenburg to Caprivi, January 18, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 3382. For the Bavarian government's criticism of King Wilhelm II's "betrayal," see also Vitzthum von Eckstädt to the Saxon ministry of war, February 8, 1894, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 120.

regent went so far as to send Soden back to Stuttgart in order to seek a “clarifying word” about the agreement from the Württemberg monarch. It was soon clear that the Bebenhausen Convention had not, as Crailsheim had initially feared, modified one of the “basic treaties of the empire.”¹⁰³ Nevertheless, one Bavarian newspaper still thought it wise to issue the following warning to its readers in June 1894: today, Prussia “wants a finger, tomorrow it will demand the entire hand, and, the following day, it will tear away the entire body.”¹⁰⁴

In the first half of the 1890s, the possibility that alterations to Württemberg’s military convention with Prussia – one of the “basic treaties of the empire” – might endanger the reserve rights of Bavaria seemed acute. Unlike his grandfather, Kaiser Wilhelm II was determined to exercise his powers to their fullest possible extent following his accession to the throne in 1888. Less than two years later, he tactlessly reminded the aging Bismarck that “one should not twist or quibble with the word of a Kaiser” for he was “accustomed to being obeyed.”¹⁰⁵ Wilhelm II’s eagerness to be both seen and heard, and the bombastic and ill-conceived manner in which he established his “personal monarchy,” inevitably created friction with Germany’s second-largest kingdom. During a visit to Munich in September 1891, the Kaiser sparked widespread indignation in Bavaria by inscribing “suprema lex regis voluntas!” in the city’s Golden Book.¹⁰⁶ Wilhelm II’s conception of the scope of his imperial role ensured that efforts

¹⁰³ Theodor von Holleben, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Caprivi, February 4, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 3382. After it became known in Munich that the Bebenhausen Convention had not altered the military convention of 1870, Crailsheim issued an apology to the Württemberg government. Crailsheim to the Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, February 10, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 3383.

¹⁰⁴ *Bayerischer Kurier*, June 26, 1894, attached to the report by Guido von Thielmann, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Caprivi, June 26, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 2749.

¹⁰⁵ Wilhelm II’s telegram to Bismarck, January 17, 1890, quoted in *Philipp Eulenburgs Politische Korrespondenz*, ed. John C.G. Röhl (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1976), 1:420.

¹⁰⁶ For Wilhelm II’s adherence to the “monarchical principle” and its consequences, see Röhl, *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser’s Personal Monarchy*, 117-38, 383-405. For his relationship to Bavaria, see Hans-Michael Körner, “Na

to assert Bavaria's privileged position in the empire were viewed as a lack of German patriotism in Berlin. During a reception in Moscow in June 1896, a speaker raised his glass to Prince Heinrich of Prussia and the German princes who had travelled to Tsar Nicholas II's coronation ceremony "in his entourage." Prince Ludwig of Bavaria was quick to respond: "we are not an entourage, not vassals, but rather allies of the German Kaiser." Wilhelm II was livid. The Bavarians, he claimed, had illusions of grandeur and were conspiring to annex Bohemia and the Tyrol from Austria-Hungary in order to establish a "South German empire."¹⁰⁷

Wilhelm II's determination to exercise his imperial authority and pressure his fellow monarchs into adopting a "national" perspective were at the centre of the disputes over the marksman's lanyard and the double cockade in the mid-1890s. On both occasions, the Kaiser's initiatives were met with stubborn resistance from Prince Regent Luitpold. In the aftermath of the Bebenhausen Convention, a far more serious conflict unfolded between Berlin and Munich that once again convinced the prince regent to dig in his heels in defence of his reserve rights. This dispute concerned the administration of military justice. Article 61 of the imperial constitution extended the Prussian regulations for courts martial, which had been introduced in April 1845, to the empire's non-Prussian states. For the time being at least, Bavaria was excluded from this measure. Because military justice had only recently been reformed in the South German kingdom in April 1869, the federal treaty of November 1870 permitted Bavaria to retain its existing regulations until both the Bundesrat and Reichstag could agree upon a

warte Wittelsbach!' Kaiser Wilhelm II. und das Königreich Bayern," in *Der letzte Kaiser. Wilhelm II. im Exil*, ed. Hans Wilderotter and Klaus-Dieter Pohl (Berlin: Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1991), 31-42.

¹⁰⁷ Vitzthum von Eckstädt to the Saxon ministry of war, June 9 and August 18, 1896, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 124. For Prince Ludwig's speech, the subsequent political scandal, and the Bavarian heir's "Canossa experience" during a meeting with Wilhelm II in Kiel, see Müller, *Royal Heirs in Imperial Germany*, 176-9.

common code for court martial proceedings.¹⁰⁸ In the first two decades after unification, half-hearted attempts were made to standardize military justice across Germany. These attempts failed, as Crailsheim explained in 1881, because the government in Munich was unwilling to consent to the creation of a supreme military court under the Kaiser's control. The King of Bavaria's power of command remained unassailable in peacetime and, as a result, only he could confirm sentences and issue pardons to the soldiers of his contingent.¹⁰⁹

In opposing the creation of a supreme military court, Crailsheim enjoyed the support of a large portion of Bavaria's population. This support was not solely a product of concerns over the kingdom's reserve rights or even South German resentment towards the Kaiser. In large part, courts martial became an explosive issue during the 1890s because of differing opinions over the role of the army in German society. Military justice in Prussia was founded on the conviction that the army, in order to perform its domestic function as a bulwark of the monarchical order, must remain a "state within a state." Prussian courts martial therefore took place behind closed doors and trials were conducted in writing. Moreover, active officers oversaw the proceedings and, owing to the absence of an independent appeals process, the decisions of military judges were rarely overturned. By contrast, Bavaria's military justice reform in 1869 reflected the army's less dominating position in South German society. Shaped by liberal principles of jurisprudence that had emerged during the nineteenth century, courts

¹⁰⁸ Section III, Article 5, "Der Bundesvertrag betreffend den Beitritt Bayerns zur Verfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 23. November 1870," and Article 61, "Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:330, 398.

¹⁰⁹ Crailsheim's comments on draft legislation presented to the Bundesrat concerning military justice proceedings, forwarded to Rudolf von Gasser, Bavarian envoy in Dresden, June 16, 1881, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, Bayerische Gesandtschaft Dresden 3737. See also Karl Möckl, *Die Prinzregentenzeit. Gesellschaft und Politik während der Ära des Prinzregenten Luitpold in Bayern* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1972), 380-1.

martial in Bavaria were open to the public, trials were conducted orally, and the verdicts of the military judges, who were required to have received formal legal training, could be reviewed by a supreme military court. The unwillingness of many Bavarians to abandon these liberal gains was evident in late 1891. When rumours circulated in Munich that the Prussian war minister had drafted a common military justice code, the Centre Party, supported by a majority of the deputies and with the sympathy of Bavaria's own minister of war, sent a petition to the Bavarian parliament. The petition asked Prince Regent Luitpold to agree only to a common code that embodied the principles of judicial independence and oral and public trials.¹¹⁰

Much to the relief of Crailsheim, the Bavarian minister of war, and the deputies of the Centre Party, the rumoured military justice code did not appear before the Bundesrat in the following months. Personnel changes nevertheless ensured that the matter remained hotly debated in Berlin. In the autumn of 1893, General Walther Bronsart von Schellendorff was appointed Prussian minister of war and, one year later, Prince Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst assumed office as imperial chancellor. For different reasons, both men were far more inclined than their predecessors to introduce a common military justice code that would give the German public access to courts martial. Bronsart wished to gain goodwill in the Reichstag, which had passed resolutions in support of public trials in 1889 and 1892, in order to secure an increase to the army's peacetime strength. He also hoped to use military justice reform as a weapon in his struggle against the Prussian General Staff and the Kaiser's military cabinet, both of which were working to undermine the war ministry's authority. Like the war

¹¹⁰ Pritzelwitz to the Prussian ministry of war, October 22, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 2743; Drummond to the British Foreign Office, October 30 and November 11, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 264. For the differences between courts martial proceedings in Bavaria and Prussia and the reaction of the Bavarian parliament to rumours concerning the drafting of a military justice code for the entire empire, see Möckl, *Die Prinzregentenzeit*, 381-4.

minister, Hohenlohe was convinced that the introduction of public courts martial could neutralize opposition in the Reichstag, especially from the Social Democrats, who wasted no opportunity to criticize the lack of accountability inherent in Prussia's existing military justice system. The chancellor was also bound by his past: as Bavaria's minister-president in the spring of 1869, he had played a crucial role in opening Bavarian courts martial to public scrutiny. If he now failed to support Bronsart, Hohenlohe feared that he would be ridiculed by the Reichstag and the German public as "more Prussian than a Prussian general."¹¹¹

Hohenlohe's arguments failed to convince the Kaiser. Wilhelm II steadfastly refused to consent to a military justice code that would introduce public courts martial to the Prussian army. Under the influence of the conservative members of his entourage, most notably General Wilhelm von Hahnke, the chief of the military cabinet, and Philipp zu Eulenburg, his closest civilian advisor, the Kaiser became convinced that opening proceedings to the public would undermine the army's discipline. As Hahnke explained to Colonel Theophil Reichlin von Meldegg, Bavaria's military plenipotentiary, in the spring of 1896, it was possible that the Kaiser would consent to the autonomy of military judges and even approve a military justice code that provided for oral proceedings. But Wilhelm II would never permit the newspapers to report on courts martial: "just as in everyday life the man of the house does not leave his door open," the army could under no circumstances tolerate "the wider population and above all the extreme elements" looking into its internal affairs. The preceding decades, Hahnke continued, had witnessed a seemingly irresistible shift in the balance of power between monarchy and

¹¹¹ Hohenlohe's diary entry for October 31, 1895, in *Fürst Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst. Denkwürdigkeiten der Reichskanzlerzeit*, ed. Karl Alexander von Müller (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1967), 114-16. See also Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 246; Möckl, *Die Prinzregentenzeit*, 385-6.

parliament, and the military represented the only sphere in which royal authority remained unquestioned. The army, he had previously told Hohenlohe, would therefore have to remain “an isolated body into which no one could be permitted to gaze with critical eyes.”¹¹²

In light of this fierce opposition in the Kaiser’s entourage, Bronsart’s “promotion” to adjutant-general and the appointment of the more pliable General Heinrich von Goßler as Prussian war minister in the summer of 1896 were not surprising. The new minister of war, Wilhelm II boasted to Eulenburg, “is agreed with me in all questions” and “wants only to be his Kaiser’s general.”¹¹³ Bronsart’s removal from office also deprived Hohenlohe of his most powerful ally. Still, the elderly chancellor was determined to “stand or fall on the question of public procedure.” In May 1896, he declared in the Reichstag that the anticipated military justice code would be drafted “in accordance with modern legal opinion.” The chancellor’s commitment, albeit vague, to a liberal reform of courts martial enraged the Kaiser. Both Eulenburg and Wilhelm II were nevertheless convinced that Hohenlohe’s dismissal would unleash a serious political crisis at an inopportune moment in time. They were therefore willing to compromise. During a meeting in Wilhelmshöhe in August 1896, Hohenlohe agreed not to oppose Bronsart’s “promotion” and Goßler’s appointment as Prussian war minister. In return, the Kaiser promised to reconsider the introduction of public courts martial after seeking the advice of the commanding generals of the empire’s twenty army corps.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Hohenlohe’s diary entry for November 2, 1895, in Müller, *Fürst Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst*, 116-17; Reichlin’s written statement, dated April 4, 1896, attached to his report to Asch, April 30, 1896, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11135.

¹¹³ Wilhelm II’s telegram to Eulenburg, August 13, 1896, in Röhl, *Philipp Eulenburgs Politische Korrespondenz*, 3:1731-2.

¹¹⁴ For background on the courts martial issue, see John C.G. Röhl, *Germany without Bismarck: The Crisis of Government in the Second Reich, 1890-1900* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1967), 178-99. For the chancellor’s stubborn insistence on public courts martial, see Hohenlohe to Friedrich von Holstein, August 5, 1896, in *The Holstein Papers: The Memoirs, Diaries and Correspondence of Friedrich von Holstein, 1837-1909*, ed. Norman

This compromise only postponed the inevitable conflict. The outcome of consultations with the corps commanders, one observer wrote, was “absolutely predictable” and it was “incomprehensible” that Hohenlohe would be able to remain in office after these officers had recommended restricting the public’s access to trials.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the Kaiser worked to sabotage the entire military justice reform. Wilhelm II made it clear that he would only consent to public proceedings on two conditions: the Kaiser should be given the authority to determine whether or not they were opened to the public in any part of the empire, and a supreme military court should be established in Berlin. Even if the Bavarians accepted these conditions, which was highly unlikely, Wilhelm II would be able to block public courts martial in North Germany, which, after all, were “incompatible with Prussian discipline.”¹¹⁶

Until 1896, Bavaria’s approach to these developments had been cautious. In early 1891, the Saxon government had approached the Bavarian envoy in Berlin, Hugo von Lerchenfeld, with the suggestion that the two kingdoms might cooperate in order to ensure that their military rights were not endangered by a common military justice code. The Bavarian response was ambivalent. Even though Crailsheim and the Bavarian minister of war, General Benignus von Safferling, recognized the advantages in establishing a common front against Berlin, they were convinced that Saxon and Bavarian interests were not identical. They also feared that an early commitment to Dresden might restrict their freedom of action in the future. Bronsart’s efforts in 1895 to reach an agreement with Munich before a military justice code appeared before the

Rich and M.H. Fisher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 3:645. For the compromise with the Kaiser in Wilhelmshöhe, see Hohenlohe’s diary entry for August 8, 1896, in Müller, *Fürst Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst*, 251-2.

¹¹⁵ Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter to Eulenburg, August 10, 1896, in Rich and Fisher, *The Holstein Papers*, 3:647-8.

¹¹⁶ Wilhelm II to Eulenburg, August 14, 1896, in Röhl, *Philipp Eulenburgs Politische Korrespondenz*, 3:1732-3.

Bundesrat therefore had little chance of success: the Bavarian government could not take a firm standpoint until all the details were known.¹¹⁷ The appearance of draft legislation in early October 1896 initially did little to provide clarity to the Bavarian position. On two separate occasions in November, Prussia's military attaché in Munich reported that the Bavarians had only minor reservations about the draft and that even the establishment of a supreme military court was unlikely to encounter significant opposition.¹¹⁸ In part, these mixed signals were the result of a change in personnel at the Bavarian war ministry. Safferling had supported the Centre Party's petition in 1891 and thereafter urged Crailsheim to oppose any military justice code that would establish a supreme military court. His successor, General Adolf von Asch, who assumed office in June 1893, was far more willing to make concessions.¹¹⁹

Bavarian ambivalence soon disappeared. Throughout October and November 1896, a commission assembled from representatives of the Bavarian interior, justice, and war ministries met to scrutinize the draft military justice code. At the beginning of December, the minister of war presented the commission's findings to the prince regent. Although Luitpold agreed that Paragraph 270/2, which authorized the Kaiser to close courts martial to the public in any part of the empire, should be removed, he rejected the commission's recommendation that Bavaria agree to the creation of a supreme military court. The kingdom's reserve rights, Luitpold informed Asch, had to be preserved in their "full extent": he would never agree to limit the independence of Bavaria's military courts or their jurisdiction over the kingdom's

¹¹⁷ Haag to Asch, May 31, 1895, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11134. For the Bavarian reaction to the Saxon government's offer of cooperation, see Lerchenfeld to the Bavarian foreign ministry, January 21, 1891, Crailsheim to the Bavarian minister of war, General Benignus von Safferling, February 18, 1891, and Safferling to Crailsheim, March 2, 1891, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11134.

¹¹⁸ Krosigk's reports to the Prussian ministry of war from November 6 and 28, 1896, PA AA Berlin, R 2753.

¹¹⁹ Möckl, *Die Prinzregentenzeit*, 397-99, 409-10.

soldiers. This unwillingness to make concessions to Prussia compelled the government in Munich to adopt an unwavering standpoint towards the military justice reform. When the legislation was debated in the Bundesrat in early 1897, Lerchenfeld thus fell back on the traditional Bavarian argument: the federal treaty from November 1870 safeguarded the King of Bavaria's military authority in peacetime and, as a result, the South German kingdom was entitled to retain its own supreme military court. Failure to acknowledge this reserve right would violate the imperial constitution. Whereas the passage of legislation required simple majorities in both the Bundesrat and Reichstag, Article 78 ensured that the "specific rights of the individual federal states" could only be modified with the approval of those states.¹²⁰

This insistence on constitutional propriety weakened, rather than strengthened, the South German kingdom's position. Having hoped all along that Bavarian opposition to the creation of a supreme military court might derail the entire military justice reform, Wilhelm II was delighted. In May 1897, he told the Bavarian military plenipotentiary that, without a common supreme court, the military justice code was "unthinkable." He would "not be displeased if nothing came of the whole matter" since he had little sympathy for the reform and believed that Prussia's existing courts martial regulations provided the army with "so many advantages"¹²¹ Even Lerchenfeld's proposed changes to the legislation failed to acquire broad support in the Bundesrat. Although Saxony's minister of war had initially objected to the

¹²⁰ Article 78, "Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:402. For Lerchenfeld's insistence on the acknowledgement of Bavaria's reserve right, see Lerchenfeld to Crailsheim, January 23, 1897, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11146. For the reaction to the draft military justice code in Munich, including the prince regent's opposition to the creation of a supreme military court in Berlin, see Möckl, *Die Prinzregentenzeit*, 410-13.

¹²¹ Reichlin to Asch, May 5, 1897, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11146. For the Kaiser's reaction to Bavaria's opposition to the military justice code in the Bundesrat, see also Campbell, "The Bavarian Army," 191-2.

subordination of Saxon soldiers to a military court in Berlin, and even though Württemberg's parliament had demanded that its government undertake its own reform in the event that a military justice code for the empire failed to guarantee public proceedings, neither Dresden nor Stuttgart was prepared to give its backing to Bavarian demands for an autonomous court in Munich.¹²² In focusing on this demand, the Bavarians also sacrificed their support in the Reichstag and Germany's public more broadly. As it became clear in early 1897 that the ministers in Munich were more interested in defending their sovereign's rights than restricting the Kaiser's power of command, support, especially from Bavarian liberals, evaporated.¹²³

Throughout the summer and early autumn of 1897, neither the Kaiser nor the prince regent was prepared to acknowledge the other's standpoint. Yet, because Bavaria's reserve rights had emerged as the principal issue in the struggle over military justice reform and because the Bavarian government had grown increasingly worried about the strength of its position, the chancellor was given an opportunity to seek a way out of the crisis through negotiation. At the end of October, Hohenlohe approached the Kaiser with a compromise: if Wilhelm II agreed to postpone a settlement between Berlin and Munich over the jurisdiction of a supreme military court, the chancellor would no longer insist on public access to courts martial. The draft legislation produced by the Prussian ministry of state, including Paragraph 270/2, which allowed the Kaiser to close military justice proceedings to the public at any time

¹²² Hohenthal to Metzsch, February 1, 1897, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 4694; Metzsch to Hohenthal, October 29, 1897, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 125. For the earlier attitudes of the two kingdoms towards the military justice reform, see Haag to the Bavarian ministry of war, September 22, 1890, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11134; Holleben to Hohenlohe, May 22, 1895, PA AA Berlin, R 3383.

¹²³ Möckl, *Die Prinzregentenzeit*, 415-16.

and in any part of the empire, could therefore be introduced. Wilhelm II agreed and, in May 1898, the Reichstag approved a common military justice code for the empire.¹²⁴

Hohenlohe's decision to separate the question of the supreme military court from the question of public access to courts martial was above all motivated by fear. It would be "regrettable from the monarchical point of view," the chancellor wrote to one of his closest confidantes, if the Bundesrat and Reichstag were asked to resolve what, in essence, was a dispute between two ruling houses. With Lerchenfeld's consent, Hohenlohe instead sought a dynastic solution to a dynastic problem.¹²⁵ His first attempt in early 1898 was a failure. Although the chancellor convinced Prince Regent Luitpold to personally write to the Kaiser, the negotiations soon became bogged down over the location and jurisdiction of a separate Bavarian court. It was not until the end of November 1898 and following additional encouragement from the chancellor that Luitpold and Wilhelm II reached an agreement. A special Bavarian senate would be established as part of the empire's supreme military court. In order to reach this agreement, both sides were forced to make concessions: although the supreme military court would be located in Berlin, the Bavarian senate's officers would be appointed by the King of Bavaria. Moreover, its verdicts would derive from the Bavarian monarch and not be issued "in the name of the empire." At the beginning of March 1899, a majority in the Reichstag approved the agreement between the two sovereigns.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Hohenlohe's diary entry for October 28, 1897, in Müller, *Fürst Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst*, 397-8. See also Röhl, *Germany without Bismarck*, 243-4.

¹²⁵ Lerchenfeld to the Bavarian foreign ministry, January 25, 1898, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11146. For the chancellor's fear of a parliamentary solution, see Hohenlohe to Otto von Völderndorff-Waradein, September 21, 1898, in Müller, *Fürst Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst*, 460.

¹²⁶ Luitpold to Wilhelm II, February 18, 1898, Wilhelm II to Luitpold, March 14, 1898, and Luitpold to Wilhelm II, April 16, 1898, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11146. For Luitpold's consent to the creation of a special Bavarian senate in Berlin, see Luitpold to Hohenlohe, November 24, 1898, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 11146. See also Campbell, "The Bavarian Army," 201-13.

The creation of a Bavarian senate as part of the supreme military court in Berlin was a victory for the prince regent and opponents of closer military integration with Prussia. The Bavarian contingent retained its special status according to the federal treaty as “a self-contained component of the federal army ... under the military command of His Majesty the King of Bavaria.” This victory had been purchased at a high cost. The conflict over military justice reform deepened the existing animosity between Kaiser Wilhelm II and Prince Regent Luitpold, while the narrow focus of the Bavarian government on the kingdom’s reserve rights alienated German liberals and created resentment in Dresden and Stuttgart. To be sure, Bavaria’s ministers had initially been unwilling to commit themselves to open confrontation, a course that they considered too dangerous. Instead, they preferred to observe developments in Berlin. It was only after the prince regent declared himself unwilling to accept any reduction to his remaining sovereign powers that Crailsheim and Lerchenfeld were compelled to adopt a more aggressive defence of Bavaria’s military autonomy. The Kaiser’s determination to sabotage the reform in the interests of preserving the Prussian army’s reliability as an instrument of domestic policy ensured that the possibility of resolving the conflict in a manner that would be acceptable in both Berlin and Munich at times appeared remote. In the end, the weakness of the Bavarian position – the South German kingdom was the only state that could justifiably claim unconstrained authority over its soldiers in peacetime – and Hohenlohe’s fears that permitting the Reichstag deputies to discuss the Bavarian king’s rights could jeopardize the monarchical principle throughout Germany encouraged the two sides to compromise.

Conclusion

The prince regent's opposition to the military justice reform clearly defined the limits of military integration in the German empire following the Wars of Unification. The Kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg could accept the distribution of Prussian equipment and uniforms to their soldiers. They were also willing to consent to the reorganization and training of their contingents according to Prussian standards. After all, through the military agreements they had signed with Bismarck between 1867 and 1870, the three rulers were obligated to work towards some degree of uniformity across the entire German army. The non-Prussian rulers were at the same time determined to preserve their remaining military rights in the decades after unification. As a result, the periodic efforts to consolidate or extend the authority of the Kaiser, his military cabinet, and Prussia's war ministry over the state-based contingents often elicited fierce reactions, especially in the two South German kingdoms. Unlike Saxony, which had been compelled to enter the North German Confederation in 1867 and sought after 1871 to preserve its status in the empire through cooperation with Prussia, Bavaria's King Ludwig II and Württemberg's King Karl felt more keenly the loss of their sovereign powers.

This resistance to military centralization did not always ensure the preservation of the rights of the two South German kingdoms: in part by concealing the full scope of the duties of an inspector-general, Bismarck was able to subordinate Bavaria's two army corps to Friedrich Wilhelm's Fourth Army inspectorate in 1871 and subject their soldiers to annual imperial inspections over the next two decades. In all cases, however, Bavaria's federal treaty and Württemberg's military convention provided the South German monarchs with persuasive

arguments against the further integration of their contingents into the Prussian-dominated military structure of the empire. Simultaneously, and as Hohenlohe feared in the autumn of 1898, the resulting disputes between the *Bundesfeldherr* and the two *Kontingentsherren* involved risks to Germany's monarchical foundations. It was therefore better to work within the German army's contingent-based structure than to renounce or ignore agreements that underpinned monarchy's role in the empire. Ironically, from the 1890s onwards, the martial ambitions of Germany's dukes, grand dukes, kings, and princes would test the willingness of Kaiser Wilhelm II and his fellow rulers to pursue compromise over open conflict.

Chapter Three

Risk and reward: Warrior princes in the German army

From the rolling hills of Bohemia to the Loire valley, the male members of Germany's ruling houses had been familiar sights on the battlefields of the Wars of Unification. In the summer of 1866, Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia and his cousin, Prince Friedrich Karl, had assumed command of two of the three Prussian armies that advanced through Saxony and the mountain passes from Silesia into the Habsburg monarchy. Both princes played important roles in the Battle of Königgrätz. While Friedrich Karl's First Army pinned down the Austrians near the village of Sadowa, Friedrich Wilhelm's Second Army, advancing from the northeast, rolled up the exposed right flank of Benedek's forces and, in doing so, decided the Austro-Prussian War in Prussia's favour. Shortly after the battle, King Wilhelm tearfully embraced his son and, according to one popular account, placed his own *Pour le Mérite* around the crown prince's neck.¹ Friedrich Wilhelm and his cousin again led Prussia's armies in 1870, this time in the campaign against France. In command of a mixed army of Prussians and South Germans, the crown prince oversaw early victories at Weissenburg and Wörth, and later took part in the pivotal Battle of Sedan. When the French fortress of Metz surrendered to the besieging Prusso-German troops under Friedrich Karl at the end of October, the King of Prussia marked the occasion by promoting both his son and his nephew to the rank of field marshal.²

The two leading members of the House of Hohenzollern were not the only German princes with martial ambitions. In the campaigns against Austria and France, the Prussian

¹ Friedrich Wilhelm's diary entry for July 3, 1866, in *Kaiser Friedrich III. Tagebücher von 1848-1866*, ed. Heinrich Otto Meisner (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1929), 450-1. See also Müller, *Our Fritz*, 130-1.

² Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 284.

Guard Corps was led by King Karl of Württemberg's cousin, Prince August, who had served in the Prussian army for much of his life. Fearing that the Saxons were about to strike the decisive blow during the Battle of St. Privat in August 1870, Prince August formed his guardsmen into tight columns and launched them towards the well-entrenched French troops. Within twenty minutes, almost a quarter of his corps – roughly 8,000 men – had been killed or wounded.³ Other warrior princes fared much better than Prince August. In 1866, Crown Prince Albert, the son of King Johann of Saxony, took command of his father's army, withdrawing it to the southeast in order to link up with Benedek's army assembling in Bohemia. During the Battle of Königgrätz, Albert's Saxons stubbornly defended the Austrian left flank, abandoning their positions only in the late afternoon. At the outset of the war against France, Albert led the Saxon XII Army Corps of the North German army. After the impressive performance of his soldiers during the opening weeks of the campaign, General Helmuth von Moltke, the chief of the General Staff, gave Albert command of the newly formed Army of the Meuse. The crown prince's mixed Prusso-Saxon army thereafter played an important role in the encirclement of the French forces at Sedan in September 1870. The following year, and in recognition of his contribution to unification, Kaiser Wilhelm promoted Albert to the rank of field marshal.⁴

The presence of warrior princes on the battlefields of Austria and France reflected the significance that Germany's monarchs attached to the power of military command. It was not sufficient for a king or grand duke to sign an officer's commission or approve the transfer of a

³ Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 176-7. For a detailed account of the assault of the Prussian Guard Corps during the Battle of St. Privat, see Wolfgang Förster, ed., *Prinz Friedrich Karl von Preußen. Denkwürdigkeiten aus seinem Leben* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1910), 2:250-6.

⁴ Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 124-8; Bernhard Schwertfeger, "Albert," *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 1 (1953), 131-2. For Crown Prince Albert's appointment as commander of the Army of the Meuse and his role both in the operations in eastern France at the end of August 1870 and during the Battle of Sedan, see Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 190-223.

regiment from one garrison to another. The preservation of a ruling house's martial reputation demanded that its male members lead their soldiers in combat. The long peace between 1871 and 1914 presented few opportunities to do so. As a result, the empire's monarchs sought opportunities to cast themselves in the role of warrior kings during inspections, parades, and reviews. In the spring and autumn of every year, Kaiser Wilhelm reviewed the regiments of the Prussian Guard Corps in Berlin. Despite the oppressive heat and the clouds of dust thrown up by the parading troops, the review in September 1872 created, in the words of one observer, a "brilliant military spectacle."⁵ When Russia's Tsar Alexander II visited Stuttgart the next year, King Karl of Württemberg organized a military parade for his imperial guest. Although the tsar's health was visibly poor, the two monarchs ostentatiously rode alongside their staff officers through the nearby village of Cannstadt and onto the parade ground.⁶ Even Bavaria's King Ludwig II, who did his utmost to avoid military events, occasionally felt obligated to appear as his kingdom's *Kontingentsherr*. In the summer of 1875, the king astonished many by attending a military review for the first time in four years. The review, the British envoy in Munich wrote, was "eminently successful" and the king, who had chosen a general's uniform for the occasion, was "received by the public with extraordinary enthusiasm."⁷

The largest stage on which Germany's rulers publically performed their martial roles was the so-called *Kaiserparaden*. Beginning in 1876, these military parades concluded the large-scale autumn manoeuvres, or *Kaisermanöver*. In doing so, they forged a link between

⁵ Maximilian Pergler von Perglas, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, September 8, 1872, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2652.

⁶ Anton von Magnus, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Bismarck, June 10, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 3354.

⁷ Robert Morier, British envoy in Munich, to the British Foreign Office, August 23, 1875, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 227. For a description of the military review in the Bavarian press, see Rupert Hacker, ed., *Ludwig II. von Bayern in Augenzeugenberichten* (Düsseldorf: Karl Rauch Verlag, 1966), 224-6.

practical military exercises, which were designed to test the German army's readiness for war, and a ceremonial event highlighting the monarch's power of command and intended for public consumption. Of course, the focal point of these events was the Kaiser. Nevertheless, because the manoeuvres were held in different regions of the empire each year, the *Kommandogewalt* of the Kaiser often shared the spotlight with the military authority of the *Kontingentsherren*. When staged beyond Prussia's borders, the *Kaiserparaden* included soldiers from the non-Prussian contingents. On these occasions, and in deference to the army's federal structure, the Kaiser also wore Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg military decorations and uniforms.⁸ The willingness of the Kaiser to accommodate the martial images of his fellow monarchs at times meant that the *Kaiserparaden* resembled royal processions. This was certainly the case in Stuttgart in the fall of 1899: the Kaiser and King Albert of Saxony each took their places at the head of an infantry regiment, while Württemberg's King Wilhelm II assumed pride of place in his own kingdom by taking command of three regiments drawn from his contingent.⁹

Attendance at military parades or the wearing of decorations and uniforms could indeed create a "brilliant military spectacle." In a period in which broader sections of the population viewed hereditary privilege to be anachronistic, these carefully stage-managed performances also seemed necessary in order to strengthen a ruler's claim to his throne. Still, they were poor

⁸ Jakob Vogel, "Nation in Arms: Military and Commemorative Festivals in Germany and France, 1871-1914," in *Festive Culture in Germany and Europe from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Karin Friedrich (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 248-50. See also Green, *Fatherlands*, 319-20; Kirn, *Soldatenleben in Württemberg*, 96-105. For the criticisms of the *Kaisermanöver* by German and foreign observers, particularly during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II, see Bernd F. Schulte, "Die Kaisermanöver 1893 bis 1913. Evolution ohne Chance," in *Von der freien Gemeinde zum föderalistischen Europa. Festschrift für Adolf Gasser zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Fried Esterbauer, Helmut Kalkbrenner, Markus Mattmüller, and Lutz Roemheld (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1983), 243-59.

⁹ Victor Drummond, British envoy in Munich, to the British Foreign Office, September 9, 1899, TNA Kew, FO 30, file 294.

substitutes for heroism on the battlefield. Moreover, by the second half of the nineteenth century, taking command of soldiers in combat was increasingly dangerous for Germany's, and Europe's, ruling monarchs. Defeat on the battlefield might threaten one's grip on power, while military academies and staff colleges produced officers who were far more qualified to lead mass conscript armies than emperors, kings, or grand dukes.¹⁰ Unable or unwilling to discard the martial element of their dynastic images, Germany's rulers turned to their cousins, uncles, nephews, and sons. As during the Wars of Unification, warrior princes, who had been trained as professional officers, were selected to lead their soldier-subjects on behalf of their ruling houses. For the King of Prussia, as Kaiser and *Bundesfeldherr*, the promotion of members of the House of Hohenzollern to high-ranking command positions presented few problems. The appointment of non-Prussian warrior princes was an entirely different matter. Placing their heirs or family members in the upper echelons of the German army required the empire's *Kontingentsherren* to seek imperial approval. In the opinion of the Kaiser and his advisors, this approval contained both risks and rewards. The appointment of warrior princes from Bavaria, Württemberg, and even Baden could strengthen the monarchical principle on which Bismarck's empire had been founded. In light of the army's contingent-based structure, their presence as inspectors-general or army corps commanders could at the same time weaken the *Bundesfeldherr*'s power of command and undermine military effectiveness in wartime.

¹⁰ Michael Epkenhans, "Das Ende eines Zeitalters: Europäische Monarchen und ihre Armeen im Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Monarchen und ihr Militär*, ed. Winfried Heinemann and Markus Pöhlmann (Potsdam: Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 2010), 59-74. For a discussion of monarchical self-representation as warrior kings during the early modern period, see Thomas Menzel, *Der Fürst als Feldherr. Militärisches Handeln und Selbstdarstellung bei Reichsfürsten zwischen 1470 und 1550* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2003), 49-71.

Passing on the martial baton: Warrior princes before the First World War

The upbringing of male members of Germany's ruling houses underwent considerable change over the course of the nineteenth century. The creation of constitutional governments across German-speaking Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars and the shock of the Revolutions of 1848 convinced many monarchs that their heirs should not only become gifted soldiers, but also competent rulers. The enrollment of princes at *Gymnasien* and universities had therefore become more common by the second half of the century.¹¹ However, lectures in military history and active service in their army's most prestigious regiments – often the cavalry or the guards – remained common features in the upbringing of Germany's heirs. This was especially true for the House of Hohenzollern, the ruling dynasty of Prussia. Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, the son of King Wilhelm I, was enlisted in a Prussian guards regiment at the age of seven and, having become accustomed to life in the barracks and drill on the parade ground, entered active service shortly before his eighteenth birthday. As was customary for members of ruling houses, promotion through the ranks depended little on a prince's ability to perform his duties. Despite interrupting his military career to attend the University of Bonn in the early 1850s, Friedrich Wilhelm reached the rank of colonel by the age of twenty-three. In 1864, during the Second Schleswig-Holstein War, the crown prince – still only thirty-three years old, but now a major-general – was assigned to the staff of Field Marshal Friedrich von Wrangel. Although some observers might have wondered who was baby-sitting whom, Bismarck tasked

¹¹ Müller, *Royal Heirs in Imperial Germany*, 75-111; See Yvonne Wagner, *Prinzenerziehung in der 2. Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Zum Bildungsverhalten des preußisch-deutschen Hofes im gesellschaftlichen Wandel* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 309-10.

the crown prince with ensuring that military operations under the eighty-year-old commander of the Austro-Prussian forces, who was deaf and suffering from senility, went as planned.¹²

Even monarchs who, in contrast to Friedrich Wilhelm, had not seen active service in the Wars of Unification demonstrated an intense interest in the army throughout their lives. One such monarch was Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden. Although he had never led troops on the battlefield, between 1877 and his death in 1907, Friedrich served as inspector-general of the Fifth Army Inspectorate in Karlsruhe. The Kaiser's decision to appoint the grand duke was widely considered a favour to his son-in-law and, because of Friedrich's lack of military experience, no one expected him to receive a front-line command in a future war. The long-time Prussian envoy to Baden, Karl von Eisendecker, therefore expressed his astonishment in July 1890 when the grand duke enthusiastically declared his intention to take part in that year's autumn manoeuvres: Friedrich, he reported, had "recently shown unusually great interest in military matters, of which, according to those competent to judge, he understands very little." Perhaps much more worryingly for the Prussians, the grand duke thought it "his destiny to command an army in the event of war," a view that was encouraged by the officers of his entourage.¹³ Despite Friedrich's obvious unsuitability as a wartime commander, Eisendecker was impressed by his martial passion. Friedrich took his duties "uncommonly seriously," so much so that members of his court became worried that he might unnecessarily wear himself out: in the summer of 1899 and approaching his seventy-third birthday, the grand duke insisted

¹² Hans-Christof Kraus, "Friedrich III. (12. März 1888 – 18. Juni 1888)," in *Preussens Herrscher: Von den ersten Hohenzollern bis Wilhelm II.*, ed. Frank-Lothar Kroll (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 268-9; Müller, *Our Fritz*, 129-30.

¹³ Karl von Eisendecker, Prussian envoy in Karlsruhe, to Friedrich von Holstein, July 18, 1890, in Rich and Fisher, *The Holstein Papers*, 3:345-6.

on inspecting almost every regiment assigned to the Fifth Army Inspectorate, spent too much time in the saddle, and, afterwards, barely allowed himself any time to recuperate.¹⁴

Other monarchs of Friedrich's generation performed their role as warrior kings simply because it was expected of them. Prince Luitpold of Bavaria, who became prince regent following the mysterious death of King Ludwig II in June 1886, began his military service in 1835 at the age of fourteen. Six years later, he was appointed commander of an artillery regiment. By 1848, Luitpold had risen to the rank of general, and, during the Austro-Prussian War, commanded a division.¹⁵ Despite a long military career that also included a promotion to Bavarian inspector-general in 1869, the prince regent preferred parades to military exercises. This preference was above all the result of personal shortcomings. In the fall of 1889, the Prussian envoy in Munich reported that numerous Bavarian officers had expressed a desire for an inspection by the Kaiser. This desire and the accompanying discontent in the Bavarian officer corps was above all the result of the prince regent's apparent lack of interest in the kingdom's military affairs. The Prussian envoy was nevertheless quick to explain Luitpold's reluctance to take part in military exercises. The prince regent was an "extraordinarily weak rider" and sought to avoid situations in which this weakness in his martial image might become obvious. According to the Bavarian war minister, the prince regent's entourage had even been limited to only three adjutants during the recent manoeuvres "in order to expose as few eyes as possible to the equestrian deficiencies of His Highness." If he were to conduct an inspection

¹⁴ Eisendecker to Hohenlohe, August 24, 1899, PA AA Berlin, R 2664.

¹⁵ Hermann Rumschöttel, "'Der erste Kavalier seines Hofes'. Persönlichkeit und Politik des Prinzregenten," in *Prinzregent Luitpold von Bayern. Ein Wittelsbacher zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, ed. Ulrike Leutheusser and Hermann Rumschöttel (Munich: Allitera Verlag, 2012), 19-21; Katharina Weigand, "Prinzregent Luitpold. Die Inszenierung der Volkstümlichkeit?" in *Die Herrscher Bayerns. 25 historische Portraits von Tassilo III. bis Ludwig III.*, ed. Alois Schmid and Katharina Weigand (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 362-3.

of the Bavarian contingent alongside Wilhelm II, who was well-known for his horsemanship, it would, the Prussian envoy concluded, produce “a picture that I dare not paint.”¹⁶

Luitpold recognized that even taking an active role in military affairs in peacetime could represent a considerable risk to a monarch. In wartime, and as France’s Napoleon III discovered in September 1870, defeat on the battlefield could have catastrophic consequences for a ruling dynasty. For this reason, Frederick the Great was the last Prussian king to lead his soldiers into combat.¹⁷ After 1871, there was also little chance that Germany’s less-powerful monarchs would actively take part in future campaigns. The presence of warrior kings at the front could, contemporaries argued, destabilize the military hierarchy. In April 1875, the Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin reported that King Albert of Saxony would be in line to take command of an army in a future war against France. There was only one concern. While the military cabinet was confident that Albert, as in 1870-1, would follow the orders of the seventy-eight-year-old Kaiser Wilhelm, would the Saxon king also be willing to subordinate himself to his successor?¹⁸ These concerns only increased after Wilhelm II’s accession to the throne in 1888. When, in December 1908, the Saxons again inquired as to whether or not Germany’s rulers would actively participate in a future war, General Helmuth von Moltke the Younger, the chief of the Prussian General Staff, was very candid. Aside from a handful of princes who had already been selected for commands, it would be impossible for the reigning monarchs to

¹⁶ Kuno zu Rantzau, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Bismarck, October 14, 1889, PA AA Berlin, R 2762. In the fall of 1887, Oskar von Soden, Württemberg’s envoy in Munich, had commented on the unfavourable impression that Luitpold’s absence from manoeuvres had left on the Bavarian contingent. Soden to Mittnacht, September 9, 1887, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 211.

¹⁷ Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann, “Militärische Prinzerziehung und monarchischer Oberbefehl in Preußen 1744-1918,” in *Die Inszenierung der heroischen Monarchie. Frühneuzeitliches Königtum zwischen ritterlichem Erbe und militärischer Herausforderung*, ed. Martin Wrede (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2014), 440-1.

¹⁸ Report of Major Carl von Planitz, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, April 27, 1875, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 96.

assume any role whatsoever. Such participation had the potential to create awkwardness and friction in the German army's command structure. What if a situation arose during a campaign in which officers of the General Staff felt it necessary to reprimand a ruling monarch? Moltke and the Kaiser would then be placed in an awkward, if not impossible, situation.¹⁹

Because Kaiser Wilhelm II sought every opportunity to project a martial image after 1888, this dilemma became more and more acute. Especially in the early years of his reign, the Kaiser routinely intervened in the annual manoeuvres, or *Kaisermanöver*. Describing this behaviour during the exercises in Silesia in September 1890, General Alfred von Waldersee, who, at the time, was the chief of the Prussian General Staff, wrote in his diary: "the Kaiser is extraordinarily restless, rushes to and fro, often finds himself too far forward in the firing line, overrides the decisions of his generals, gives numerous and often contradictory orders, and hardly listens to his advisors." In Waldersee's opinion, Wilhelm II possessed some knowledge of parade-ground exercises, but virtually no ability to command men in the field. What the young monarch did have, however, was a "growing self-confidence and an overestimation of his own abilities." This often produced awkward situations. The Kaiser, Waldersee despaired, "always wishes to be victorious and therefore resents an umpire's decision which goes against him."²⁰ General Karl von Einem, who served as Prussian minister of war between 1903 and

¹⁹ Report of Colonel Hermann von Salza und Lichtenau, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, December 9, 1908, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 40. According to the chief of the General Staff, such a situation had arisen in 1870-1. Moltke was nevertheless much more concerned that either he would be forced to remind a reigning monarch of the General Staff's authority or the Kaiser would be compelled to remove him from his command.

²⁰ Waldersee's diary entry for September 21, 1890, in Meisner, *Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Alfred Grafen von Waldersee*, 2:145. For Waldersee's criticism of the Kaiser's performance following these manoeuvres and its impact on his relationship with Wilhelm II, see Röhl, *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser's Personal Monarchy*, 416-25.

Table 4 – Warrior princes in the German army, 1871-1914²¹

| | Army inspectorate | Army corps | Division | Brigade |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------|----------|---------|
| Prussia | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Bavaria | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Saxony | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Württemberg | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Baden | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Other ruling houses | 3 | 1 | 8 | 10 |

²¹ Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der deutschen Heere*, 1:33ff.

1909 and who took part in the *Kaisermanöver* as a staff officer, deeply resented the Kaiser's behaviour. Over time, Einem wrote, the view gained currency that the manoeuvres no longer possessed any military value and that "the only ones who have success [during them] are those who find themselves on the Kaiser's side."²² When Moltke became chief of the General Staff in 1906, he insisted that Wilhelm II refrain from actively participating in the manoeuvres.²³

The Kaiser's insistence on performing his role as supreme warlord, frequently with embarrassing results, went hand-in-hand with a dictatorial approach to decision-making. Between 1871 and 1888, Wilhelm II's grandfather had left the affairs of government largely in the hands of Bismarck. As a result, Christopher Clark writes, when Wilhelm II came to the throne, "the office of emperor was like a house in which most of the rooms had never been occupied." Bismarck's dismissal in the spring of 1890 enabled the young Kaiser to establish his "personal rule" by exercising his constitutional authority to its fullest possible extent.²⁴ Nowhere was this more apparent than in military affairs. In addition to making sweeping changes to his military entourage shortly after his accession to the throne, Wilhelm II insisted on being consulted in all senior personnel decisions. The most famous of these decisions involved the chief of the Prussian General Staff. Whereas General Alfred von Schlieffen, the author of Germany's operational plan for a two-front war against France and Russia, preferred other candidates as his successor, Wilhelm II overruled him and, in January 1906, appointed General Helmuth von Moltke the Younger, the nephew of the architect of Prussia's victories in the Wars of Unification. From the Kaiser's point of view, it mattered little who replaced the

²² Karl von Einem, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten 1853-1933* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1933), 146-7.

²³ Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War*, 58-66; John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Into the Abyss of War and Exile, 1900-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 299-301.

²⁴ Christopher Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II: A Life in Power* (London: Penguin, 2009), 64-5.

retiring Schlieffen. “You can do that bit of work in peacetime,” the Kaiser informed Moltke, but “in a war, I will be my own chief of the General Staff.”²⁵

Like his father, Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, later Kaiser Friedrich III, who had remained deeply critical of the “German-Napoleonic kings” throughout his life, Wilhelm II was a fervent opponent of particularism. He maintained good relations with many of his fellow monarchs and possessed a deep respect for both his uncle, Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden, and Saxony’s King Albert. At the same time, however, the Kaiser expected the members of Germany’s ruling houses to display a thoroughly “national” attitude.²⁶ He probably agreed, at least in part, with the “imperial loyal politician” in Munich who argued for the appointment of the empire’s non-Prussian monarchs, especially the kings, to senior command positions in the army. Such appointments would not only contribute to national unity by binding these monarchs more closely to the Kaiser through military service, but, over time, also firmly entrench the belief that “supreme military authority” rested with the *Bundesfeldherr* and was “not essential to the dignity of a king.”²⁷ Few members of Germany’s ruling houses were willing to fully renounce this crucial element of their dynastic image. In the spring of 1892, Prince Ludwig of Bavaria made this clear when he announced his intention to attend the following year’s *Kaisermanöver*, which would take place near Metz and include Bavarian units. With his father, Prince Regent Luitpold, unable to attend, the prince considered it “self-evident” that at least one member of the House of Wittelsbach would travel to the *Reichsland*.

²⁵ Hermann von Stein, *Erlebnisse und Betrachtungen aus der Zeit des Weltkrieges* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1919), 36-7. For the controversial appointment of Moltke as chief of the General Staff, see Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War*, 67-72.

²⁶ See Röhl, *Wilhelm II: The Kaiser’s Personal Monarchy*, 127-8. For Wilhelm II’s attitudes towards the German monarchs, see Ingeborg Koch, “Die Bundesfürsten und die Reichspolitik in der Zeit Wilhelms II.” (PhD diss., Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität zu München, 1961), 17-27.

²⁷ Anton von Monts, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Hohenlohe, July 24, 1896, PA AA Berlin, R 2663.

A few months before the manoeuvres, Ludwig communicated a special request to Berlin: the prince wished to command a review of the entire 5th Bavarian Division before Wilhelm II. This review, Ludwig stressed, must remain an entirely Bavarian affair and not include any Prussian regiments. As such, it would not form part of the annual *Kaiserparade*, but instead represent a separate “salute offered by the Bavarian troops to the *Bundesfeldherr*.”²⁸

When seeking to underline the military authority and prowess of their dynasties, the empire’s non-Prussian rulers could draw on a large reservoir of warrior princes. Reporting to his superiors in Berlin in March 1895, the Prussian military attaché in Munich observed that Bavarian princes “almost without exception are determined to offer up their strength to their Fatherland through military service.” This insistence was sometimes absurd. Despite his obvious lack of talent, one of Prince Ludwig’s sons had recently been forced to take the requisite courses to become an officer: he performed so poorly that the prince regent refused to allow him to enter service with an infantry regiment. “One here must ascribe to the *Kriegsschule* [military academy] its own special power,” the military attaché derisively concluded, since “just as little as the blind being able to see or the deaf being able to hear is a *Kriegsschule* capable of making intelligent men out of idiots.”²⁹ But not all warrior princes were such hopeless cases. In fact, the same Prussian officer praised the willingness of Ludwig’s younger brother, Prince Arnulf, to listen to the advice of his non-royal subordinates after he was named commander of the I Bavarian Army Corps in 1892. The prince had been greatly

²⁸ Major Kurt von Pritzelwitz, Prussian military attaché in Munich, to the Prussian war ministry, April 10 and 12, 1893, PA AA Berlin, R 2746. For Prince Ludwig’s determination to represent his ruling house at the *Kaisermanöver* around Metz, see Pritzelwitz’s report, May 11, 1892, PA AA Berlin, R 2744.

²⁹ Pritzelwitz to the Prussian war ministry, March 3, 1895, PA AA Berlin, R 2750. The number of Bavarian princes who entered military service was, according to Pritzelwitz, highly undesirable and he surmised that “the time is not far off when the question of their use...will cause more than a little embarrassment.”

disappointed when his father, the prince regent, had demanded that he remain in Munich at New Year's, thereby preventing him from attending the customary celebrations with the other corps commanders in Berlin. Arnulf recognized this as an opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from the experience of the Prussians. Referring to a conversation with the prince's chief of staff, the military attaché recommended an invitation to the next *Kaisermanöver*: this would allow Arnulf "to expand his horizons beyond the confines of his own corps."³⁰

The tension between the Kaiser's desire to control the reins of power and the martial enthusiasm of the empire's non-Prussian ruling houses was apparent only a few weeks after Wilhelm II ascended the throne in June 1888. Shortly before his death, Kaiser Friedrich III promoted General Leonhard von Blumenthal, his former chief of staff during the Franco-Prussian War, to the rank of field marshal. Almost immediately, rumours circulated in Dresden that Blumenthal would be elevated to the post of inspector-general and that the Saxon XII Army Corps, commanded by the older and more senior Prince Georg of Saxony, would be subordinated to the new field marshal's army inspectorate. These worries intensified only a few months later when Friedrich's son, the young Kaiser Wilhelm II, raised Prince Albrecht of Prussia to the rank of field marshal.³¹ Prince Georg was deeply hurt by the lack of imperial recognition of his military service and, some observers believed, was even prepared to resign his post as corps commander if either Blumenthal or Prince Albrecht carried out an inspection of his soldiers. Only the intervention of Prince Georg's brother, the King of Saxony, and his wife with the new Kaiser smoothed over matters. Through an imperial cabinet order in July 1888, Prince Georg received a field marshal's baton and was given command of his own army

³⁰ Pritzelwitz to the Prussian war ministry, January 16, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 2748.

³¹ Carl von Dönhoff, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to Bismarck, July 9, 1888, PA AA Berlin, R 3252.

inspectorate containing the Saxon and two Prussian army corps.³² The damage had already been done, however. One observer in Dresden wrote soon afterwards that the preceding weeks of uncertainty “had not failed to produce a certain disquiet in the military circles here.”³³

This incident foreshadowed three much more serious disputes between the Kaiser and the empire’s ruling houses concerning the appointment of warrior princes. In the early 1890s, demands from Munich that Prince Leopold of Bavaria assume control of the Fourth Army Inspectorate reawakened old concerns about the reliability of Bavarian soldiers among the Prussian military and political authorities. Less than a decade later, Wilhelm II’s uncle and the once enthusiastic inspector-general, Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden, proposed his son and heir as the next commander of the Badenese XIV Army Corps. As with the candidacy of Prince Leopold, the prospect of a South German prince at the head of his own soldier-subjects produced anxiety in Berlin. Worse still, the grand duke’s request encouraged King Wilhelm II of Württemberg to put forward his own heir, Duke Albrecht, as the replacement for the Prussian commander of the kingdom’s XIII Army Corps. In each case, the desire to strengthen the martial image of their own ruling houses provided the motivation for the non-Prussian monarchs. However, the Kaiser and his advisors worried that agreeing to these requests would not only threaten the centrality of command, but also undermine military effectiveness in wartime. These disputes therefore tested the willingness of Wilhelm II and his fellow rulers to find common ground based on the German army’s contingent-based structure.

³² Friedrich von Niethammer, Bavarian envoy in Dresden, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, July 6, 1888, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2857. Reporting two days later, the Bavarian envoy noted that Prince Georg intended to travel to Berlin in order to express his thanks to the Kaiser and personally collect his marshal’s baton. Niethammer to the Bavarian foreign ministry, July 8, 1888, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2857.

³³ Reports of the Austro-Hungarian legation in Dresden to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, July 8 and 14, 1888, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA V Sachsen, box 45-1.

Encouraging particularism: Bavaria and the Fourth Army Inspectorate

Because the Kaiser's *Kommandogewalt* extended to Bavaria only in wartime, the authorities in Berlin closely monitored South German military affairs after 1871. The military attaché in Munich created a window into the kingdom, while the Kaiser's constitutional "duty and right" to inspect the Bavarian contingent in peacetime gave Prussian officers access to military exercises and manoeuvres that would have otherwise been off limits. Between 1871 and 1888, these inspections were carried out by Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, the heir to the Prussian and German throne. Because he had led the South German troops against France in 1870, the choice of the crown prince was an obvious concession to Bavaria. Ludwig II may have resented Friedrich Wilhelm's tours of his kingdom, but the appointment of a non-royal Prussian general would have been far more painful for the king. Following the crown prince's accession to the throne and subsequent death in June 1888, it became increasingly difficult to accommodate Bavarian sensitivity to imperial oversight. With the performance of Bavarian soldiers having consistently received glowing praise, even from Prussian officers, few in Munich saw a reason for the continuation of annual inspections. This growing military self-confidence soon found expression in calls for Prince Leopold of Bavaria to assume control over the Fourth Army Inspectorate, in turn fueling Prussian fears about the German army's cohesion.

Prussian efforts to maintain a comfortable balance between concessions and control were initially successful following the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I and his son's accession as Friedrich III in March 1888. Having already promoted General Leonhard von Blumenthal to the rank of field marshal, the terminally ill Kaiser made it known in early April that he also

intended to appoint his former chief of staff in the “South German army” as his successor as inspector-general of the two Bavarian army corps. The choice of Blumenthal, Herbert von Bismarck, the chancellor’s son and state secretary of the Foreign Office, told the Bavarian envoy in Berlin, would hopefully be acceptable to the government in Munich. Not only was the field marshal the second-most senior officer in the Prussian contingent behind the chief of the General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke, but the appointment of a non-royal officer to this sensitive post would emphasize the technical importance, rather than the political connotations, of future imperial inspections. Blumenthal himself looked forward to reuniting with his old Bavarian comrades from the Franco-Prussian War. In mid-April 1888, the newly minted field marshal assumed his duties as inspector-general of the Fourth Army Inspectorate.³⁴

Blumenthal’s first inspection tour took place in the second half of August 1888. In an attempt to avoid singling out Bavaria and antagonizing Prince Regent Luitpold, the field marshal carried out alternating inspections of Bavarian and Württemberg regiments over a period of nearly two weeks. As during the crown prince’s visits, the inhabitants of the two South German kingdoms warmly greeted the inspector-general. In Augsburg and Würzburg, Prussia’s military attaché in Munich wrote, the reception was “almost enthusiastic,” while, in Nuremberg, large numbers of workers travelled from the nearby industrial centre of Fürth in order to catch a glimpse of Blumenthal.³⁵ Still, there were signs that the previous Bavarian

³⁴ Hugo von Lerchenfeld, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, to Krafft von Crailsheim, Bavarian foreign minister, April 6, 1888, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77688; General Emil von Xylander, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to General Adolph von Heinleth, Bavarian war minister, April 18, 1888, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, Alter Bestand A IV 242. See also Rüddenklau, “Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik,” 90-2.

³⁵ Report of Major Hermann von Rantzau, Prussian military attaché in Munich, September 5, 1888, PA AA Berlin, R 917. For Blumenthal’s reception in Württemberg, see Ludwig von Wesdehlen, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Bismarck, August 30, 1888, PA AA Berlin, R 917.

willingness to suffer through imperial inspections was nearing its end. Whereas the prince regent had accompanied Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm on his last inspection tour in 1886, Luitpold retreated to the Bavarian Alps before Blumenthal arrived in Munich. In contrast to events in Stuttgart, there was no official reception for the field marshal in Bavaria. When, during Blumenthal's visit to Würzburg, the inspector-general suddenly requested permission from the commander of the II Bavarian Army Corps to attend the exercises of two Bavarian artillery units, the Bavarian war minister strenuously protested. These exercises had not been included in the prearranged inspection schedule and it was inappropriate for the inspector-general to arrange for an expansion of his tour without the approval of the prince regent. At least one Bavarian general was surprised by the vehemence of the war minister's response. It was clear, he told Prussia's military attaché, that pressure from the Bavarian court had heightened the war minister's sensitivity to Blumenthal's activities in the kingdom.³⁶

These incidents were symptomatic of discussions that had been taking place among Bavarian court officials and ministers since the spring of 1888. Soon after Blumenthal's appointment as inspector-general, the Bavarian envoy in Berlin, Hugo von Lerchenfeld, cautiously suggested to Herbert von Bismarck that, in the future, the frequency of imperial inspections of the Bavarian contingent could be curtailed. Rather than taking place annually, as they had since 1871, a Prussian inspector-general might visit the kingdom only once every few years. This initiative, which had originated with the chief of the prince regent's Privy Council, General Ignaz Freyschlag von Freienstein, was given encouragement by the unusual

³⁶ Major Hermann von Rantzau's reports from September 5 and 10, 1888, PA AA Berlin, R 917. For Blumenthal's inspection tour of Bavaria and Württemberg more generally, see Rüddenklau, "Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik," 105-9.

behaviour of Blumenthal. In April 1888, the inspector-general casually asked the Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin whether or not exercises or manoeuvres, which he might be able to attend, were planned in Bavaria for the coming autumn. Because he had refrained from making a formal request, Lerchenfeld believed that even the field marshal “did not assume that the inspection of the Bavarian army has to take place annually.”³⁷

Seeking to gain favour at the court in Munich, both the foreign minister, Krafft von Crailsheim, and the war minister, General Adolph von Heinleth, voiced their support for Freyschlag’s and Lerchenfeld’s initiative. The federal treaty, the war minister pointed out, permitted the Kaiser to carry out inspections of the Bavarian contingent or, as had been the case between 1871 and 1888, appoint inspector-generals for that purpose. It said nothing about the frequency of those inspections. Moreover, the justification for imperial inspection tours – ensuring that Bavarian and Prussian soldiers received the same equipment and training and that their units were organized along similar lines – was becoming more and more difficult to sustain. The high standards reached by Bavaria’s contingent in the nearly two decades since unification meant that annual inspections were no longer necessary to convince the Kaiser and his advisors that the South German kingdom had fulfilled its military obligations.³⁸

Blumenthal’s appointment as inspector-general did more than encourage discussion of the frequency of the imperial inspections among Bavarian authorities. In the spring of 1888, the Prussian military attaché observed that the field marshal’s anticipated tour of Bavaria had

³⁷ Lerchenfeld to the Bavarian foreign ministry, May 5, 1888, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77688. For Blumenthal’s conversation with the Bavarian military plenipotentiary, see Xylander to Heinleth, April 18, 1888, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, Alter Bestand A IV 242.

³⁸ Heinleth to Crailsheim, May 23, 1888, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77688. For Crailsheim’s efforts to ensure that the Bavarian war ministry did not transform the inspection question into a purely military matter, see Crailsheim to Heinleth, July 1, 1888, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, Alter Bestand A IV 242. See also Rüddenklau, “Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik,” 94-105.

produced an outpouring of emotion. Everywhere, he wrote, “one gladly remembers the ties created to His Excellency through the war of 1870/71.” Yet there was also disappointment. According to the military attaché, many in the kingdom had hoped that the Kaiser would name Prince Leopold of Bavaria to this post. The prince was certainly qualified. Leopold had fought in both the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars and had received the Military Order of Max Joseph, Bavaria’s highest military decoration, for his actions in December 1870 at the Battle of Villedieu, during which he had also been wounded. In 1875, he was given command of a cavalry brigade and, in 1881, a division. One year before Blumenthal took over the Fourth Army Inspectorate, Prince Leopold had been named commanding general of the I Bavarian Army Corps in Munich.³⁹ When Bismarck’s dismissal as chancellor in March 1890 quickly put an end to the discussions between Lerchenfeld and the Foreign Office concerning the frequency of imperial inspections, Freyschlag and the Bavarian ministers began to work towards a different objective: securing the post of inspector-general for Leopold. In October 1890, Bavaria’s military plenipotentiary in Berlin, Colonel Hermann von Haag, brought his government’s wishes to the attention of the chief of the Kaiser’s military cabinet. He had little success. Although the prince enjoyed an “excellent reputation” and the “absolute confidence” of Wilhelm II, Haag was told that Blumenthal had only recently assumed his post and no other army inspectorate was available. Leopold would simply have to wait his turn.⁴⁰

³⁹ Hans-Michael Körner, “Leopold,” *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 14 (1985), 271. For the widespread expectation that Leopold would follow Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm as inspector-general, see Major Hermann von Rantzau’s report, April 26, 1888, as well as Philipp zu Eulenburg, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Bismarck, August 21, 1888, PA AA Berlin, R 917.

⁴⁰ Colonel Hermann von Haag, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to General Benignus von Safferling, Bavarian war minister, October 13 and 17, 1890, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 43. See also Rüddenklau, “Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik,” 120-45.

Others were not so certain that Prince Leopold should be entrusted with an army inspectorate, least of all one that included the two Bavarian army corps. Leopold's fiercest critic was Philipp zu Eulenburg, the Prussian envoy in Munich. In Eulenburg's view, the cohesion of the empire relied on the preservation of the Kaiser's military authority over the non-Prussian contingents. The forces of particularism in southern Germany sought every opportunity to dismantle these "trappings of solidarity" and Eulenburg therefore feared the consequences of passing on the role of inspector-general of the Bavarian contingent to a member of the House of Wittelsbach. Such a concession, especially so soon after the command of the XIII Army Corps had been given to a Württemberger for the first time, would establish a dangerous precedent for both the army and empire. Perhaps worst of all, Eulenburg wrote, the Bavarians did not even understand the gravity of the situation: "both the layperson and the officer of the Bavarian army, who is otherwise loyal to the Kaiser, cannot comprehend the consequences that would follow if the 'German' army inspection were put in the hands of a Bavarian prince."⁴¹ Eulenburg's views were loudly seconded by the newly appointed military attaché in Munich, Captain Kurt von Pritzelwitz. It was essential, Pritzelwitz argued, to preserve the link between the Bavarian and Prussian contingents. The "most urgent guarantee" against the dissolution of this link was the Kaiser's constitutional "duty and right" of inspection. This right ensured that the Bavarian officer corps, which represented the most effective bulwark against the "centrifugal efforts" of particularism, always remembered that an "indissoluble affiliation" had been forged with the German army in 1870-1, that "the all-

⁴¹ Philipp zu Eulenburg, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Chancellor Leo von Caprivi, May 5 and May 14, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 917.

highest arbiter of war and peace” resided “not in Munich, but rather in Berlin,” and that the Bavarian army swore an oath of “unconditional obedience to the *Bundesfeldherr*.”⁴²

Ironically, Wilhelm II’s visit to Munich in the autumn of 1891 greatly weakened the opposition to Prince Leopold’s appointment as inspector-general. Shortly after discussing Leopold’s future with the Bavarian military plenipotentiary in October 1890, the chief of the military cabinet had informed the Kaiser of the Bavarian government’s wishes. Wilhelm II understood that rejecting these wishes out of hand could have serious consequences. In the aftermath of Bismarck’s dismissal and following the initiation of the “new course,” it seemed more important than ever to maintain the support of the empire’s second-largest state. As a means of postponing an uncomfortable decision and reminding the Bavarian government that its soldiers had sworn an oath to the *Bundesfeldherr*, the Kaiser resolved to personally inspect the South German contingent in the following year.⁴³ The inspection, which involved 40,000 Bavarian soldiers, took place in early September 1891 and, in the words of Chancellor Leo von Caprivi, proceeded “brilliantly.” Yet the Kaiser’s actions at the same time focused public attention on the future of Prince Leopold. Not only did the prince, as the most senior general in the Bavarian contingent, lead the accompanying manoeuvres of the Bavarian troops, but Wilhelm II sought to flatter the prince regent by inviting Leopold to the *Kaisermanöver* that took place in Thuringia in mid-September. The heightened expectations following these events were evident in the Bavarian press. During the winter of 1891-2, a flood of newspaper articles

⁴² Report of Captain Kurt von Pritzelwitz, Prussian military attaché in Munich, May 14, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 917. Eulenburg’s and Pritzelwitz’s views were warmly received by the Prussian war minister, General Hans von Kaltenborn-Stachau, who argued that Prince Leopold’s appointment would encourage the Bavarian government to make additional demands in the future. Kaltenborn to Caprivi, May 24, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 917.

⁴³ Rüddenklau, “Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik,” 145-53. For Prince Regent Luitpold’s invitation to Kaiser Wilhelm II and the proposed scope of the imperial inspection, see Crailsheim to Caprivi, November 24, 1890, PA AA Berlin, R 2762.

criticized the practice of imperial inspections and expressed the hope that Prince Leopold would soon be appointed as inspector-general of the Fourth Army Inspectorate.⁴⁴

The fierce reaction in the Bavarian press convinced Caprivi that neither the Kaiser's delaying strategy nor the chief of the military cabinet's wait-and-see approach was still tenable. In February 1892, the chancellor sent a lengthy memorandum outlining his views to the Prussian minister of war. The creation of army inspectorates in 1871, he argued, had been motivated by "Prussian-dynastic" rather than military considerations. Since the elevation of Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden to the rank of inspector-general in 1877, however, three of the five army inspectorates were in the hands of members of non-Prussian dynasties. It was therefore entirely understandable that Bavaria and Württemberg, two of the largest and most important non-Prussian states, would eventually demand their own inspector-generals as "some kind of replacement for the loss of military sovereignty that the German empire has imposed upon them." Accommodating these wishes was in the best interests of Prussia. The foundations of the empire, as a confederation of monarchs, would only be weakened if the prestige of one or another of its ruling houses was undermined. The chancellor, like Wilhelm II, also understood that the success of the imperial government's domestic and foreign policies depended in large part on support from the federal states. Finally, the fears that Eulenburg and Pritzelwitz had expressed in the previous spring were exaggerated. The German army indeed represented the "best cement for Prussia's assimilation efforts" across the empire, though only if the authorities in Berlin avoided offending Bavarian pride. Compromise, Caprivi concluded,

⁴⁴ Rüddenklau, "Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik," 167-83. For the chancellor's assessment of the imperial inspection, see Caprivi to the Foreign Office in Berlin, September 9, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 2762. Eulenburg was particularly sensitive to the mood in the Bavarian press. See, for example, Eulenburg's reports to Caprivi, November 10 and 13, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 2763.

was the best way forwarded: Prince Leopold should be promoted to inspector-general and given command of a new army inspectorate consisting of two Prussian army corps.⁴⁵

By placing Prince Leopold in command of an army inspectorate that did not contain the two Bavarian army corps, Caprivi hoped to accommodate the wishes of the Bavarian government while preserving Prussian oversight over the South German contingent. These efforts quickly fell apart. In March 1892, Grand Duke Ludwig IV of Hesse-Darmstadt, the inspector-general of the Third Army Inspectorate, died unexpectedly of a heart attack. The grand duke's death encouraged the Bavarian military plenipotentiary to make inquiries in Berlin. Was it not possible, he asked the chief of the military cabinet, that the vacancy could be filled by Prince Leopold? The response was cautious. While a replacement would need to be found for the Third Army Inspectorate, the two Bavarian army corps could not be taken from Blumenthal's jurisdiction without reason. The prince, the chief of the military cabinet countered, could take over Grand Duke Ludwig's army inspectorate together with its three Prussian army corps.⁴⁶ This solution no longer seemed suitable. Emboldened by the strength of public opinion, Crailsheim and his fellow ministers in Munich insisted on the inclusion of the Bavarian contingent in Prince Leopold's future army inspectorate. Meanwhile, the Kaiser had become convinced by Caprivi's arguments in favour of a compromise with Bavaria. On June 27, 1892, Wilhelm II issued a cabinet order that transferred Blumenthal to the vacant Third Army Inspectorate and appointed Prince Leopold as his successor. So that the King of

⁴⁵ "Denkschrift über die künftige Besetzung der IV. Armee-Inspektion," drafted by Caprivi and forwarded to the Prussian war minister, February 8, 1892, PA AA Berlin, R 918. The war minister agreed with the chancellor's arguments, though he expressed concern that, if Prince Leopold received an army inspectorate, the King of Württemberg would feel aggrieved. Kaltenborn to Caprivi, February 14, 1892, PA AA Berlin, R 918.

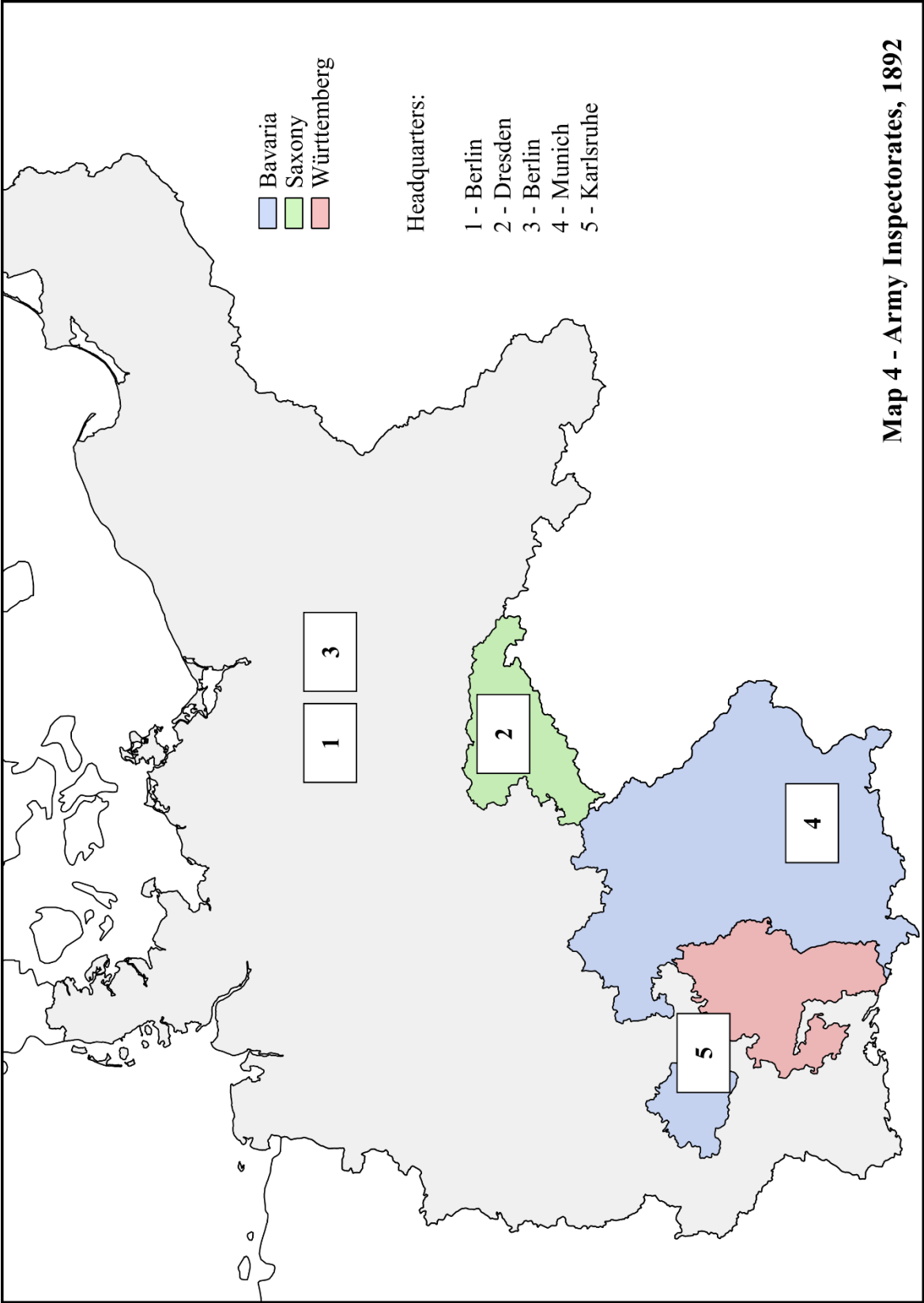
⁴⁶ Haag to Safferling, April 14, 1892, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1147.

Württemberg would not have to endure inspections of his contingent by a Bavarian prince, a second cabinet order attached the XIII Army Corps to Blumenthal's army inspectorate.⁴⁷

The military and political leaders in Berlin might have been forgiven for believing that the matter was settled in the summer of 1892. It was not. Prince Leopold's appointment as inspector-general of the Fourth Army Inspectorate dramatically changed both his professional duties and personal circumstances. As the commanding general of the I Bavarian Army Corps, the prince had been responsible for the discipline and training of the men under his command and had drawn a generous salary from Bavaria's treasury. Following his promotion, Leopold found himself subordinated to the Kaiser who tasked him with periodic, though infrequent, inspections of the units in his army inspectorate's jurisdiction. Because the rank of inspector-general was considered an honorary title, there was also no remuneration for its holder. Almost immediately, Leopold set about expanding his authority and securing compensation for himself.⁴⁸ Despite friction with Prince Arnulf, who replaced his brother as corps commander in Munich and who chafed at the inspector-general's unauthorized presence at manoeuvres, it was not until late 1893 that Leopold won the support of the Bavarian war ministry for his preferred solution: he should also assume the duties of an inspector-general of the Bavarian army. This office, which had been inactive since 1871, offered two benefits: it allowed the

⁴⁷ Kaiser Wilhelm II's two cabinet orders, June 27, 1892, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1147. For the Bavarian government's insistence that Prince Leopold assume control over the Fourth Army Inspectorate, together with the two Bavarian army corps, see Haag to Safferling, May 4, 1892, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1147. For the prince's appointment more generally, see Rüdtenklau, "Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik," 187-95.

⁴⁸ Prince Leopold of Bavaria to Safferling, July 10, 1892, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1147. For the prince's own disappointment at his promotion to inspector-general, see Hans-Michael Körner and Ingrid Körner, ed., *Leopold Prinz von Bayern 1846-1930. Aus den Lebenserinnerungen* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1983), 190.



prince to carry out inspections at any time on behalf of the prince regent, thereby expanding his authority, and it provided an annual salary of 12,000 Marks. At the beginning of November 1893, the prince became both a Bavarian, as well as an imperial, inspector-general.⁴⁹

Kaiser Wilhelm II had been reconciled to Leopold's appointment as inspector-general in part because it did not endanger his constitutional "duty and right" of inspection. The prince would receive his instructions from Berlin and carry out his inspections as an imperial officer. In order to remind Leopold of the chain of command, a Prussian staff officer was assigned to the Fourth Army Inspectorate.⁵⁰ His assumption of the duties, if not the title, of an inspector-general of the Bavarian army in the autumn of 1893 had the potential to upset this delicate arrangement. Once again, the Prussian representatives in Munich – Eulenburg and Pritzelwitz – led the opposition against Prince Leopold's newfound authority. In the view of the military attaché, the dangers involved in combining the duties of a Bavarian and imperial inspector-general were considerable. After receiving his instructions from the Kaiser, Leopold could simply request the prince regent's permission to carry out inspections of the same Bavarian units. In theory, he would be acting on behalf of the *Bundesfeldherr*. In practice, Pritzelwitz argued, the prince would "never inspect the Bavarian troops in his capacity as a *Prussian* inspector-general." Much more seriously, the conflation of the two roles would permit Bavarian soldiers to make up their own minds whether they were being reviewed by a member of the House of Wittelsbach or one of the Kaiser's inspector-generals. These sentiments were shared by Eulenburg. Convinced that the tide of particularism in South Germany could only

⁴⁹ Order of the Bavarian war ministry, November 1, 1893, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1147. For the friction with Prince Arnulf, see Pritzelwitz to the Prussian war ministry, September 5, 1892, PA AA Berlin, R 918. More generally, see Rüddenklau, "Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik," 196-206.

⁵⁰ Rüddenklau, "Studien zur bayerischen Militärpolitik," 194.

be stemmed by Wilhelm II's personal intervention, the Prussian envoy urged the Kaiser to personally review the Bavarian contingent "as frequently as possible."⁵¹

These protests fell on deaf ears in Berlin, and Prince Leopold continued to fulfill the duties of both a Bavarian and an imperial inspector-general until 1913. Caprivi's sacrifice of Prussian control over the Fourth Army Inspectorate in return for better relations with Bavaria did not appeal to everyone, however. In early 1902, Prussia's envoy in Munich, Anton von Monts, penned a scathing report of the military situation in South Germany. As a result of Bismarck's concessions in 1870, there were only two reliable links between the Bavarian contingent and the larger German army: the inclusion of the Kaiser in the *Fahneneid*, or oath of allegiance, and imperial inspections. Without question, "German-patriotic" sentiments had become entrenched in the kingdom. Still, Monts believed that the House of Wittelsbach constantly sought opportunities to weaken these links to the empire. In 1892, this persistence had borne fruit. Echoing Pritzelwitz's earlier fears, Monts argued that the role of the Kaiser and Prussia's military institutions was therefore clear: they were the glue that held the army together. This glue was slowly crumbling and, in order to guarantee the loyalty of Bavarian soldiers, these institutions would have to be strengthened, not weakened.⁵²

Despite the fears of Monts and others, there were few objections to the appointment of Prince Rupprecht, the son of Bavaria's prince regent, later king, and the commander of the I Bavarian Army Corps, as Leopold's successor. As General Karl von Wenninger, the Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, wrote in January 1912, Rupprecht was widely considered

⁵¹ Eulenburg to Caprivi, November 17, 1893. PA AA Berlin, R 918. For the views of the military attaché in Munich, see Pritzelwitz's reports to the Prussian war ministry, November 6 and 17, 1893, PA AA Berlin, R 918.

⁵² Anton von Monts, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow, February 21, 1902, PA AA Berlin, R 2763.

the obvious choice to replace Leopold. There was only one obstacle to his promotion: General Karl von Bülow, the commander of the Prussian III Army Corps, was more experienced than Rupprecht. In the event of Leopold's retirement and the promotion of Rupprecht to inspector-general, Bülow's seniority could not be ignored. Two options therefore existed. First, the III Army Corps, which was attached to the Fourth Army Inspectorate, could be subordinated to another inspector-general. In this case, and in order to avoid awakening jealousies in Karlsruhe and Stuttgart, a replacement for the III Army Corps would have to be drawn from the Prussian contingent. Second, Rupprecht could refrain from conducting inspections of Bülow's troops, thereby sidestepping the issue of seniority until another army inspectorate became available for the Prussian general.⁵³ The technical obstacles to Rupprecht's appointment mounted in the following weeks. In February 1912, another Prussian officer pointed out to Wenninger that not only Bülow, but also General Hermann von Eichhorn, the commander of the Prussian XVIII Army Corps, was senior to the prince. Both Prussian corps commanders would have to be taken into account during a future shuffling of personnel in the army's highest echelons.⁵⁴

This personnel shuffle began in the autumn of 1912. Bülow received the Third Army Inspectorate in Hanover, while Eichhorn was given control of the newly established Seventh Army Inspectorate in Saarbrücken. Reluctant to leave his post until his nephew's promotion was all but certain, and with seniority no longer an obstacle, Prince Leopold finally requested

⁵³ Handwritten note of General Karl von Wenninger, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, January 24, 1912, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 13.

⁵⁴ General Gustav von Schoch, department chief for personnel matters in the Bavarian ministry of war, to Wenninger, February 9, 1912, and Wenninger's response, February 12, 1912, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 13. Schoch had already conceded at the end of January that the question of Rupprecht's appointment as inspector-general would only become "acute" when senior Prussian generals were no longer under consideration for the same position. Schoch to Wenninger, January 31, 1912, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 13.

his retirement in March 1913. The Prussians were nevertheless unwilling to hand the Fourth Army Inspectorate to Rupprecht without certain guarantees. Kaiser Wilhelm II, the chief of the military cabinet, General Moriz von Lyncker, explained to Wenninger in mid-February, was confident in the prince's abilities, but also placed "considerable value" on the presence of a Prussian army corps alongside the Bavarian contingent. As before, Prussia's III Army Corps would have to be attached to Rupprecht's army inspectorate.⁵⁵ The Kaiser was not alone in expressing these views. A few weeks later, the chief of the General Staff informed Wenninger that, without question, it was "in the interest of Bavaria and the empire that Munich's army inspectorate permanently include a Prussian army corps." Moltke was willing to compromise, however. Whereas, under normal circumstances, it was desirable to place only three corps under each inspector-general, Moltke promised to speak with Wilhelm II. Since the Bavarian government insisted on maintaining the integrity of its contingent, arrangements could likely be made so that the entire Bavarian contingent *and* the Prussian III Army Corps remained under Rupprecht's authority. Wenninger was pleased. "There exists," he wrote to Munich shortly afterwards, "a great willingness to accommodate us" in Berlin.⁵⁶

In 1902, Monts had feared that the inspector-general of the Fourth Army Inspectorate would become a "hereditary" Bavarian position. His fears were confirmed when Rupprecht succeeded his uncle in March 1913. Although less contentious than Leopold's promotion in 1892, both Rupprecht and his supporters had been forced to endure some uncertain moments

⁵⁵ General Moriz von Lyncker, chief of the Kaiser's military cabinet, to Wenninger, February 12, 1913, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 13. For Leopold's desire to retire, but only if his nephew succeeded him, see Körner and Körner, *Leopold Prinz von Bayern*, 198.

⁵⁶ Wenninger to the Bavarian ministry of war, March 1, 1913, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 13.

in the preceding weeks. In February, Rupprecht's father, Prince Regent Ludwig, promoted his son to the rank of colonel-general in order to drive home Bavaria's expectations for its warrior prince in Berlin. Meanwhile, and having seen Bülow and Eichhorn receive army inspectorates in the fall of 1912, the prince declared to the Bavarian war minister that he would resign as a commanding general if the Kaiser overlooked him for the position of inspector-general of the Bavarian contingent.⁵⁷ He was probably bluffing. Still, Rupprecht's and his father's behaviour revealed the significance that the House of Wittelsbach attached to the position of inspector-general and, more generally, to its martial reputation. Because of Bavaria's privileged position in the empire, the Kaiser and his advisors had little choice but to accommodate the requests from Munich. The same readiness to compromise did not extend to Germany's smaller states. Over a decade before Wenninger reported in June 1913 that Friedrich II of Baden, whose father had enthusiastically served as inspector-general between 1877 and his death in 1907, was not being considered for a command in a future war, this had become painfully clear in Karlsruhe.⁵⁸

Unconditional rejection: Kaiser Wilhelm II and Baden

Shortly after the turn of the century, Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden became embroiled in a dispute with his nephew, Kaiser Wilhelm II. This dispute concerned the grand duke's request to see his son and heir, also named Friedrich, named commanding general of the XIV Army Corps, the formation containing almost all of the regiments recruited from Baden. Occurring

⁵⁷ Dieter J. Weiß, *Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern (1869-1955). Eine politische Biographie* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2007), 54-5.

⁵⁸ Wenninger to the Bavarian ministry of war, June 2, 1913, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 42.

only a few years after the appointment of Prince Leopold of Bavaria as inspector-general, the Kaiser's response highlighted the uneven distribution of military authority in the empire. While Bavaria's federal treaty recognized the kingdom's contingent as "a self-contained component of the federal army" under the command of the King of Bavaria in peacetime, Article One of Baden's military convention with Prussia, also signed in the autumn of 1870, transformed the grand duchy's army into an "unmediated component of the German, that is to say, the Royal Prussian army." The grand duke remained the ceremonial commanding general of his army, enjoying the right to inspect Badenese soldiers and, if necessary, use the regiments garrisoned in Baden to stamp out civil unrest. Recruits from the grand duchy also served in their own units, which carried their old colours and were identified by the prefix "Badenese." The King of Prussia nevertheless became Baden's *Kontingentsherr*. As a result, who was to lead the XIV Army Corps was decided in Berlin, not Karlsruhe.⁵⁹ Wilhelm II, who harboured a deep distrust of the younger Friedrich and who was convinced that a Badenese prince in command of Badenese soldiers would jeopardize his *Kommandogewalt*, was therefore well within his rights to refuse the elderly grand duke's request. Its legality notwithstanding, the Kaiser's decision created deep resentment at the court in Karlsruhe. It was entirely justifiable, the grand duke and his advisors argued, that Baden should also have its warrior prince.

Friedrich, the grand duke's son, struck an unimpressive figure. Born in 1857, he was an introverted youth, establishing few close relationships with his fellow students. During his studies at the universities of Freiburg, Heidelberg, and Bonn, where he attended lectures on political science, law, and history with his younger cousin, the future Kaiser Wilhelm II,

⁵⁹ "Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bund und Baden vom 25. November 1870," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:343-6.

Friedrich demonstrated little interest or aptitude for academics. By contrast, his military career was more impressive. In 1880, he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Prussian 1st Foot Guards Regiment – the “first regiment of Christendom” – in Potsdam. In the following years, he alternated between assignments in Baden and Prussia. In March 1889, Friedrich was promoted to the rank of colonel and given command of a Badenese infantry regiment in Freiburg and, only ten months later, he became a major-general and commander of a Prussian guard infantry brigade in Berlin. In 1893, Friedrich returned to Freiburg as the commander of the 29th Division, one of the two divisions of the Badenese XIV Army Corps. Although he enjoyed rapid promotion through the military hierarchy, there were questions about his suitability to rule. When, in the autumn of 1881, Grand Duke Friedrich contracted typhus, his son took up residence in Karlsruhe in order to temporarily take over his father’s duties. The results were less than encouraging and Friedrich was forced to depend heavily on Baden’s ministers. The publication of an appreciative letter to his son following the grand duke’s recovery in October 1882 was likely intended not only for public consumption, but also as a means of restoring the diminished self-confidence of the heir to Baden’s throne.⁶⁰

Even more damaging were the rumours that followed Friedrich after his return to the army. In February 1883, the Prussian envoy to Baden, Albert von Flemming, forwarded a newspaper article to Berlin that had been published first in the North German press and then picked up by several Badenese editors. The article suggested that the younger Friedrich had fallen out with the Prussian commander of the XIV Army Corps during his brief time in

⁶⁰ Walther Peter Fuchs, *Studien zu Großherzog Friedrich I. von Baden* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1995), 137-74; Leonhard Müller, “Friedrich II. als Erbgroßherzog von Baden (1857-1907). Neue Quellen im Generallandesarchiv Karlsruhe,” *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 145 (1997), 325-41; Uwe A. Oster, *Die Großherzöge von Baden (1806-1918)* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2007), 209-10.

Karlsruhe. According to the article's author, Friedrich had even contemplated abandoning his military career entirely as a result of his disagreement with the Prussian general.⁶¹ Despite a hasty denial in Baden's official gazette, the damage had already been done. The future grand duke's character had been given a black mark in the eyes of the authorities in Berlin. Karl von Eisendecker, Flemming's successor as Prussian envoy in Karlsruhe, fueled their concerns. In a letter to a friend in July 1890, he argued that Friedrich was not only considered "remarkably hard and brusque" by his military subordinates, but would "one day turn out to be a rather embarrassing federal prince." Even more concerning was his unpatriotic attitude. Baden's heir, the envoy wrote, was "widely regarded as holding strictly separatist views."⁶²

Despite, or perhaps because, of his reputation as a particularist, rumours circulated in the late 1890s that Friedrich, then commanding a division in Freiburg, would be promoted to command of the Badenese XIV Army Corps. These rumours coincided with tensions between Kaiser Wilhelm II and Grand Duke Friedrich, whose source was the perceived unfair treatment by the military cabinet of the Prussian commander in Karlsruhe. Shortly after the end of the autumn manoeuvres in 1895, the grand duke, in his role as inspector-general of the Fifth Army Inspectorate, and General Sigismund von Schlichting, the commanding general of the XIV Army Corps, had together composed an objective, though highly critical assessment of the performance of Baden's soldiers. This report was not well received by the Kaiser and, in early 1896, Schlichting was suddenly and unexpectedly relieved of his command. In part because the grand duke had not been consulted before Schlichting's transfer, but also because he had

⁶¹ Albert von Flemming, Prussian envoy in Karlsruhe, to Bismarck, February 6, 1883, PA AA Berlin, R 2624.

⁶² Karl von Eisendecker, Prussian envoy in Karlsruhe, to Holstein, July 18, 1890, in Rich and Fisher, *The Holstein Papers*, 3:345-6.

forged a particularly close relationship with the Prussian general, Wilhelm II's decision deeply offended the elderly Friedrich. It was widely assumed, Württemberg's envoy to Baden wrote, that the grand duke would eventually retaliate against the Kaiser and his military cabinet by proposing his son as commanding general of the XIV Army Corps. There was only one problem: the younger Friedrich was thought to disapprove of the idea. This disapproval was largely the result of satisfaction with life in Freiburg. After his appointment as commander of the 29th Division, the grand duke's son and his wife developed a strong connection with the city, creating a court-like atmosphere in the Sickingen Palace.⁶³

Much to the disappointment of Friedrich, who would probably have preferred to remain in Freiburg, the Kaiser and his military cabinet soon decided to promote the heir to Baden's throne. Yet, much to the disappointment of the grand duke, the members of his court, and Badenese patriots more generally, Friedrich was given command of the Prussian VIII Army Corps in Coblenz in late January 1897. Having grudgingly taken up his new post and despite his personal shortcomings, Friedrich soon proved Eisendecker wrong by earning the praise and respect of his subordinates, and much of the Rhineland's population as well. Even though he was almost certainly looking back on the past with rose-coloured glasses, in his memoirs, Paul von Hindenburg, the future field marshal and chief of staff in the Supreme Command during the First World War, described his three and half years as Friedrich's chief of staff in the VIII Army Corps as numbering among the best in his life. The future grand duke's "noble spirit, in which were united majestic dignity and endearing warmth, his exemplary, indefatigable loyalty to duty, which was combined with soldierly manner and talent, quickly won him the

⁶³ Soden to Mittnacht, December 10, 1895, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/04, file 189. For the lifestyle of Friedrich and his wife in Freiburg, see Oster, *Die Großherzöge von Baden*, 213.

love and confidence not only of his subordinates, but also of the Rhenish population.”⁶⁴ Friedrich’s success as the commanding general of a Prussian army corps therefore increased his standing as an officer in the eyes of many Prussians. It also encouraged hopes in Baden that the grand duke’s heir would soon take command of his own soldier-subjects.⁶⁵

In the spring of 1901, these hopes were given renewed encouragement. Schlichting’s successor as commander of the XIV Army Corps, General Adolf von Bülow, requested that the Kaiser’s military cabinet relieve him of his duties for health reasons. Having been notified of the Prussian general’s impending retirement, Grand Duke Friedrich wrote to his nephew, the Kaiser, and proposed his son as the most suitable replacement. There were, according to the grand duke, several reasons to consider the younger Friedrich for this position. First, after four years in command of the VIII Army Corps in Coblenz, his son had acquired the necessary experience and showed the required administrative and tactical skill. He had also proven himself capable of balancing the military and political dimensions of a commanding general’s role: he had maintained excellent relations with the civilian administration in the Rhineland while forging an outstanding fighting force. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Friedrich’s transfer to Karlsruhe would bring the heir to Baden’s throne more closely into contact with circumstances in the grand duchy and thereby better prepare him for his future responsibilities as a ruler. Although not explicitly mentioned, the mediocre performance of his son in the early 1880s likely weighed heavily on Grand Duke Friedrich’s mind. Third, and finally, whereas the elderly grand duke was still able to perform his functions as the inspector-general of the Fifth

⁶⁴ Paul von Hindenburg, *Generalfeldmarschall von Hindenburg. Aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1920), 60. See also Müller, “Friedrich II. als Erbgroßherzog von Baden,” 341-2.

⁶⁵ Stefan Burián von Rajecz, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, January 29, 1897, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 42-4.

Army Inspectorate, he was increasingly finding this difficult. The presence of his son in Karlsruhe would allow Friedrich to delegate some of his duties to the corps commander and, in doing so, allow himself to focus on government affairs.⁶⁶

Wilhelm II was adamantly opposed to such an appointment. His reasons, which were outlined in a memorandum composed by his adjutant-general, General Hans von Plessen, at the end of April 1901, were both military and political. The General Staff's operational plan, Plessen wrote, foresaw the immediate deployment of the XIV Army Corps along the Franco-German border during mobilization. Because the French were expected to launch an offensive into southern Germany shortly after the outbreak of a war, and because the German forces in this region would likely be compelled to stage a fighting withdrawal, Friedrich would have to give up his command before the fighting even started. The reason for this was simple. It was inconceivable, the adjutant-general explained, that the heir to Baden's throne could be exposed to the "vicissitudes" of such dangerous operations, especially when they involved the probable surrender of German territory to the enemy. It was hardly necessary to detail the potential consequences of such reserves on the battlefield for Baden's ruling house. There were other political considerations. Baden, which had signed a much less favourable military convention with Prussia in 1870, would be encouraged by Friedrich's appointment to demand changes to "this alleged evil," something that would undermine the army's existing structure. Agreeing to the grand duke's request would create a domino effect and embolden the King of Württemberg, whose own army corps would soon require a new commanding general, to claim this position for his heir, Duke Albrecht. If Württemberg's king did so, and in light of circumstances in

⁶⁶ Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden to Kaiser Wilhelm II, April 1901, in *Großherzog Friedrich I. von Baden und die Reichspolitik 1871-1907*, ed. Walther Peter Fuchs (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1980), 4:302-3.

Bavaria, where Prince Arnulf led one army corps and his nephew, Prince Rupprecht, would probably receive the next vacant position, “the Kaiser would then have transferred four army corps in South Germany, in other words, an army, into the hands of young princes with particularistic backgrounds.” The consequences could be catastrophic. The *Bundesfeldherr*’s unifying influence would cease to exist and, as a result, there would be “no guarantee of an absolutely tight cohesion [of the contingents] and of the security of the *Kommandogewalt* in the entire German army ... let alone if setbacks occur in a war.”⁶⁷

Plessen’s memorandum was correct in one respect: Grand Duke Friedrich hoped to see changes to Baden’s military convention with Prussia. Shortly after Schlichting was recalled in early 1896, several members of the Badenese court remarked to the Austro-Hungarian envoy that the grand duke deeply regretted renouncing his sovereign rights, especially his influence over military affairs, to Prussia in November 1870. Friedrich now realized that this decision had been made too “light-heartedly” and in the mistaken belief that Germany’s three kings would eventually follow his patriotic example. In what was probably intended as a defiant gesture against the Kaiser’s *Kommandogewalt*, the elderly grand duke had recently adopted the habit of wearing a Badenese colonel’s uniform. Whereas senior officers in the XIV Army Corps were compelled to wear Prussian uniforms, complete with the *Pickelhaube* and its accompanying eagle, the symbol of the House of Hohenzollern, the uniforms of officers with the rank of colonel and below still bore the Badenese coat of arms.⁶⁸ The manner in which Schlichting departed Karlsruhe also reflected the grand duke’s displeasure with the state of

⁶⁷ Memorandum composed by General Hans von Plessen, the Kaiser’s adjutant-general, April 29, 1901, in Fuchs, *Großherzog Friedrich I. von Baden und die Reichspolitik*, 4:313-14.

⁶⁸ Theodor Zichy von Zich und von Vásonykeö, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, February 8, 1896, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 42-3.

military relations in the empire. In January 1896, a farewell dinner for the Prussian general took place in the grand ducal palace. During the dinner, Grand Duke Friedrich paid tribute to Schlichting's service in Baden in what Eisendecker later described as "uncommonly warm and emotional words." Friedrich then further raised suspicions in Berlin by awarding Schlichting the ruling house of Baden's Order of Fidelity, a distinction that neither of the previous two Prussian corps commanders had received. "According to my impression," Eisendecker wrote, "there is very much the feeling here that the honours heaped on the highly deserving general, especially from the highest authority, were something out of the ordinary."⁶⁹

Under these circumstances, the Kaiser's refusal to accommodate the grand duke's request created considerable animosity at the court in Karlsruhe. In a letter to Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow in May 1901, Friedrich expressed his concern that the consequences of the Kaiser's decision would be "quite harmful" not only for his son, but also for his own standing among his subjects. Rather than recognizing the injustice done to the grand duchy by Wilhelm II, the people of Baden would lay the blame at their own sovereign's feet. Concern for his own legitimacy mixed with parental sensitivities: "the impression in the land will be a bad one and, for us parents, the sorrow is profound."⁷⁰ Despite his previous criticism of the younger Friedrich, Eisendecker likewise recognized the seriousness of the Kaiser's decision. Baden's ruling couple, he wrote, were only willing to accept Wilhelm II's arguments against

⁶⁹ Eisendecker to Chancellor Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, January 16, 1896, PA AA Berlin, R 2631.

⁷⁰ Grand Duke Friedrich of Baden to Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow, May 18, 1901, in Fuchs, *Großherzog Friedrich I. von Baden und die Reichspolitik*, 4:323-5. The contents of Plessen's memorandum were communicated to Eisendecker at the beginning of May. Prussia's envoy soon afterwards informed Grand Duke Friedrich and his wife of the Kaiser's decision. Bülow to Eisendecker, May 5, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 919. For the grand ducal couple's deep disappointment after learning that their son would not command the XIV Army Corps, see Eisendecker to Bülow, August 27, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 919; Kurt von der Pfordten, Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, May 2, 1902, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3060.

the transfer of their son on one condition: the current Prussian commander of the XIV Army Corps should remain in his post until Friedrich had fully recovered from illness. Through conversations at court, the Prussian envoy had learned that Friedrich's doctors feared that the Kaiser's decision would have a "strong and detrimental" effect on their patient's health. The grand duke and his wife therefore wished to postpone breaking the news to their son until after he had regained his strength. Such a delay would be impossible if General von Bülow was replaced by another Prussian corps commander. Wilhelm II agreed, and Bülow remained in Karlsruhe until January 1902. However, the possibility that Friedrich might still be appointed commander of the XIV Army Corps was, as Chancellor von Bülow told Eisendecker, out of the question, "now and in the future." Reading the writing on the wall, the heir to Baden's throne asked the Kaiser's military cabinet to relieve him of his duties in October 1902.⁷¹

Some in Berlin believed that Friedrich had only submitted his resignation in the hope that the Kaiser would finally agree to his father's request. The grand duke's son, according to these rumours, was therefore shocked when Wilhelm II quickly replaced him as commander of the VIII Army Corps. More certain is the reaction of Friedrich's parents. Having invested so much energy in her son's military career, Grand Duchess Louise was, Eisendecker wrote, "not entirely understanding" of her son's decision.⁷² Others at the court in Karlsruhe were more sympathetic. As the Prussian envoy reported in the spring of 1901, several members of the

⁷¹ Bülow's telegram to Eisendecker, July 23, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 919. For Eisendecker's request that the Prussian commander of the XIV Army Corps remain in his post until the grand duke's son recovered his health, see Eisendecker to Bülow, July 16, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 919. More generally, see Müller, "Friedrich II. als Erbgroßherzog von Baden," 343-5.

⁷² Eisendecker to Bülow, October 25, 1902, PA AA Berlin, R 2666. For the rumours in Berlin concerning Friedrich's resignation from the army, see Bülow to Eisendecker, December 12, 1902, PA AA Berlin, R 919.

Table 5 – Commanding generals of the XIV Army Corps, 1871-1914⁷³

| | Tenure | Birthplace |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| August Graf von Werder (1808 – 1887) | 1870 – 1879 | East Prussia |
| Hugo von Obernitz (1819 – 1901) | 1879 – 1888 | West Prussia |
| Sigismund von Schlichting (1829 – 1909) | 1888 – 1896 | Brandenburg |
| Adolf von Bülow (1837 – 1907) | 1896 – 1902 | Brandenburg |
| Max von Bock und Polach (1842 – 1915) | 1902 – 1907 | Rhineland |
| Ernst Freiherr von Hoiningen, called Huene (1849 – 1924) | 1907 – 1914 | Rhineland |

grand duke's entourage were opposed to Friedrich's transfer to Karlsruhe. After four years in Coblenz, they argued that the heir to Baden's throne should instead prepare for his future responsibilities as a ruler. If he insisted on continuing his military career, Friedrich could take over his father's duties as inspector-general. These duties would likely not take up much of his time and, as a result, allow him to focus on government affairs. Perhaps fearing that her son might follow in his father's footsteps by playing, rather than living, the life of a soldier, Grand

⁷³ Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der deutschen Heere*, 1:75.

Duchess Louise dismissed this option out of hand: the post, she told Eisendecker, was “chiefly an honorary office and of little importance.”⁷⁴ Unable to point to a military convention that would justify his father’s request, but conscious of his role in preserving his dynasty’s martial reputation, Friedrich was forced to take what he could get. The Kaiser was more than happy to accommodate this, far less threatening request. When it was suggested to him that the grand duke’s son might eventually succeed his father as inspector-general, Wilhelm II’s response was unambiguously: “good and correct.” In October 1907, just one week after his father’s death, Grand Duke Friedrich II of Baden assumed control of the Fifth Army Inspectorate.⁷⁵

Reluctant approval: Duke Albrecht and the XIII Army Corps

The conflict between Grand Duke Friedrich I of Baden and Kaiser Wilhelm II over the command of the XIV Army Corps in Karlsruhe was the dress rehearsal for a more serious dispute between Prussia and Württemberg. In the spring of 1901, Plessen had expressed the fear that accommodating the grand duke’s request could set a dangerous precedent for the future. What at the time might simply be considered a demonstration of the Kaiser’s goodwill could embolden Germany’s other ruling houses to make similar requests on behalf of their members. The most likely source of such a request, Plessen believed, was Württemberg. Duke Albrecht, the cousin and presumed heir of King Wilhelm II, had recently assumed command

⁷⁴ Eisendecker to Bülow, May 12, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 919. For the belief in the grand duke’s entourage that the younger Friedrich should focus on his future government responsibilities, see Eisendecker to Bülow, May 10, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 919.

⁷⁵ Bülow’s telegram to the Foreign Office in Berlin, August 5, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 919. Grand Duchess Louise, having realized that her son would not receive command of the XIV Army Corps, was also eventually convinced that Friedrich should assume his father’s duties as inspector-general. Eisendecker to Bülow, September 2, 1903, PA AA Berlin, R 2673.

of a division in Stuttgart. Following a few years in this post, it was possible that both the duke and king, as well as Württemberg royalists, would begin clamouring for Albrecht to become commanding general of the XIII Army Corps. Even though the Kaiser heeded these warnings and rejected the grand duke's request, Plessen's fears were soon realized. Less than one year after Friedrich's son resigned his post as corps commander in Coblenz, pressure began to mount on the Kaiser to give Duke Albrecht command of the formation that contained nearly all of Württemberg's contingent. As in the conflict with Baden, Wilhelm II's advisors warned the Kaiser of the potential dangers. Albrecht, they proposed, should instead lead a Prussian army corps. This concession revealed the extent to which the Prussian military authorities, mindful of the benefits of accommodating one of the empire's larger ruling houses, were willing to accommodate the wishes of Württemberg's monarch. Yet it was not enough for King Wilhelm. In the ensuing conflict with Berlin, court officials and ministers in Stuttgart possessed a crucial advantage over their counterparts in Karlsruhe: Württemberg's military convention compelled the Kaiser to take its king's wishes into account.

Far more than its equivalent in Baden, the post of commanding general of the XIII Army Corps had remained a sore point in relations between Prussia and Württemberg in the decades after unification. Following a succession of Prussian corps commanders, Kaiser Wilhelm II's decision to appoint General Wilhelm von Wölckern, a Württemberger, to this post in the autumn of 1890 had been seen as long-overdue recognition of the military ability of the South German kingdom's officer corps. It was widely expected that Württembergers, not Prussians, would command the XIII Army Corps in the future. These hopes were soon dashed. In March 1895, the sixty-five-year-old Wölckern, who had been pondering retirement

since the previous summer, was replaced by the Prussian General Oskar von Lindequist. This appointment, one observer wrote, was met with “quite a bit of displeasure” in Stuttgart. Not only was the war minister, General Max Scott von Schottenstein, the most senior general in Württemberg, but many considered King Wilhelm II’s adjutant-general, General Kuno von Falkenstein, as the most qualified candidate to replace Wölckern. Although Falkenstein’s appointment in April 1896 as commander of the XV Army Corps in Strasbourg did much to appease anti-Prussian critics – he was the first Württemberger to lead an army corps outside the borders of his kingdom – it was common to hear the view expressed in Stuttgart that “one would rather have seen him take command of the XIII Württemberg Army Corps.”⁷⁶

Despite the odds, Lindequist won the hearts and minds of Württemberg. The Prussian general, Bavaria’s envoy in Stuttgart wrote, possessed a “favourable combination of soldierly character and sophistication, aided by a natural likeableness” and an understanding of the “difficult position of a Prussian general in Württemberg.” Prussia’s envoy likewise found it difficult to hold back his praise. Lindequist’s personality had enabled him to enjoy “a degree of popularity that no other Prussian had ever before reached in Swabia.” When the Kaiser suddenly transferred Lindequist to the newly formed XVIII Army Corps in Frankfurt in the spring of 1899, the general was only allowed to take up his new post after a succession of farewell banquets in the Württemberg capital.⁷⁷ In part because he failed to remain within the confines of his authority as corps commander, thereby earning the enmity of Württemberg’s

⁷⁶ Zichy to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, April 10, 1896, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 42-3. See also Pfordten to the Bavarian foreign ministry, April 9, 1896, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3055. For the displeasure in Stuttgart following Lindequist’s appointment, see Zichy’s report from March 26, 1895, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 42-2.

⁷⁷ Pfordten to the Bavarian foreign ministry, April 14, 1899, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3057; Karl von Derenthall, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Hohenlohe, April 16, 1899, PA AA Berlin, R 3384.

war minister, and in part because much of his tenure was spent on sick leave, Lindequist's successor, General Ludwig von Falkenhausen, established a far less enviable reputation for himself. As a result, there were few farewell banquets when the Kaiser reassigned him in March 1902. The most important consequence of Falkenhausen's appointment, however, was renewed agitation for a Württemberg general to assume command of the XIII Army Corps. A few months before Falkenhausen's reassignment, rumours circulated that King Wilhelm II's adjutant-general, General Hermann von Bilfinger, would be named as the Prussian general's replacement. Even after it became clear that the Kaiser and his advisors had no intention to promote a Württemberger to the post, one observer predicted that the new Prussian corps commander's stay in Stuttgart would be brief: he would soon make way for Duke Albrecht and, with this appointment, "quiet will ensue in this delicate question for a long time."⁷⁸

Duke Albrecht was the obvious choice to carry on the martial traditions of his ruling house. Born in 1865, the duke began his military career as a lieutenant in an *Uhlán* regiment shortly before his twentieth birthday. Unsurprisingly, Albrecht rapidly ascended the military hierarchy. After rising to colonel of the grenadier regiment in Stuttgart in 1896, the duke was transferred to Prussia two years later and placed in command of a guard cavalry brigade in Potsdam. In 1900, he returned to Stuttgart as the commander of an infantry brigade and, only seven months later, he was given command of the 26th Division of the XIII Army Corps.⁷⁹ At thirty-six years of age, Duke Albrecht was much younger than most division commanders in

⁷⁸ Pfordten to the Bavarian foreign ministry, March 10, 1902, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3060. See also Alfons von Pereira-Arnstein, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, January 26, 1902, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 44-1.

⁷⁹ Paul Sauer, "Albrecht," in *Das Haus Württemberg. Ein biographisches Lexikon*, ed. Sönke Lorenz, Dieter Mertens, and Volker Press (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1997), 417; Bernard Schwertfeger, "Albrecht Maria Alexander Philipp Joseph, Herzog von Württemberg, Generalfeldmarschall," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 1 (1953), 175.

the German army. Yet his accelerated advancement through the ranks was not seen as only a product of his royal birth by contemporaries. In the spring of 1896, the Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart wrote that the duke's enthusiasm for his duties had earned him "enormous popularity in the officer corps."⁸⁰ Even professional soldiers considered Albrecht to be a more than capable warrior prince. Wilhelm Groener, who succeeded Erich Ludendorff as deputy chief of staff in the Supreme Command at the end of the First World War and who served as a staff officer under the duke between 1908 and 1910, described his former superior as someone under whom "work was a joy, because he combined an extraordinarily endearing nature with an outstanding military talent."⁸¹ Groener, like Hindenburg, might have been pining for the good old days of the empire. Still, Albrecht himself understood that warrior princes should rely on and learn from their non-royal comrades. In the autumn of 1900, he complained to the Baroness von Spitzemberg, the widow of the former Württemberg envoy in Berlin, about Wilhelm II's behavior at the recent *Kaisermanöver*. Because the Kaiser insisted on actively taking part in the manoeuvres, whoever found himself on the opposing side, the duke acidly remarked, was always defeated, even when he should have won.⁸²

As in the spring of 1901, when the grand duke of Baden had made a similar request, the Kaiser refused to consider Albrecht's appointment as commanding general of the XIII Army Corps. During the unveiling of a monument to Frederick the Great at Döberitz, just

⁸⁰ Zichy to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, April 21, 1896, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 42-3. The Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart was more critical. Less than two weeks earlier, he noted that Albrecht's promotion to colonel was solely the result of King Wilhelm II's wish that his heir represent him at Tsar Nicholas II of Russia's coronation. This would have been impossible for the duke to do as a more junior officer. Pfordten to the Bavarian foreign ministry, April 9, 1896, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3055

⁸¹ Wilhelm Groener, *Lebenserinnerungen. Jugend, Generalstab, Weltkrieg*, ed. Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1972), 118.

⁸² Baroness von Spitzemberg's diary entry for November 3, 1900, in Spitzemberg, *Das Tagebuch der Baronin Spitzemberg*, 401-2.

outside of Berlin, at the end of May 1903, Wilhelm II informed the duke that he had no objections to Württemberg's heir receiving command of an army corps, just as long as it was not the XIII Army Corps. Three factors, the Kaiser explained, had led him to this decision. First, the Württemberg contingent formed a "border corps" and, as such, it would find itself engaged with French forces immediately after the outbreak of a war. It seemed ill-advised to place the heir to Württemberg's throne in such a dangerous situation. Second, Germany's princes, the Kaiser believed, always found it difficult to separate their military duty to the empire and loyalty to their soldier-subjects. Albrecht would without question suffer from the same conflict of interest in Stuttgart. Third, Wilhelm II had recently refused to appoint Grand Duke Friedrich's son as commander of the XIV Army Corps. How could he now agree to the same request from Württemberg without causing an uproar in Karlsruhe? These arguments failed to make an impression on King Wilhelm II's adjutant-general, General Hermann von Bilfinger. Every corps, he wrote shortly after the duke's conversation with the Kaiser, would be involved in a future war, while, despite an apparent conflict of interest, Prince Arnulf of Bavaria and Crown Prince Friedrich August of Saxony were leading army corps in their own kingdoms. Finally, the XIII Army Corps, unlike its Badenese counterpart, was not part of the Prussian contingent and its commanding general was not determined in Berlin, but only following agreement between the *Bundesfeldherr* and Württemberg's *Kontingentsherr*.⁸³

Bilfinger probably had his suspicions, but the Kaiser was not telling the whole truth. Like two years earlier when the elderly grand duke had put forward his son as the next

⁸³ General Hermann von Bilfinger, King Wilhelm II's adjutant-general, to Carl von Weizsäcker, July 30, 1903, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand Q 1/18, file 151. For the monument unveiling in Döberitz and the presence of Prussian and non-Prussian representatives, see Jakob Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt. Der Kult der 'Nation in Waffen' in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1871-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 166-7.

commanding general in Karlsruhe, Wilhelm II's opposition to Albrecht's appointment as commander of the Württemberg army corps was influenced less by operational or general dynastic concerns than by worries about the future of Prussian military control over South Germany. This was clear to Saxony's military plenipotentiary, Colonel Hans Krug von Nidda. The Kaiser's greatest concern, Krug wrote to his superiors in Dresden, was that the post of commanding general in Stuttgart would fall into the hands of a relative of Württemberg's *Kontingentsherr*, thereby eliminating the "Prussian countercurrent" that had been present in the kingdom in the three decades since unification. From the Prussian perspective, it was far more preferable if Albrecht took over a Prussian army corps. The duke would then be at the mercy of the Kaiser and his military cabinet, who would be able to relieve him of his duties or transfer him elsewhere without enflaming public opinion in South Germany. Preserving the Prussian countercurrent in Württemberg was not without risks. Falkenhausen's successor as commander of the XIII Army Corps, General Konrad von Hugo, had done little to endear himself to the court in Stuttgart through his "arrogant, boisterous" behaviour and Krug had learned from sources in Berlin that the Kaiser's military cabinet had begun discussing his replacement. Until Albrecht's future was resolved, however, the Prussian general would have to remain in his post. In Prussian eyes, Hugo was the lesser of two evils.⁸⁴

Regardless of the motivations behind it, the Kaiser's rejection of Albrecht's and King Wilhelm's wishes created considerable ill will in Stuttgart. In January 1904, the Württemberg

⁸⁴ Colonel Hans Krug von Nidda, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, August 14, 1903, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 35. See also Krug's report from January 5, 1904, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 36; Hugo von Lerchenfeld, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, January 21, 1904, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2682.

Table 6 – Commanding generals of the XIII Army Corps, 1895-1919⁸⁵

| | Tenure | Contingent |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Oskar von Lindequist (1838 – 1915) | 1895 – 1899 | Prussian |
| Ludwig Freiherr von Falkenhausen (1844 – 1936) | 1899 – 1902 | Prussian |
| Konrad von Hugo (1844 – 1911) | 1902 – 1907 | Prussian |
| Joseph von Fallois (1849 – 1912) | 1907 – 1908 | Prussian |
| Duke Albrecht of Württemberg (1865 – 1939) | 1908 – 1913 | Württemberg |
| Max von Fabeck (1854 – 1916) | 1913 – 1915 | Prussian |
| Theodor Freiherr von Watter (1865 – 1922) | 1915 – 1919 | Württemberg |

monarch declined to attend the imperial birthday celebrations in Berlin. According to Prussia's envoy in Stuttgart, there was little doubt that this decision was tied to the dispute over the next commander of the XIII Army Corps.⁸⁶ Because neither side appeared willing to give in, and

⁸⁵ Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der deutschen Heere*, 1:73.

⁸⁶ Ludwig von Plessen-Cronstern, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Chancellor von Bülow, January 5, 1904, PA AA Berlin, R 3406. For the King of Württemberg's displeasure more generally, see Sauer, *Württembergs letzter König*, 223-4.

because this dispute threatened to damage relations between two of the empire's largest federal states, Württemberg's foreign minister, Julius von Soden, began work on a compromise. In late January 1904, Soden contacted the Badenese government and requested the grand duke's assistance to mediate an agreement between the two monarchs. Although it would of course be difficult for Friedrich to intervene on behalf of the King of Württemberg, especially so soon after his own request had been turned down in Berlin, the dispute was "a national matter" that could result in "an open conflict" between Prussia and the South German kingdom. Such a conflict between North and South would put Baden in an uncomfortable situation.⁸⁷ While Soden sought the support of the grand duke, Württemberg's envoy in Berlin was instructed to persuade Chancellor von Bülow and the chief of the military cabinet of Württemberg's point of view. The foreign minister refused to stop there. Writing to Duke Albrecht, he pointed out that the kingdom's heir could only avoid further damage to his own reputation by agreeing to take command of a Prussian army corps. If he did so, and after a few years in this post, there was a strong possibility that the Kaiser would agree to transfer him to Stuttgart.⁸⁸

As a result of Soden's efforts, Albrecht finally agreed to assume command of the Prussian XI Army Corps in Cassel in September 1906. This choice should not be viewed as a capitulation, however. Several months earlier, in February, King Wilhelm of Württemberg had returned from a visit to Berlin in unusually high spirits. The chief of the military cabinet, the

⁸⁷ Arthur von Brauer, Badenese minister-president, to Grand Duke Friedrich, January 23, 1904, in Fuchs, *Großherzog Friedrich I. von Baden und die Reichspolitik*, 4:528-9. The Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart criticized Soden's decision to reach out only to Baden. It was unfortunate, he wrote, that "the King of Württemberg did not find his way to Munich." Pfordten to the Bavarian foreign ministry, March 6, 1904, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77877.

⁸⁸ Duke Albrecht of Württemberg to Julius von Soden, Württemberg foreign minister, April 5, 1905, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 51, file 196. For Soden's instructions to Württemberg's envoy in Berlin, see Soden to Axel Varnbüler von und zu Hemmingen, February 15, 1905, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand P 10, file 1050.

Saxon military plenipotentiary wrote, had made assurances to the monarch that, after the duke spent an appropriate amount of time in command of a Prussian army corps, he would do his utmost to convince the Kaiser to reassign Albrecht to Stuttgart. Even though no guarantees were made, King Wilhelm seemed “very content.”⁸⁹ His mood was justified two years later, when, in February 1908, Hugo’s successor as corps commander in Stuttgart, General Joseph von Fallois, was relieved of his duties for health reasons. Shortly afterwards, Duke Albrecht was named commander of the XIII Army Corps. Perhaps as a means of saving face, the Kaiser scheduled the announcement to coincide with the King of Württemberg’s birthday. Albrecht’s transfer could therefore be portrayed as a gift, thereby preserving, at least on the surface, the Kaiser’s *Kommandogewalt*. King Wilhelm was nevertheless ecstatic. Writing to his cousin, he rejoiced at being “the first to break the happy news to you.” At the end of his telegram, the king added: “I am very lucky myself.”⁹⁰ Returning to Stuttgart not only furthered the duke’s own military career, it also enhanced the martial reputation of Württemberg’s ruling house.

Unlike in his dispute with Grand Duke Friedrich of Baden, Kaiser Wilhelm II was forced to eventually accommodate King Wilhelm’s wishes. After decades of tensions between Berlin and Stuttgart over the command of the XIII Army Corps, it seemed more advisable to create a little quiet in this delicate question. Still, even after Albrecht’s transfer to Stuttgart,

⁸⁹ Colonel Hermann von Salza und Lichtenau, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon war ministry, February 10, 1906, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 38. For the Württemberg foreign minister’s role in the emergence of this compromise, see Soden to Varnbüler, February 15 and March 3, 1905, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand P 10, file 1050.

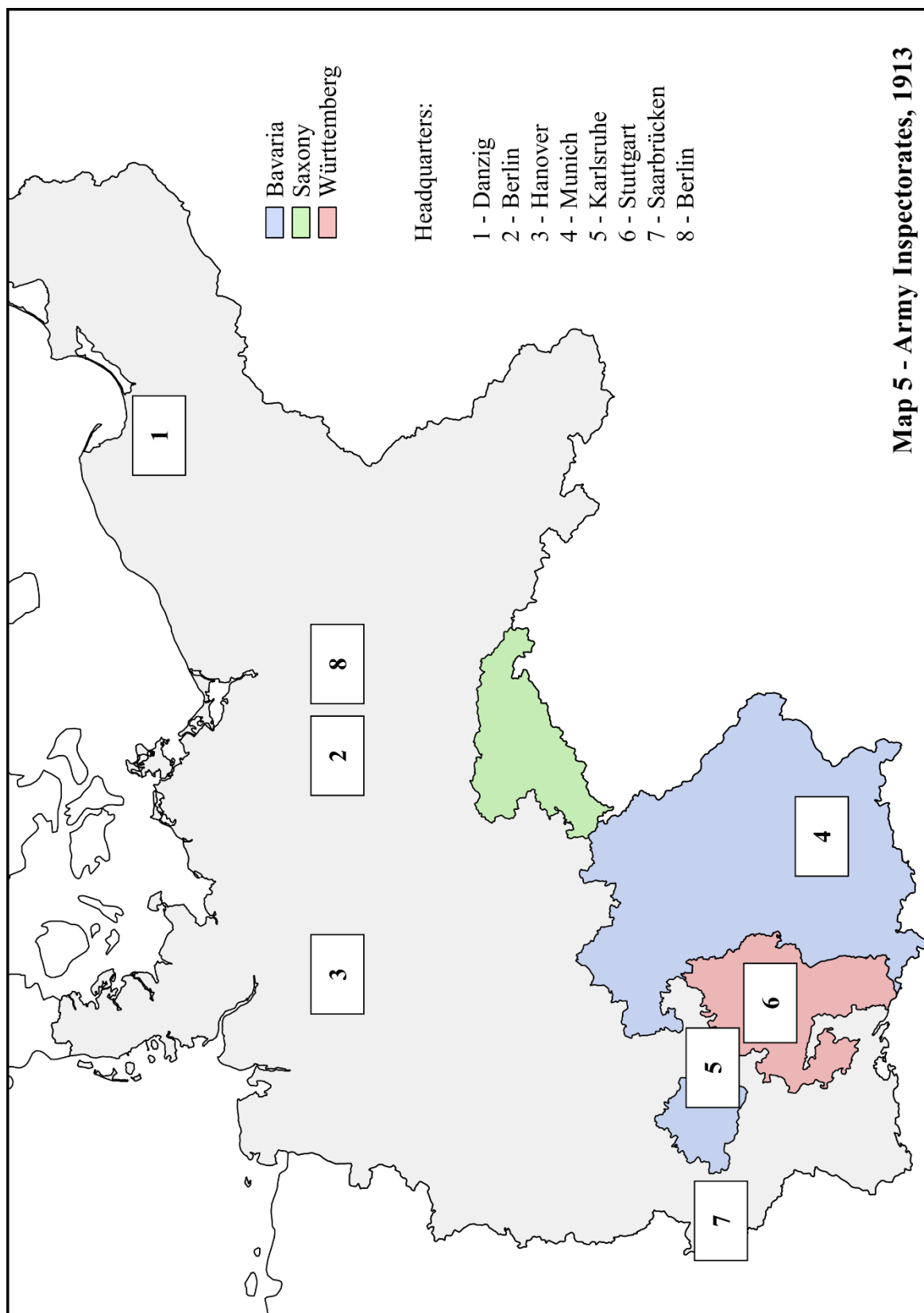
⁹⁰ Sauer, *Württemberg’s letzter König*, 224; Walker, “Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire,” 106-8. For King Wilhelm’s delight at the Kaiser’s decision, see Eisendecker to Bülow, February 25, 1908, PA AA Berlin, R 919. For the announcement of Albrecht’s transfer just before the King of Württemberg’s birthday, see Otto von Ritter zu Groenesteyn, Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, February 23, 1908, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77877; Ludwig von Callenberg, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, February 26, 1908, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 45-2.

some observers wondered whether or not the Kaiser had dropped his previous reservations against placing the command of a South German army corps in the hands of a non-Prussian prince. The Kaiser's decision, the Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart wrote in February 1906, had been influenced by two factors. First, as the dispute between the two monarchs dragged on, the King of Württemberg had increasingly insisted on literal readings of his kingdom's military convention, in particular the article concerning mutual agreement over the appointment of the corps commander in Stuttgart. Second, and perhaps more importantly, one of the Kaiser's advisors had apparently raised the possibility that, after two or three years in Stuttgart, Albrecht could be pushed upstairs and given control of an army inspectorate. It is unclear that the second factor was central to the Kaiser's decision. What is certain, however, is that in March 1913 Albrecht was named inspector-general of the Sixth Army Inspectorate.⁹¹

Conclusion

Duke Albrecht progressed rapidly through the upper echelons of the German army in part because of his military skill. The heir to Württemberg's throne was a professional soldier who had dedicated much of his life to the army and, in the process, had earned the loyalty and respect of his subordinates. His military career was also a product of his birth into the ruling house of Württemberg. The martial reputation of his dynasty required him to take an active

⁹¹ Sauer, *Württemberg's letzter König*, 224. For the Austro-Hungarian envoy's suspicions regarding the Kaiser's motivations, see Callenberg to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, February 26, 1908, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 45-2.



role in military affairs and, if the opportunity presented itself, command his own soldier-subjects on the battlefield. Because of the limitations that had been increasingly placed on Germany's monarchs by constitutions and parliaments following the Napoleonic Wars and the Revolutions of 1848, the desire to preserve the image of a warrior dynasty as a means of bolstering the legitimacy of hereditary rule was especially strong in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the German empire, with its twenty-two kings, grand dukes, dukes, and princes, it could also cause headaches. In February 1913, Bavaria's military plenipotentiary, General Karl von Wenninger, informed the Kaiser's military cabinet that Prince Rupprecht wished for his appointment as inspector-general to be postponed until early April. The military cabinet was reluctant to accommodate this request. For technical reasons, other appointments, in particular Albrecht's promotion to inspector-general, would have to take place in March. If one South German prince was promoted much sooner than another, it was almost certain that an "undesirable discussion would take place in the press." Rupprecht withdrew his request, and both he and Albrecht assumed their duties as inspectors-general in March 1913.⁹²

When it came to the appointment of warrior princes, appearances mattered. Equally important were the military powers of one's ruling house. Grand Duke Friedrich's wish, expressed in the spring of 1901, that his son and heir return to Karlsruhe as the commanding general of the XIV Army Corps went unfulfilled because Baden's ruler had surrendered many of his military rights to the King of Prussia during the Franco-Prussian War. Kaiser Wilhelm II, convinced that a Badenese prince at the head of Badenese soldiers represented an unacceptable risk to the cohesion of the German army, steadfastly refused to accommodate his

⁹² Wenninger to the Bavarian ministry of war, February 13, 1913, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 13.

uncle's request. The outcome was much different in the case of Württemberg. Even though similar objections were raised against the suggestion that the cousin and heir of King Wilhelm II of Württemberg take command of the XIII Army Corps – a post that, with one exception, had been the preserve of Prussian generals since 1871 – the South German kingdom could build a much stronger case for its warrior prince. Württemberg's military convention with Prussia made it necessary for the *Bundesfeldherr* and *Kontingentsherr* to agree on each new appointment as commanding general in Stuttgart, compelling both sides to seek common ground. The relative ease with which the question of Prince Leopold's successor as inspector-general of the Fourth Army Inspectorate was solved in 1912-13 confirmed Bavaria's far stronger military position in the empire. It also revealed that Kaiser Wilhelm II and his advisors understood that the presence of warrior princes in senior command positions was a double-edged sword: it could undermine the Kaiser's *Kommandogewalt*, but it could also strengthen the monarchical foundations upon which Bismarck's empire had been built.

Chapter Four

Divided contingents: Religion and small-state loyalties in the German army

The military conventions with Saxony and Württemberg and the federal treaty with Bavaria allowed the non-Prussian kings to retain a voice in the empire's military affairs after 1871. The German army's state-based contingents were compelled to adopt Prussian organizational standards and service regulations, and, in some cases, equipment and uniforms. Over time, even the visible differences between Prussia and non-Prussian soldiers disappeared. Yet non-visible differences continued to exist. Recruits swore oaths of allegiance to the Kaiser as *Bundesfeldherr* and their king as *Kontingentsherr*. These same men underwent training and completed their service within the borders of their own kingdoms. If they were stationed elsewhere in the empire, such as in Alsace-Lorraine, they more often than not served in regiments from their own states. The prominence afforded to members of the Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg ruling houses in the upper echelons of the officer corps at the same time served as a constant reminder to soldiers that the German army remained a collection of contingents, rather than a unitary institution. As a writer for the *Berliner Tageblatt* explained to his readers in the autumn of 1897, Bavaria's army "has its own history, its own traditions, and justifiably holds firmly to these in the same way that it holds firmly to its ancestral Bavarian ruling house." The spirit of Bavaria's officer corps was nevertheless "thoroughly national" and it was self-evident that, for its members, "no sacrifice would be too great for the honour and independence of the German Fatherland."¹ As long as dual loyalties did not

¹ *Berliner Tageblatt*, September 25, 1897, attached to the report of the acting Saxon envoy in Berlin, Robert von Stieglitz, to the Saxon foreign ministry, October 2, 1897, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 3308.

threaten the ability of the German army to perform its duties, there were few concerns. The Prussian military authorities could tolerate a separate Bavarian officer corps provided its members remained loyal to their commander-in-chief, the Kaiser.

Loyalty took many shapes and forms in the German army, however. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, migration from the countryside to the expanding industrial and manufacturing centres of Berlin, the Rhineland, Saxony, and Silesia produced stunning demographic changes. Whereas over 60 percent of the population lived in towns of fewer than 2,000 people in 1871, this number decreased to 40 percent by 1910. In the same period, the number of people living in the imperial capital more than doubled.² The military authorities followed these developments with unease. Because many urban workers pledged their support to the Social Democratic Party – the “party of revolution” – high-ranking officers feared that recruiting men from the cities could undermine the German army’s effectiveness in wartime. More importantly, soldiers who had been “infected” by socialism might be unwilling to combat domestic unrest. These fears increased after the expiration of Bismarck’s anti-socialist legislation in 1890. Six years later, General Alfred von Waldersee, the former chief of the Prussian General Staff who had declined the Kaiser’s offer to become “viceroy” of southern Germany, was still confident that the army would, “in the end, shoot down the insurgents.” He nevertheless wondered: “will it be the same in ten years?”³ Scholars have questioned the claim that Germany’s military authorities attempted to mitigate the socialist

² Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1990), 1:34-42. For an overview of the demographics and patterns of internal migration in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Dieter Langewiesche and Friedrich Lenger, “Internal Migration: Persistence and Mobility,” in *Population, Labour and Migration in 19th- and 20th-Century Germany*, ed. Klaus J. Bade (New York: Berg, 1987), 87-100.

³ Waldersee’s diary entry for December 30, 1896, in Meisner, *Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Alfred von Waldersee*, 2:381.

danger by disproportionately drawing recruits from the supposedly more “reliable” rural districts. Still, the Prussian war ministry remained determined to limit the overall size of the standing army in the decades before the First World War. Since finding officers to command newly formed units would only be possible by admitting “democratic and other elements” into its ranks, deficiencies in the army’s organization were overlooked before 1914.⁴

The military authorities were not only concerned about Social Democrats. Recruits from the German empire’s ethnic minorities also appeared to threaten the army’s cohesion following unification. The incorporation of Schleswig-Holstein into Prussia in 1866 and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 placed sizeable Danish and French minorities within Germany’s newly drawn borders. Even before the Wars of Unification, the eastern provinces of Prussia were home to a significant Polish population. This population steadily increased over the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of a high birthrate and immigration from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, leading some Prussian officials, including Bismarck, to fear a Polish “swamping” of the kingdom’s borderlands. In 1900, almost eight percent of the empire’s fifty-six million inhabitants did not speak German as their first language.⁵ After 1871, the Prussian war ministry, whose contingent contained men from all

⁴ General Karl von Einem, Prussian war minister, to General Alfred von Schlieffen, chief of the Prussian General Staff, April 19, 1904, in *Der Weltkrieg 1914-1918. Kriegsrüstung und Kriegswirtschaft*, ed. Reichsarchiv, Anlagenband (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1930), 90-2. For the measures against socialist agitation in the army, see Wilhelm Deist, “Die Armee in Staat und Gesellschaft 1890-1914,” in *Das Kaiserliche Deutschland. Politik und Gesellschaft 1870-1918*, ed. Michael Stürmer (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1977), 312-39. Oliver Stein questions the assertion that the Prussian war ministry sought to limit the number of recruits from urban areas despite the declining population of the countryside. Stein, *Die deutsche Heeresrüstungspolitik*, 60-70.

⁵ “Die Bevölkerung nach der Muttersprache am 1. Dezember 1900,” *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 25 (1904), 8. On December 1, 1900, 4,231,129 inhabitants of the empire did not speak German as their first language. Of this number, 3,086,489 spoke Polish as their first language, 211,679 French, and 141,061 Danish. For the concerns about the increasing Polish population of Prussia’s eastern provinces, see Richard Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire (1871-1900)* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1981), especially 39-51.

three of these minorities, became increasingly concerned about the reliability of its recruits. In tandem with the Prussian government's "Germanization" policies, large numbers of Polish-speaking soldiers were therefore transferred from their home provinces of West Prussia, Posen, and Silesia to Brandenburg and the Rhineland after 1894. Similarly, as late as 1912, only half of the army's 14,000 Alsace-Lorrainers were serving in the *Reichsland*.⁶ Even some foreign observers believed that these measures were justified. When conscription was introduced in Alsace-Lorraine in the autumn of 1872, Britain's envoy to Bavaria thought this to be unwise. The population, he wrote, could not be integrated into the empire in the same way that Northern and Western Germans had been absorbed into Prussia after 1866. "Scratch the surface of the Hanoverian or the Holsteiner and you get at the German beneath," but "employ the same process with an Alsace-Lorrainer and it will be a long time before you get at anything but an Alsace-Lorrainer, but what you do get to at last is French and not German."⁷

The British envoy was both right and wrong. Alsace-Lorrainers, as well as Danes and Poles, were often unwilling recruits for the German army. Yet Hanoverians and Holsteiners were not always fervent German patriots. After 1871, a large percentage of the soldiers who served in the Prussian contingent retained dual loyalties, even though they were ethnically German and regardless of their political allegiances. Because they had also signed military conventions with Prussia, the North German sovereigns, as well as their fellow rulers in Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt, continued to play minor roles in Germany's military affairs. While they did not possess the same far-reaching authority over their soldiers as the kings of Bavaria,

⁶ Boysen, *Preußische Armee und polnische Minderheit*, 29-46; Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 73.

⁷ Robert Morier, British envoy in Munich, to the British Foreign Office, October 21, 1872, TNA Kew, FO 9, file 216. Before writing this report, Morier had traveled extensively throughout Alsace and spoken with numerous government authorities and local notables about the attitude of the region's population.

Saxony, and Württemberg, the empire's grand dukes, dukes, and princes were recognized as ceremonial commanders-in-chief, exercising limited influence over the application of military justice and the deployment of units recruited in their territories. Officers from the kingdom of Hanover, which had disappeared from the map of Europe following the Austro-Prussian War, were an additional source of concern in Berlin. Many of these men were not reconciled to the new distribution of power in Germany after 1871 and, preferring to swear an oath of loyalty to the King of Saxony and serve in his kingdom, remained just beyond the reach of the Kaiser, his military cabinet, and the Prussian war ministry. The same was true for Bavaria's potentially unreliable Catholic and Jewish soldiers. Because the King of Bavaria exercised unrestricted control over personnel decisions within his contingent, the *Bundesfeldherr* could do little to shape the composition of the Bavarian officer corps. The federal treaty with Bavaria and the military conventions with the empire's smaller states not only represented obstacles to the centralization of command. They also encouraged fears in Berlin that certain religious beliefs and small-state loyalties would undermine the "German-patriotic" sentiment of the army's soldiers. In the decades after unification, these fears convinced the Prussian authorities to closely monitor the perceived "enemies of the empire" in Bavaria and Saxony as well as the Badenese, Hessians, Oldenburgers, and others within their own contingent's ranks.

A contingent-based contingent? Prussia's Badenese, Hessians, and North Germans

Like the German army more broadly, the Prussian contingent was a collection of state-based contingents. This structure had its origins in the decades before the Austro-Prussian War.

According to the German Confederation's military constitution, only seven of the federal army's ten corps – three Austrian, three Prussian, and one Bavarian – were composed of soldiers from a single state. The remaining three corps were cobbled together from the contingents of the smaller German states. In 1830, nineteen of these smaller contingents, mainly those from northern Germany, were removed from the mixed corps and concentrated in a "reserve infantry division" that would provide garrisons for the federal fortresses. The confederation's smallest states were thereby freed from their obligations to contribute costly artillery, cavalry, and support units to the federal army.⁸ After the failure of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV's Erfurt Union, Prussia worked to extend its control over these small contingents. In 1861, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha concluded a military convention with Prussia that effectively integrated its contingent into the Prussian army. Over the next few years, similar agreements were signed with Anhalt, Saxe-Altenburg, and Waldeck. During the 1850s and early 1860s, several of the remaining North German contingents were given Prussian commanders, reorganized along Prussian lines, and re-equipped with the needle gun. Their officers also took part in exercises and manoeuvres and attended military schools in the kingdom of Prussia.⁹

These developments, like the creation of the reserve infantry division, were welcomed as cost-cutting measures by the governments of northern Germany. But closer ties between

⁸ "Beschluss vom 9. December 1830, betreffend Erleichterungen in der Contingentstellung bei den drei gemischten Armeecorps, und Bildung einer Reserve-Infanteriedivision," as well as the subsequent modifications to this resolution, in *Die Kriegsverfassung des Deutschen Bundes nach den Bundesbeschlüssen der Jahre 1821 und 1822* (Frankfurt am Main: Bundes-Präsidial-Druckerei, 1846), 39-50. For the organization of the army of the German Confederation and the obligations of the individual contingents, see "Grundzüge der Kriegsverfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 9. April 1821" and "Nähere Bestimmungen der Kriegsverfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 12. April 1821 und 11. Juli 1822," in *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, ed. Ernst Rudolf Huber (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1978), 1:119-29.

⁹ Elmar Wienhöfer, *Das Militärwesen des Deutschen Bundes und das Ringen zwischen Österreich und Preussen um die Vorherrschaft in Deutschland 1815-1866* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1973), 94-7.

their contingents and the Prussian army also increased the dependence of these states on their larger neighbour. In 1866, much of northern Germany, including Anhalt, the Hanseatic cities, the two Mecklenburgs, Oldenburg, all but one of the Thuringian states, and Waldeck, sided with Prussia against Austria. The rapid Prussian victories seemed to demonstrate the wisdom of this decision. The smaller states that had supported Austria – Frankfurt, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, and Nassau – were annexed and their rulers deposed. Prussia's allies, although forced to join the North German Confederation, suffered no territorial losses and their sovereigns remained on their thrones.¹⁰ It was nevertheless soon clear that the Prussian reorganization of northern Germany would not be confined to the political sphere. The North German army, in contrast to that of its predecessor, would be brought more completely under Prussian control. Even though little was initially known outside of Berlin about the financial costs of these military reforms, many assumed they would be high. As the Saxon foreign minister, Richard von Friesen, told the Austrian envoy in Dresden at the beginning of December 1866, the financial burden would surely be beyond the means of the smaller states. Their ministers, like those from the Thuringian states who had appealed to the Saxon government for support, were fooling themselves if they thought that they could sustain their contingents by themselves. They would have only one choice: complete integration into Prussia's army.¹¹

In mid-December 1866, Bismarck provided the governments of northern Germany with more specifics by circulating a draft constitution for the new confederation. Over the following

¹⁰ Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Unification*, 295-7, 303-10; Dietrich, "Das Jahr 1866 und das 'Dritte Deutschland'," 102-6. For the Treaty of Prague and the subsequent Prussian annexations, see "Der Friedensvertrag von Prag vom 23. August 1866," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:249-55.

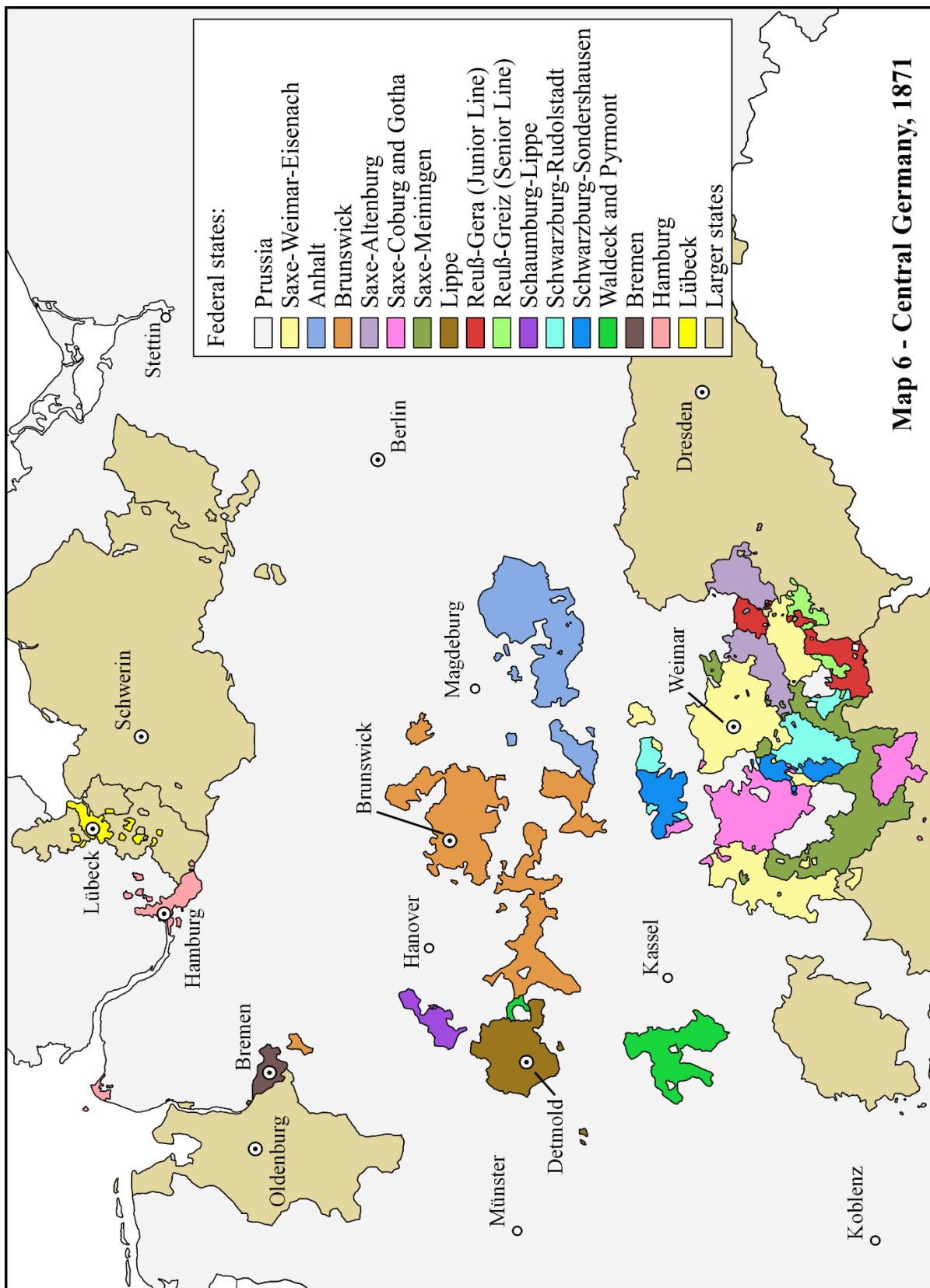
¹¹ Josef von Werner, Austrian envoy in Dresden, to the Austrian Foreign Office, December 2, 1866, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA V Sachsen, box 34-1.

months, this draft was fiercely debated by the member states and, later on, by the newly elected North German Reichstag. Whereas each state would retain its own contingent and most officers would be appointed by their respective sovereigns, the King of Prussia would receive far-reaching control over the North German army. Not only would he determine the commanders of all of the army's contingents, but also the locations of their peacetime garrisons. In addition, officers and rank-and-file soldiers would swear an oath of allegiance to him as *Bundesfeldherr*. Confirming the worst fears of the smaller states, universal military service would be introduced throughout the confederation and the army's strength would be fixed at one percent of the population, or 300,000 men. To cover the costs, states would need to provide the sum of 225 Thaler annually for each of their soldiers.¹² During the winter of 1866-7, it was these articles that provoked the strongest opposition. Some of the larger states, such as Brunswick and the two Mecklenburgs, believed that too much power had been given to the *Bundesfeldherr*. In contrast, some of the smaller states, whose budgets would double or triple with the adoption of Prussian-style conscription, wished to abolish their military administrations altogether. Saxony's military convention with Prussia, signed in February 1867, had shown these states that they would not get support from the confederation's second-largest member.¹³

The dissatisfaction of the smaller states worked to Prussia's advantage. Shortly after the North German parliament convened in Berlin to debate the draft constitution, Bismarck

¹² "Verfassung des Norddeutschen Bundes vom 16. April 1867," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:272-85, especially 282-4. See also Ludwig von Montgelas, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, December 20, 1866, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2646.

¹³ Klaus-Dieter Kaiser, "Die Eingliederung der ehemals selbständigen Norddeutschen Truppenkörper in die preussische Armee in den Jahren nach 1866" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1972), 72-5. For the negotiations between Bismarck and the ministers of the North German states in early 1867, see Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 290-371.



asked the Prussian war minister, General Albrecht von Roon, to begin bilateral negotiations with their governments. By the beginning of May 1867, the frameworks for a number of agreements had been established.¹⁴ Over the following months, nearly all the North German states signed military conventions with Prussia. The smallest of these states – the Hanseatic cities, Lippe, Schaumburg-Lippe, Schwarzburg-Sonderhausen, and Waldeck – completely integrated their contingents into the Prussian army, renouncing almost all of their military authority in the process. Some of the larger states, including Anhalt, Oldenburg, and the Thuringian states, agreed to abolish their military administrations and transfer control over personnel decisions to the King of Prussia's military cabinet. Only Brunswick and the two Mecklenburgs failed to conclude agreements in 1867. Holding out for concessions similar to those given to Saxony, Grand Duke Friedrich Franz II of Mecklenburg-Schwerin stubbornly refused to sign a military convention with Prussia. After negotiations dragged on for over a year, the grand duke finally read the writing on the wall and, in July 1868, surrendered control over officer appointments to Prussia. In return, the grand duchy was permitted to retain its own military administration. Several months later, in the autumn of 1868, Mecklenburg-Strelitz signed a similar agreement. Duke Wilhelm of Brunswick was much less submissive. Despite the small size of his contingent, the duke refused to formally integrate his soldiers into the Prussian army and a military convention was only signed after his death in 1884.¹⁵

¹⁴ Director of the General War Department in the Prussian ministry of war, General Theophil von Podbielski, to Bismarck, May 3, 1866, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, III. Hauptabteilung MdA I, file 9373.

¹⁵ Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 473-514; Kaiser, "Die Eingliederung der ehemals selbständigen norddeutschen Truppenkörper in die preußische Armee in den Jahren nach 1866," 75-136. For the military conventions between Prussia and the North German states, except the two Mecklenburgs, see J.C. Glaser, ed., *Archiv des Norddeutschen Bundes* (Berlin: Friedrich Kortkamp Verlag, 1867), 4:170ff. The almost two decades of negotiations between Brunswick and Prussia, as well as Bismarck's occasional threats of federal intervention against Duke Wilhelm, are discussed at length in Karl Lange, *Bismarcks Kampf um die Militärkonvention mit Braunschweig 1867-86* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Verlag, 1934).

Whether their rulers had signed military conventions with Prussia or not, the North German contingents were thoroughly reorganized after the North German constitution came into effect on July 1, 1867. Article 61 of the constitution introduced Prussian military justice and service regulations across the army, while Article 63 extended Prussia's system of unit designations to the North German contingents and ensured that their soldiers were outfitted in Prussian-style uniforms. The two Mecklenburg contingents, for example, were reorganized into the 89th Grenadiers and the 90th Fusiliers, while the contingents from the Thuringian states were grouped together into three new infantry regiments, receiving the Prussian regimental numbers ninety-four to ninety-six. The reorganized contingents were thereafter attached to the three Prussian army corps that were created after 1866.¹⁶ The composition of the contingents underwent considerable change after their incorporation into the North German army. Because authority over personnel matters had been transferred to Berlin in almost all cases, the adoption of Prussian organization, service regulations, and uniforms was without exception accompanied by the arrival of Prussian officers. Prussianization was particularly evident in the 93rd Infantry Regiment, forming the contingent from Anhalt. Of the duchy's thirty-five officers who had formerly served in the federal army, fourteen were transferred to Prussia. These men were replaced by twenty-nine Prussians. The 91st Infantry Regiment, which comprised the bulk of Oldenburg's contingent, retained more of its former officers – thirty-seven – but was assigned fourteen Prussian officers from Brandenburg, Pomerania, and

¹⁶ "Verfassung des Norddeutschen Bundes vom 16. April 1867" in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:282-3. For the reorganization of the North German contingents and their integration into the army of the North German Confederation, see Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:243-55.

Table 7 – Non-Prussian units in the North German army, 1867-1870¹⁷

| | Infantry battalions | <i>Jäger</i> battalions | Cavalry regiments | Artillery batteries |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Saxony | 27 | 2 | 6 | 16 |
| Hesse-Darmstadt | 8 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Thuringian states | 9 | - | - | - |
| Mecklenburg (Schwerin and Strelitz) | 6 | 1 | 2 | 4* |
| Anhalt | 3 | - | - | - |
| Oldenburg | 3 | - | 1 | 2* |
| Brunswick | 3 | - | 1 | 1* |
| Hamburg and Lübeck | 3 | - | - | - |
| Bremen | 1* | - | - | - |
| Lippe, Schaumburg-Lippe, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, Waldeck and Pyrmont | 3* | 1* | - | - |

* Prussian unit garrisoned in a non-Prussian state or component of a Prussian battalion or regiment

¹⁷ Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:243-53; Kaiser, "Die Eingliederung der ehemals selbständigen norddeutschen Truppenkörper in die preußische Armee in den Jahren nach 1866," 72-163.

the Rhineland. Although the regiment's colonel remained an Oldenburger, his entire staff and all three of his battalion commanders were Prussian officers after 1867.¹⁸

Even the two larger South German states that integrated their armies into the Prussian contingent after 1867 did not escape the same fate. Almost five hundred Badenese officers remained with their units when Baden's military convention with Prussia went into effect in June 1871. These men were nevertheless joined by seventy-six Prussians. The arrival of more and more Prussians ensured that the percentage of Badenese officers in the XIV Army Corps steadily decreased after unification. By 1888, only one in five officers serving in one regiment had been born in Baden. The remainder came mainly from Brandenburg, the Rhineland, and the eastern provinces of Prussia.¹⁹ The shock was only slightly less severe in the case of Hesse-Darmstadt. The grand duchy's military convention, negotiated in the spring of 1867, preserved Grand Duke Ludwig III's control over personnel matters while providing for a limited exchange of officers. In June 1871, a revised agreement was reached between the two states that directly subordinated Hessian officers to the *Bundesfeldherr*. The subsequent integration of Hessian soldiers into the Prussian contingent and the few remaining sovereign powers of the grand duke led the British envoy in Darmstadt to wonder: "if then it be borne in mind that the Hessian child is educated under a Prussian system – that when old enough to serve, he becomes a soldier in a Prussian army – that the Grand Duke of Hesse cannot promote his own subjects in his own nominal army – that the army is paid from Berlin ... the question must

¹⁸ Kaiser, "Die Eingliederung der ehemals selbständigen norddeutschen Truppenkörper in die preußische Armee in den Jahren nach 1866," 99-102, 116-18. The one exception was Brunswick. The King of Prussia could appoint a Prussian officer as the contingent's commander, but all other appointments were controlled by the duke after 1867.

¹⁹ Karl-Heinz Lutz, *Das badische Offizierskorps 1840-1870/71* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1997), 224-35, especially 230-2. According to Lutz, the reorganization of the Badenese contingent after 1871 was also accompanied by a pronounced increase in the percentage of officers from noble backgrounds.

force itself to the mind: what is the independence of the Grand Duchy? Where are the Grand Duke's sovereign rights and when will this abnormal state of things come to an end?"²⁰

The British envoy's comments, made in the fall of 1875, highlight the consequences of unification for the rulers of the smaller German states. They also reveal that the process of integration into the Prussian contingent was not painless. In both Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt, entrance into Prussian service created considerable anxiety, especially for members of the officer corps. Badenese and Hessian officers were offered the same terms that were offered to their North German comrades in 1867: commissions at the rank that an officer would have obtained had he served in the Prussian army from the outset of his career or, if he instead decided to retire, favourable pensions. Still, rumours circulated in the spring of 1871 that the expansion of the Badenese division into an army corps would result in fewer, not more, opportunities for the grand duchy's officers. Some, mainly senior Badenese officers would likely not be accepted into Prussian service at all.²¹ These fears were confirmed only a few months later. On average, between six and twelve Prussians were transferred to each Badenese regiment and around seventy Badenese officers were sent to distant garrisons in Prussia. Some officers complained that they lost as many as six years of service time when they accepted Prussian commissions and it was soon commonplace to hear officers grumble that a Badener

²⁰ Hubert Jerningham, British envoy in Darmstadt, to the British Foreign Office, November 28, 1875, in Mösslang and Whatmore, *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich*, 1:222-6. For the reorganization of the Hessian army after the Austro-Prussian War, see Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 497-510; Kaiser, "Die Eingliederung der ehemals selbständigen norddeutschen Truppenkörper in die preußische Armee in den Jahren nach 1866," 137-48.

²¹ For example, see Eduard Riederer von Paar zu Schönau, Bavarian envoy in Karlsruhe, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, March 18, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2050; Fidel von Baur-Breitenfeld, Württemberg envoy in Karlsruhe, to Johann von Wächter-Lautenbach, Württemberg minister-president, April 6, 1871, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/04, file 103.

only seldom reached the rank of colonel.²² The situation was similar in Hesse-Darmstadt where many senior officers reluctantly accepted pensions. In total, over sixty Hessian officers either chose to retire or were refused entrance into Prussian service in the winter of 1871-2.²³

By integrating their armies into the Prussian contingent, the rulers of Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, and the smaller North German states relinquished some of the most carefully guarded rights of a sovereign. Not only could these rulers no longer wield the power of command, but they were unable to determine, with minor exceptions, the appearance and equipment of their soldiers and the composition and organization of their contingents. Their remaining authority, one historian has written, surely “must have seemed without substance, impractical, and absurd.”²⁴ Yet few military powers, no matter their degree of absurdity or impracticality, are completely without substance. In the spring of 1868, the King of Prussia informed the Bavarian military plenipotentiary during a parade in Potsdam that he wished to see the Prussian eagle affixed to the helmet of every soldier in the North German army.²⁵ Wilhelm I understood that emblems had the power to strengthen or undermine a soldier’s allegiance. Some of the sovereigns who integrated their armies into the Prussian contingent

²² Baur-Breitenfeld to Wächter-Lautenbach, June 11 and July 24, 1871, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/04, file 103. For the number of Badenese officers transferred to Prussian regiments or to the General Staff in Berlin, see Lutz, *Das badische Offizierskorps 1840-1870/71*, 226.

²³ Evan Montagu Baillie, British envoy in Darmstadt, to the British Foreign Office, January 4, 1872, TNA Kew, FO 30, file 240; Gasser to the Bavarian foreign ministry, January 26, 1872, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3032.

²⁴ Becker, *Bismarcks Ringen um Deutschlands Gestaltung*, 478. Ernst Rudolf Huber also clearly distinguished between the military conventions with Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg and those with the smaller German states. Huber, *Heer und Staat in der deutschen Geschichte* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1943), 251-2.

²⁵ Major Karl von Freyberg, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Bavarian ministry of war, April 26, 1868, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, Alter Bestand E 380. Article 63 of the North German Confederation’s constitution stated that the design of insignia, such as cockades, was determined by each *Kontingentsherr*, a role that the King of Prussia assumed through the military conventions with the smaller North German states.

after 1867 continued to possess a voice in military affairs that went beyond the design of helmets. In addition to enjoying the rights to review their regiments, select officers as aides-de-camp and, under certain circumstances, deploy their soldiers in order to restore civil order in their domains, they exercised some influence over the location of garrisons and, in some cases, the administration of military justice. Uncertain of the loyalty of many of their soldiers, the Prussian military authorities viewed these remaining military rights with unease.

Among the sovereigns of North Germany, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin retained the most far-reaching powers over his soldiers. The military convention that was signed in 1868 and a second agreement, finalized in 1872, permitted the grand duke to appoint independent commandants who were responsible for administering the military justice cases in Mecklenburg's regiments. These commandants, Saxony's military plenipotentiary in Berlin observed, made "unmeasured and very often unpleasant use of this prerogative" in the decades following unification.²⁶ The resulting friction between the Mecklenburg military department, which remained in existence following unification according to the grand duchy's military convention, and the Prussian war ministry reached a climax in January 1892. Shortly after Grand Duke Friedrich Franz III succumbed to pressure from Berlin and authorized Prussian officers to oversee courts martial proceedings in his contingent, a Prussian soldier was arrested and sentenced by the Mecklenburg commandant in Dömitz. The garrison's Prussian officer, unlike the unfortunate commandant, who had not been informed of the grand duke's decision,

²⁶ Colonel Georg von Schlieben, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, August 30, 1891, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 116. For the terms of the two military conventions, see *Stenographische Berichte des Deutschen Reichstags*, 1st Legislative Period, Anlagen (Berlin, 1872-3), 26:702-3 and 29:130-2. For the integration of the contingents of the two Mecklenburgs into the Prussian army more generally, see Klaus-Ulrich Keubke, *Kleine Militärgeschichte Mecklenburgs* (Schwerin: Stock und Stein Verlag, 1995), 78-93.

therefore refused to carry out the sentence. Instead, he ordered the soldier to be freed, with force if necessary. The incident, in the words of the Kaiser, had been “harmless.” Still, the threat to military discipline was considered serious enough among the Prussian authorities to warrant the resignation of the chief of Mecklenburg’s military department.²⁷

More contentious were the rights to determine the peacetime deployment of units. In the military conventions with the smaller North German governments, Prussia had agreed to recruit and garrison units within the states. Although formally Prussian soldiers, recruits would complete their military service in their home districts. Further concessions were made to some of the larger states. Article Six of Hesse-Darmstadt’s military convention of 1871 not only required the Prussian war ministry to garrison Hessian regiments within the grand duchy. The *Bundesfeldherr* also agreed to make use of his constitutional power to redeploy any and all elements of the army only in urgent circumstances. If such a situation arose, the Kaiser was obligated first to consult with the grand duke before issuing orders to Hessian soldiers.²⁸ This promise – largely meaningless, since an appropriate justification could always be found – nevertheless became the focal point of a dispute between Grand Duke Ludwig IV and the Prussian war ministry in the spring of 1881. In early April, the soldiers of a Hessian artillery battery were transferred wholesale to a newly formed regiment in Alsace. The grand duke, who was not informed of the decision in advance, made his feelings known to the Prussian envoy

²⁷ Hugo von Lerchenfeld, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, January 8, 1892, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 77877; Friedrich Karl von Moser, Württemberg’s envoy in Berlin, to Württemberg’s minister-president, Hermann von Mittnacht, January 11, 1892, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand 50/03, file 186.

²⁸ “Militärkonvention zwischen Preußen und Hessen vom 13. Juni 1871, nebst Schlußprotokoll,” in *Stenographische Berichte des Deutschen Reichstages*, 1st Legislative Period, Anlagen (Berlin, 1872), 26:708-14. For an example of the Prussian concessions to the smaller North German states, see “Militair-Convention zwischen Preussen und Schwarzburg-Sonderhausen,” June 28, 1867, in Glaser, *Archiv des Norddeutschen Bundes*, 4:192-9.

in Darmstadt, who then passed the sovereign's objections on to the chancellor. Always sensitive to the concerns of the German empire's rulers, Bismarck immediately requested an explanation. Because the transfer did not involve an entire unit, but rather its personnel, the war minister claimed that the military convention had not been violated. With little hope of reversing the decision, the grand duke eventually abandoned his opposition.²⁹

Baden's military convention with Prussia contained similar clauses relating to the location of garrisons. Article Four ensured that the Badenese contingent would be stationed "so far as possible" within the borders of the grand duchy and that the *Bundesfeldherr* would refrain from transferring units from other contingents to Baden. The one exception was Rastatt. Because this city was considered a federal fortress, its commanding officer and garrison were determined by the Kaiser.³⁰ When, in the summer of 1909, the Prussian war ministry replaced the Prussian infantry regiment in Rastatt with another from the Rhineland, the government in Karlsruhe sent a strongly worded complaint to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg. Not only had the war minister failed to notify the Badenese before the transfer of these units, but, from 1890 onwards, Rastatt had ceased to be a federal fortress. The city's garrison could no longer be exempt from the terms of the military convention. The Badenese government therefore demanded that, if an exchange of units were to take place, one of the several Badenese

²⁹ Friedrich von Alvensleben, Prussian envoy in Darmstadt, to Bismarck, April 3, 1881, and the Foreign Office in Berlin to Alvensleben, April 16, 1881, with a copy of the report by General Georg von Kameke, Prussian minister of war, to Bismarck, April 9, 1881, PA AA Berlin, R 3046. The grand duke's objections were based on a conversation between his adjutant general and a high-ranking Prussian officer. An exchange of letters between the Kaiser and Ludwig IV eventually settled the matter. Alvensleben to Bismarck, April 20, 1881, PA AA Berlin, R 3046.

³⁰ "Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bund und Baden vom 25. November 1870," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:343-6. The *Bundesfeldherr*'s control over federal fortresses was outlined in Articles 64 and 65 of constitution of the North German Confederation and, later on, the German empire.

regiments stationed in the neighbouring *Reichsland* should be transferred to Rastatt.³¹ As in the dispute with the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, the Prussian war minister, General Josias von Heeringen, rejected these arguments, pointing out that the transfer involved only Prussian regiments and that the military convention therefore did not apply in this instance. Even if this agreement were applicable, Rastatt's exemption from its terms and the presence of a Prussian unit in its garrison had little to do with the city's status as a federal fortress. Instead, the war minister wrote, Rastatt's mixed garrison was a desirable expression of the "military solidarity and brotherhood in arms of the Prussian and Badenese troops."³²

Events in Oldenburg left little doubt in Berlin's military circles that the failure to encourage "military solidarity and brotherhood" could have serious consequences. In October 1883, a pamphlet was published in the grand duchy alleging that a Prussian officer of the 91st Infantry, Major Steinmann, had not only treated the soldiers under his command harshly, but regularly referred to them as "oxen." At around the same time, Steinmann had learned that a fellow officer, Captain von der Lippe, had often spoken disparagingly about him in public, claiming that he was a Jew. In the resulting duel, Lippe was wounded. The local newspapers sensationalized the incident, portraying the grand duchy as the aggrieved party, rather than Steinmann, and Lippe as having demanded satisfaction on behalf of Oldenburg's insulted soldiers. Events quickly spiralled out of control and, after an angry crowd gathered in front of Steinmann's house and, throwing stones, broke a number of his windows, a company of the city's garrison was called upon to restore order. Unsettled by these events, the Prussian war

³¹ Baden's legation in Berlin to Bethmann Hollweg, October 15, 1909, PA AA Berlin, R 2699.

³² General Josias von Heeringen, Prussian minister of war, to Bethmann Hollweg, November 11, 1909, and a second note containing two proposed changes to the chancellor's response to the Badenese legation in Berlin from November 29, 1909, PA AA Berlin, R 2699.

minister recommended that the Oldenburg regiment be sent to West Prussia and replaced by a Prussian unit. The “systematic agitation” against Prussian officers could not be tolerated and, in order to prevent a complete collapse of military discipline, it was necessary to “temporarily dissolve the link between the Oldenburg troops and their native population.”³³ Bismarck was strongly against such a transfer. Although neither the imperial constitution nor the military convention with the grand duchy stood in Prussia’s way, withdrawing the Oldenburgers from their garrison could only give rise to the damaging impression abroad that anti-Prussian sentiment remained strong in North Germany. In the end, the chancellor got his way. Despite the war minister’s protests, the 91st Infantry Regiment remained in Oldenburg.³⁴

Concerns about the dual loyalties of Prussia’s soldiers persisted up to the outbreak of the First World War. At the end of December 1912, the commander of the XIV Army Corps in Karlsruhe, General Ernst von Huene, informed the Prussian ministry of war that the city council of Rastatt intended to provide public land for a monument to Karl Schurz, one of the participants in the Badenese uprising of 1849. During the Prussian siege of the fortress, Schurz had escaped through a sewer and later fled to the United States. If built, Huene believed that the monument would have a corrosive effect on military discipline in the city. What might the Badenese soldiers in Rastatt think, the Prussian general asked, if a monument were built to someone who had been nothing more than a *Freischärler*, or “franc-tireur”? Memorializing Schurz would at the same time insult the garrison’s Prussian soldiers. During manoeuvres in

³³ General Paul Bronsart von Schellendorff, Prussian minister of war, to Bismarck, November 6, 1883, with the summary of events for the Kaiser by General von Schmidt, commander of Oldenburg’s garrison, October 27, 1883, PA AA Berlin, R 3171. See also the report by Prince Albrecht of Prussia, commander of the X Army Corps, to the Prussian ministry of war, November 19, 1883, PA AA Berlin, R 3171.

³⁴ Bismarck to Bronsart von Schellendorff, November 9, 1883, PA AA Berlin, R 3171. For the terms of Oldenburg’s military convention with Prussia, see “Militair-Convention zwischen Preussen und Oldenburg,” in Glaser, *Archiv des Norddeutschen Bundes*, 4:178-87.

the surrounding countryside, these men often stumbled across the gravestones of Prussian soldiers killed during the uprising. Baden's interior ministry was non-committal in its response to the Prussian government's inquiries.³⁵ Thus, the matter again surfaced in the summer of 1913. Although a relieved Huene reported that Rastatt's new mayor now refused to provide public land to the monument committee, rumours had surfaced that an influential German-American businessman had made a large financial donation to the project and had contacted the German ambassador in Washington. Huene urged his superiors in Berlin to look into these rumours. If necessary, the general was willing to approach the Kaiser directly. A copy of Huene's report eventually found its way onto the desk of Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg and, although the steps taken next are unclear, the monument project was never revived.³⁶

Some degree of friction between Prussian and non-Prussian soldiers was probably inevitable. The integration of the armies of Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, and the North German states into Prussia's military structure produced anxiety among officers over career prospects and resentment among enlisted men at being placed under overly harsh Prussian superiors. In the spring of 1877, these tensions boiled over in the fortress city of Mainz when a group of Prussians attempted to celebrate the Kaiser's birthday in a pub occupied by Hessians. The resulting soldiers' brawl caused numerous injuries, one death, and widespread shock. One observer interpreted the incident as evidence of "how little the system of Prussianizing the Germans has any chance of success in the South of the Empire, and how great in the people is

³⁵ Huene to the Prussian ministry of war, December 23, 1912, with four attachments, including the Prussian general's complaint to Baden's ministry of the interior, October 27, 1912, BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 2, file 16. For the mutiny of the Badenese army and its role in the uprising in Baden in 1849, see Wolfgang von Hippel, *Revolution im deutschen Südwesten. Das Großherzogtum Baden 1848/49* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1998).

³⁶ Huene to the Prussian ministry of war, July 20, 1913, and the Prussian ministry of war to Bethmann Hollweg, August 21, 1913, BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 2, file 16.

still the hatred of Prussia as a separate nation in the united Empire of Germany.”³⁷ It was this deep-seated animosity towards Prussia that raised concerns in Berlin. When combined with intense loyalty to monarchs who, while not nearly as influential as the rulers of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, still possessed a voice in the empire’s military affairs, even men within the Prussian contingent could appear less than reliable. The Prussian war minister’s proposal to transfer the entire 91st Infantry Regiment from Oldenburg and Huene’s concerns about the “revolutionary monument” to Carl Schurz therefore reflected the belief that small-state loyalties also had the potential to undermine the authority of the *Bundesfeldherr*. The same set of factors – dual loyalties and limited imperial control – shaped Prussian attitudes towards certain, potentially dangerous groups in Bavaria’s far more autonomous contingent.

Out of reach, but not out of sight: Catholicism, Jews, and the Bavarian officer corps

Section three of the federal treaty between Bavaria and the North German Confederation, signed in November 1870, outlined the *Reservatrechte*, or reserve rights, of the South German kingdom. One of the most important of these rights was the King of Bavaria’s control over personnel decisions. Unlike in Saxony and Württemberg, all Bavarian soldiers, including the commanding generals of the two (later three) Bavarian army corps, could only be appointed, transferred, or dismissed with the king’s consent.³⁸ In return for this military autonomy, the

³⁷ Jerningham to the British Foreign Office, March 28, 1877, in Mösslang and Whatmore, *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich*, 1:238-9. The British envoy also observed that “incidents of this kind are not new in the fortified town of [Mainz].”

³⁸ “Der Bundesvertrag betreffend den Beitritt Bayerns zur Verfassung des Deutschen Bundes vom 23. November 1870,” in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:329-33. See also Campbell, “The Bavarian Army,” 53-5.

Bavarian contingent was compelled to adopt Prussian organization, service regulations, and standards of training. Building upon the reforms introduced during the late 1860s by the minister of war, General Sigmund von Pranckh, the reorganization of Bavaria's contingent proceeded rapidly in the first few years after the Franco-Prussian War. Indeed, Pranckh's eagerness to implement the terms of the federal treaty impressed Prussian observers. In early 1872, the Prussian military attaché in Munich, Captain Hermann von Stülpnagel, wrote that the Bavarians seemed determined to carry out the necessary reforms, and added that Pranckh regularly approached him with requests for information about Prussian institutions and practices.³⁹ Closer ties were established between the two contingents in the following decades. Beginning in the autumn of 1874, a small number of Bavarian staff officers – including two future war ministers – were assigned to the Prussian General Staff in Berlin. In addition to their normal staff duties, these officers submitted reports to Munich on conditions in Prussia's contingent, served with Prussian units, and took part in Prussian military exercises.⁴⁰

The Prussians followed developments in South Germany with a cautious optimism, however. In October 1872, Stülpnagel wrote that the Bavarian war ministry had introduced new regulations for the assembly and inspection of units. These instructions were far too detailed and outlined matters, such as the behaviour appropriate to officers, which were considered self-evident in Prussia. It was clear that Bavaria's officer corps above all lacked appropriate education and leadership, and, the military attaché concluded, as many Bavarian

³⁹ Report of Captain Hermann von Stülpnagel, Prussian military attaché in Munich, March 3, 1872, PA AA Berlin, R 2704.

⁴⁰ Othmar Hackl, *Der Bayerische Generalstab (1792-1919)* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), 277-9, 292-6, 326-47. In 1914, there were eleven Bavarian officers attached to the Prussian General Staff in Berlin. Of these officers, four were assigned to the railroad department, which was responsible for the mobilization travel plan. Frauenholz, *Geschichte des Königlich Bayerischen Heeres*, 90.

officers as possible should therefore be transferred to the Prussian contingent for lengthy periods of service.⁴¹ Stülpnagel was well aware that the terms of Bavaria's federal treaty guaranteed that large-scale personnel transfers, like the exchange of officers between Prussia and Württemberg, were unlikely. Still, it was precisely because the Bavarian officer corps remained beyond the control of the Prussian military authorities that it engendered suspicion in Berlin. In part, these suspicions arose from its composition. As Stülpnagel wrote in the spring of 1879, even though the professionalism of Bavarian officers had improved immeasurably in the decade since the end of the Franco-Prussian War, the Bavarian ministry of war's decision to make the *Abitur*, or the examination certificate that permitted students to attend university, mandatory for officer candidates in 1872 was cause for concern. Many young men from "good families" were thereby prevented from entering Bavaria's officer corps. At the same time, and far more seriously, higher educational requirements would gradually limit the pool of candidates to those "elements, whose custom, household upbringing, and familial relations appeared to better suit them for careers other than the officer class."⁴²

Stülpnagel was convinced that he knew who would and would not be suitable for a career as an officer. Members of the Prussian officer corps, which perceived itself to be the strongest pillar of the Hohenzollern monarchy, were expected to adopt aristocratic attitudes and behaviour. This expectation was made clear in May 1879. An officer, Kaiser Wilhelm I wrote, should at all times endeavour "to select only those circles for his social intercourse in

⁴¹ Stülpnagel's report, October 16, 1872, PA AA Berlin, R 2704. Only a few months later, the military attaché complained that the Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, supported by the war ministry in Munich, sought to limit the number of transfers of Bavarian officers to the Prussian army for "particularistic purposes." Stülpnagel's report, February 8, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 2708.

⁴² Stülpnagel's report, May 25, 1879, PA AA Berlin, R 2717. For the educational requirements for officer candidates in Bavaria and their consequences, see Hermann Rumschöttel, *Das bayerische Offizierkorps 1866-1914* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1973), 46ff.

which good conventions prevail,” adding that “the more luxury and good living elsewhere gains ground, the more seriously the duty falls to the officer class to never forget that it is not material goods which have secured and which will preserve his highly esteemed position in state and society.”⁴³ Preserving the aristocratic character of the officer corps nevertheless became increasingly difficult in the decades after unification. The steady expansion of the German army – between 1874 and 1913, its peacetime strength nearly doubled – dramatically changed the composition of the officer corps. Whereas sixty-five percent of Prussian officers came from noble families before the Wars of Unification, nobles made up only thirty percent of all officers and twenty-seven percent of junior officers in 1913.⁴⁴ Recognizing that the nobility could no longer provide a sufficient number of officer candidates, Kaiser Wilhelm II approved the widening “of the circles which come into consideration for the replenishment of the officer corps” in March 1890. Not everyone would be accepted, but rather only “the sons of such respectable middle-class houses in which the love of king and Fatherland, a warm heart for the soldiering class, and Christian modes of behaviour are cultivated and instilled.”⁴⁵

As a consequence of Pränckh’s reforms in the late 1860s and the increased contacts between the army’s state-based contingents thereafter, the Bavarian officer corps gradually came to resemble its Prussian counterpart, a process that one historian has described as a “tendency towards social exclusiveness.”⁴⁶ By the 1890s, Prussia’s representatives in Munich

⁴³ “‘Einleitung zur Verordnung über Ehrengerichte etc.’ vom 2.5.1879,” in *Deutsche Sozialgeschichte. Dokumente und Skizzen*, ed. Gerhard A. Ritter and Jürgen Kocka (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1974), 2:227-8.

⁴⁴ Demeter, *The German Officer Corps in Society and State*, 20-32. For the pressure which the shortage of officer candidates from aristocratic families produced in the Prussian army, see Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 232-8.

⁴⁵ “Eine Kaiserliche Kabinettsordre über den Offizierstand,” March 29, 1890, in *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871-1914. Ein historisches Lesebuch*, ed. Gerhard A. Ritter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 95-7.

⁴⁶ Rumschöttel, *Das bayerische Offizierkorps*, 92-4.

could therefore express growing confidence in Bavarian officers. When newspaper reports claimed in the spring of 1897 that the Bavarian contingent had established a safe haven for particularism following unification and that high-ranking officers wished to strengthen its autonomy within the German army, the Prussian military attaché strongly disagreed. Such ideas, he wrote, were not at all widespread in the kingdom's officer corps. On the contrary, Bavarian officers were recruited "mainly from the liberal-inclined middle-class circles in which the German national idea had struck its firmest roots." If a few Bavarian officers had embraced particularism, it was only because they knew these sentiments would be favourably received at the prince regent's court and result in speedy promotion.⁴⁷ The Prussian envoy likewise reported in the summer of 1906 that the lifestyle enjoyed by Bavarian officers was characterized by "great simplicity" and "respectable traditions." The envoy's observations would probably have warmed the heart of Kaiser Wilhelm I: the majority of young, unmarried Bavarian officers still lived with their families and it was a great exception when one heard about "a young officer of the [Munich] garrison who spends too much money."⁴⁸

Of course, there were important differences between the Bavarian and Prussian officer corps. Unlike in Prussia, where officers had been recruited from the *Junker* nobility from the early eighteenth century onwards, the majority of Bavarian officers had traditionally come from middle-class families. Two factors ensured that the composition of the Bavarian officer

⁴⁷ Major von Krosigk, Prussian military attaché in Munich, to the Prussian ministry of war, May 22, 1896, PA AA Berlin, R 2752. See also Krosigk's report from March 1, 1897, PA AA Berlin, R 2754. For the relationship between the middle class and the German army after the Franco-Prussian War more generally, see Frank Becker, "Strammstehen vor der Obrigkeit? Bürgerliche Wahrnehmung der Einigungskriege und Militarismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich," *Historische Zeitschrift* 277 (2003), 87-113.

⁴⁸ Friedrich von Pourtalès, Prussian envoy in Munich, to the Foreign Office in Berlin, July 13, 1906, PA AA Berlin, R 2730.

Table 8 – The contingents of the German army, 1912⁴⁹

| | Prussia | Bavaria | Saxony | Württemberg | Total |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Army corps | 19 ^a | 3 ^b | 2 ^c | 1 ^d | 25 |
| Divisions | 38 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 50 |
| Officers | 22,828 | 3,321 | 2,178 | 1,077 | 29,404 |
| Other ranks | 483,804 | 68,957 | 48,816 | 23,774 | 625,351 |
| Total peacetime strength | 506,632 | 72,278 | 50,994 | 24,851 | 654,755 |
| % of total peacetime strength | 77.4 | 11.0 | 7.8 | 3.8 | 100.0 |
| Population (1910) | 50,794,467 ^e | 6,887,291 | 4,806,661 | 2,437,574 | 64,925,993 |

^a Guard, I-XI, XIV-XVIII, XX-XXI^b I-III Bavarian^c XII, XIX^d XIII^e Including the empire's eighteen smaller states and three free cities, as well as the *Reichsland* of Alsace-Lorraine

⁴⁹ Collenberg, *Die deutsche Armee*, 122-3; Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:296-7; Kaiserliches Statistisches Amt, *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 33 (1912), 1; Stahl, "Preußische Armee und Reichsheer," 239.

corps retained its middle-class character after 1871. First, the expansion of the Bavarian contingent following the Franco-Prussian War resulted, as in the army more broadly, in the admission of officers from wider and wider social circles. Second, the stringent educational requirements guaranteed that the sons of shopkeepers, lawyers, and teachers, who were more likely to attend a *Gymnasium*, or secondary school, retained their majority in the Bavarian officer corps. Whereas one-quarter of Bavarian officers came from noble families in the late 1860s, this proportion had decreased to fifteen percent by 1914. Yet it was not only their educational and occupational backgrounds that distinguished Bavarian from Prussian officers. The confessional balance in the Bavarian officer corps also differed greatly. Whereas two-thirds of Prussia's population was Protestant in 1900, just over seventy percent of Bavarians were Catholic.⁵⁰ In the first half of the nineteenth century, the ratio of Catholics to Protestants in Bavaria's officer corps roughly corresponded to the kingdom's population. The requirement that officer candidates possess the *Abitur* encouraged Protestant families, whose children often received higher levels of education, to enroll their sons in the Bavarian cadet school after 1872. Even though the number of Protestant officer candidates increased in the subsequent decades, Catholics maintained a slight majority in the Bavarian officer corps.⁵¹

Even though religion provided a strong justification for military service to Kaiser and king, anti-Catholicism was widespread within the Prussian officer corps. Despite constituting one-third of empire's population, Catholics occupied only five percent of senior command

⁵⁰ "Religionsverhältnisse der Bevölkerung am 1. Dezember 1900," *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich* 25 (1904), 7. On December 1, 1900, there were 21,817,577 Protestants and 12,113,670 Catholics living in Prussia, while Bavaria's population included 4,363,178 Catholics and 1,749,206 Protestants. Overall, 63 percent of the German empire's inhabitants were Protestant and 36 percent were Catholic.

⁵¹ Gundula Gahlen, *Das bayerische Offizierskorps 1815-1866* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011), 166-78; Rumschöttel, *Das bayerische Offizierskorps*, 61-5, 236-8.

positions throughout the army.⁵² Prejudice against German Catholics increased as a result of Bismarck's policies during the early 1870s. The chancellor believed that "Ultramontanes," or supporters of supreme papal authority, posed a threat to the work of national consolidation. Like members of the Social Democratic Party, devout Catholics were therefore labelled *Reichsfeinde*, or "enemies of the empire," by the conservative and nationalist press. Beginning in 1872, Bismarck waged a campaign against the Catholic Church's influence: the use of the pulpit for political purposes was outlawed, civil marriage was made mandatory, and government control over religious affairs and education was strengthened. The *Kulturkampf*, as these anti-Catholic measures became known, failed. Rather than weakening support for the papacy, Catholics in Baden, Bavaria, the Rhineland, and eastern Prussia turned to the Centre Party, whose leaders worked to defend the German empire's federal structure against greater centralization.⁵³ The increased political mobilization of Catholics and the fierce opposition of the Centre Party's predecessor in Bavaria, the Patriots' Party, to Prankh's military reforms in the late 1860s and early 1870s created considerable anxiety in Berlin: what would happen to the loyalty of the Bavarian contingent if Ultramontanism took hold in its officer corps?

⁵² Hughes and DiNardo, *Imperial Germany and War*, 29-30. For the link between religion, especially Protestantism, and the German army, see Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps*, 168-75; Hartmut Lehmann, "In the Service of Two Kings: Protestant Prussian Military Chaplains, 1713-1918," in *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Doris L. Bergen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 125-40.

⁵³ Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany: The Period of Consolidation*, 179-206. See also Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Windthorst: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Ronald J. Ross, *The Failure of Bismarck's Kulturkampf: Catholicism and State Power in Imperial Germany, 1871-1887* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998); Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 19-49. For anticlericalism more generally, see Wolfram Kaiser, "'Clericalism – that is our enemy!': European anticlericalism and the culture wars," in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47-76.

The danger that Ultramontanism allegedly posed to the “German national idea” in the Bavarian officer corps was a common theme in the reports of the Prussian representatives in Munich. In January 1873, false rumours circulated in the Bavarian capital that Pranckh had submitted his resignation. The Prussian envoy, Georg von Werthern, believed he knew exactly where the rumours had originated: Ultramontanes wished to discredit the pro-Prussian war minister and see him replaced by an officer with stronger clerical and particularistic convictions.⁵⁴ Only a few months later, Werthern reported that the same Catholic groups had turned their attention to the commanding general of the I Bavarian Army Corps, General Ludwig von der Tann. Rumours that Tann had refused to deploy the garrison of Augsburg as a cordon along the city’s streets during the festival of St. Ulrich had been spread by the Ultramontanes. The rumours, the envoy wrote, were untrue; Bavarian soldiers had taken part in the festival. Werthern nevertheless admitted that the Ultramontanes had succeeded in one respect: they had created “a great sensation in the army and in middle-class circles.”⁵⁵

Unsurprisingly, the Prussian military attaché in Munich closely monitored Bavaria’s officer corps for evidence of growing Ultramontane influence. In the spring of 1893, Major Kurt von Pritzelwitz reported that a Bavarian officer who had been ordered to attend the wedding anniversary of King Umberto I of Italy and his wife had suddenly – and falsely – claimed an illness in order to avoid making the journey. The officer, the military attaché

⁵⁴ Werthern to the Foreign Office in Berlin, January 27, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 2708. For the attitude of the Bavarian Patriots’ Party to the Bavarian and imperial armies, as well as the German empire more generally, see Friedrich Hartmannsgruber, *Die Bayerische Patriotenpartei 1868-1887* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1986), 372-80; Wilhelm Volkert, “Die Bayerische Patriotenpartei und das Zentrum 1871-1898. Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte der Bayerischen Volkspartei,” in *Geschichtswissenschaft und Zeiterkenntnis. Von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Horst Möller*, ed. Klaus Hildebrand et al. (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2008), 83-98.

⁵⁵ Werthern to Bismarck, June 18, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 2708.

believed, had been pressured to do so by his relative, the head of the fervently Catholic Thurn und Taxis family, which refused to acknowledge the House of Savoy's sovereignty over Rome. Since the Bavarian war minister had so far refused to punish the officer, Pritzelwitz worried that his behaviour could set a dangerous precedent. What, he wrote, would prevent other Catholic officers in the Bavarian contingent from successfully refusing to carry out orders in the future by claiming that these orders offended their religious beliefs?⁵⁶

In keeping a close watch on political Catholicism, Prussia's representatives focused their attention on Bavaria's military schools. When, in the summer of 1891, a Bavarian cadet refused to eat the communion wafer, the Ultramontane press sensationalized the incident, heavily criticizing the Bavarian cadet corps. This criticism was welcome news to Pritzelwitz. It was obvious, he wrote, that the cadet corps sought to create a "community of confessions" in its ranks, while the Ultramontanes worked "to add new fuel to the nearly extinguished sparks of the *Kulturkampf*."⁵⁷ The military attaché did not simply observe. He also actively sought to ensure that Bavaria continued to produce officers imbued with the "German national idea." In the spring of 1894, a brochure appeared that demanded a stronger voice for Bavaria in the empire and a more autonomous role for the kingdom in Europe. To be sure, these demands were nothing new. What made the appearance of the brochure so concerning, Pritzelwitz wrote, was that its author was an instructor of history at the Bavarian cadet school. The military attaché had little doubt that the same "megalomania, unashamed Byzantinism, and falsifications of history" that characterized the brochure also filled the instructor's lectures to the cadets, thereby preventing them from becoming the "future bearers of the imperial idea in

⁵⁶ Pritzelwitz to the Prussian war ministry, May 4, 1893, PA AA Berlin, R 2746.

⁵⁷ Pritzelwitz to the Prussian war ministry, June 25, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 2743.

Bavaria.” He therefore quickly brought the matter to the attention of the Bavarian war minister, General Adolph von Asch. The military attaché found a receptive ear. Orders were soon issued that instructors at the cadet corps should avoid political topics in their lectures. At the same time, Asch assured Pritzelwitz that, as long as he was in office, the ideas outlined in the brochure would not gain “an inch of ground” in the Bavarian army or its cadet corps.⁵⁸

From the Prussian point of view, the alleged susceptibility of Bavarian officers to Ultramontanism was not the only troubling product of the kingdom’s military autonomy. Unlike in Prussia, Jews were permitted to become active and, much more frequently, reserve officers in the South German kingdom. Although Jews had served as junior officers in the Prussian army during the Napoleonic Wars and the Wars of Unification – over one hundred were commissioned as front-line or medical officers during the Franco-Prussian War – antisemitism was an almost insurmountable barrier to those who wished to pursue a military career in peacetime. Menno Burg, the only unconverted Prussian Jew who remained in the active officer corps after 1815, was barred from serving in a guard regiment and was instead forced to pursue his career in the army’s less prestigious technical branches.⁵⁹ Following unification, the widespread belief that Jews were overrepresented in commerce and industry gave rise to popular antisemitism in Germany. The economic crash of 1873 provided the Christian Social Party of Adolf Stöcker with lower middle-class support during the early 1880s, while, in December 1892, the German Conservative Party adopted antisemitism in its

⁵⁸ Prussian ministry of war to Caprivi, May 10, 1894, with Pritzelwitz’s report to the Prussian ministry of war, March 9, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 2727.

⁵⁹ Manfred Messerschmidt, “Juden im preußisch-deutschen Heer,” in *Deutsche Jüdische Soldaten 1914-1945. Katalog zur Wanderausstellung des Militärgeschichtlichen Forschungsamtes*, ed. Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt (Bonn: E.S. Mittler, 1984), 109-16; Derek J. Penslar, *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 90-1.

so-called Tivoli Program.⁶⁰ Prussian officers could not have remained immune from these developments and unconverted Jews were systematically excluded from the standing army in the decades after the Franco-Prussian War. Only a small number gained active commissions, and those who did usually came from wealthy and influential families. By 1878, all of Prussia's Jewish officers had converted to Christianity. At the same time, Jews became reserve officers in small numbers during the 1870s, but none received this rank after 1885.⁶¹

The antisemitism in the Prussian officer corps was founded on the belief that Jews represented precisely those forces against which its members had pledged to defend both "throne and Fatherland." Jews were not only perceived to be overrepresented in middle-class professions, such as commerce and banking, but also in opposition political parties, most notably the Social Democratic Party. These men, many high-ranking officers argued, could never be placed in command of Christian soldiers. Yet the German empire was a *Rechtsstaat*, or a state governed by the rule of law, and Article 3 of the imperial constitution explicitly guaranteed that all German citizens would exercise the same civil rights.⁶² Prussia's military

⁶⁰ Peter G.J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria* (New York: John Wiley, 1964), 90-101, 118-20. For the relationship between Christianity, especially Protestantism, and German identity, see Frank Becker, "Protestantische Euphorien 1870/71, 1914 und 1933," in *Nationalprotestantische Mentalitäten in Deutschland (1870-1970). Konturen, Entwicklungslinien und Umbrüche eines Weltbildes*, ed. Manfred Gailus and Hartmut Lehmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 19-44; Doris L. Bergen, "Christianity and Germanness. Mutually Reinforcing, Reciprocally Undermining?" in *Religion und Nation. Nation und Religion. Beiträge zu einer unbewältigten Geschichte*, ed. Michael Geyer and Hartmut Lehmann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), 76-98.

⁶¹ Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps*, 37-43; Messerschmidt, "Juden im preußisch-deutschen Heer," 116-17. For the case of Walther Mossner, who was accepted into a prestigious cavalry regiment after Kaiser Wilhelm I personally intervened on his behalf and, after converting to Christianity, became an officer in the General Staff and later a major-general, see Penslar, *Jews and the Military*, 88-9. For antisemitism in Bismarckian and Wilhelmine Germany more generally, see Michael A. Meyer, ed., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times, Volume 3: Integration in Dispute, 1871-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁶² Article 3, "Gesetz betreffend die Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches vom 16. April 1871," in Huber, *Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:385-6. For the antisemitism in the Prussian officer corps, see Werner T. Angress, "Prussia's Army and the Jewish Reserve Officer Controversy before World War I," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 17 (1972), 24-7; Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps*, 37-40; Crim, *Antisemitism in the German Military Community and the Jewish Response*, 2-8.

authorities were therefore compelled to put forward carefully crafted arguments in order to disguise their personnel policies. When confronted with accusations in the Reichstag in 1889 that Prussia's officer corps was closed to Jews of certain political parties, the war minister replied that individual regiments – not the Kaiser nor his military cabinet – were responsible for approving officer candidates. Prussian officers, the war minister revealingly continued, were sensible enough to know that those who “placed themselves in opposition could not be allowed into the officer corps.”⁶³ Alongside fears of the socialist “red menace,” the army's antisemitism also reflected the belief that admitting middle-class Jews into the officer corps could corrupt their otherwise frugal and modest Christian comrades. In April 1890, the son of a wealthy Jewish banker who had recently converted to Christianity was rejected by a Saxon cavalry regiment. The unit's commander justified this decision by claiming that the candidate's wealth would have adversely affected the behaviour and morals of his fellow officers.⁶⁴

Bavaria's officer corps remained open to Jews in the decades following unification. Not only were unconverted Jews given reserve commissions, but a limited number served as active officers.⁶⁵ To be sure, the Bavarian contingent was hardly a sanctuary for German Jews who desired to pursue careers in the officer corps. The situation confronting Jews who aspired to become officers in Bavaria in fact deteriorated from the late nineteenth century onwards. Although six unconverted Jews received commissions in the standing Bavarian army between

⁶³ Colonel Georg von Schlieben, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, November 20, 1889, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 114.

⁶⁴ Carl von Dönhoff, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to the Foreign Office in Berlin, April 11, 1890, PA AA Berlin, R 3236.

⁶⁵ For the careers of two Jewish officers – a father and his son – in the Bavarian army during the nineteenth century, see Rainer Braun, “Die Offiziere Isidor und Maximilian Marx (1789-1862 und 1842-1916),” in *Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Bayern. Lebensläufe*, ed. Manfred Treml and Wolf Weigand (Munich: K.G. Saur Verlag, 1988), 95-100.

the Wars of Liberation and the outbreak of the First World War, the last was appointed in 1885. Twenty-one years later, in 1906, only four of twenty-five Jewish candidates who had fulfilled the educational and service requirements were commissioned as reserve officers. In contrast, forty-four percent of eligible Christian candidates reached this rank.⁶⁶ The presence of Jewish reserve officers and, more importantly, active officers in Bavaria was nevertheless a reminder of the King of Bavaria's unconstrained control over personal matters within his contingent. It also represented a source of concern for the military authorities in Berlin. In the decades before the First World War, the Prussian war minister therefore periodically requested information on the number of active and reserve officers in Bavaria's contingent.⁶⁷

The willingness of the Bavarian war ministry to admit even a small number of Jews into its contingent's officer corps above all reflected differing views on personnel matters. In the autumn of 1908, the Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, General Ludwig von Gebattel, wrote that he had recently spoken with officers of the Kaiser's military cabinet about personnel appointments. It was remarkable, Gebattel concluded from these conversations, that such clear differences in opinion concerning the appropriate background and education of officers existed between North and South Germany. In Prussia, it was taken for granted that the sons of officers and landowners should not be held to the same standards as those from middle-class families. The *Junker* nobility, many Prussian officers believed, had sacrificed everything for the cause of German unification and, in comparison to achieving high grades

⁶⁶ Wolfgang Schmidt, "Die Juden in der Bayerischen Armee," in *Deutsche Jüdische Soldaten. Von der Epoche der Emanzipation bis zum Zeitalter der Weltkriege*, ed. Frank Nögler (Hamburg: E.S. Mittler, 1996), 72-3, 78-9. For antisemitism in Bavaria more generally, see James F. Harris, *The People Speak! Anti-Semitism and Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Bavaria* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

⁶⁷ Rumschöttel, *Das bayerische Offizierkorps*, 248.

on entrance examinations, it was much more important to possess officers “with practical sense, with understanding of duty and honour, with enthusiasm for their occupation, with a certain skill in handling subordinates, [and] above all, with the heart in the right place.” Because of this, Gebattel was assured, the Prussian contingent would under no circumstances introduce higher educational requirements, such as the *Abitur*, for its officer candidates.⁶⁸

Bavaria’s military plenipotentiary thereafter remained a keen observer of personnel decisions in Prussia. In the summer of 1911, Gebattel wrote that the pendulum appeared to have swung too far in the opposite direction: even though North German newspapers still emphasized the importance of “character” in the officer corps, the Kaiser’s military cabinet now focused too much on an officer’s ability in the field. One Prussian officer had recently told him that a certain senior general, whose personal life and relationships to subordinates were the subject of disturbing rumours, would receive command of an army corps in the near future. When Gebattel protested, the Prussian officer replied: “indeed, he admittedly doesn’t have character, but he’s a superb infantryman and leader!” Gebattel could hardly believe his ears: both ability and character were necessary on the battlefield.⁶⁹

This desire to balance ability and character, along with the requirement that officer candidates possess the *Abitur*, encouraged the sons of middle-class Jewish families to pursue careers in the Bavarian officer corps. That the Bavarian officer corps had come to resemble its Prussian counterpart by the first decades of the twentieth century, however, was evident from a conversation between Gebattel and the Prussian minister of war, General Karl von Einem,

⁶⁸ General Ludwig von Gebattel, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Bavarian ministry of war, October 20, 1908, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1843.

⁶⁹ Gebattel to the Bavarian ministry of war, June 30, 1911, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 42.

in January 1907. Einem had heard rumours that North German Jews were travelling to southern Germany in large numbers to seek commissions in the Bavarian contingent. As in past years, the war minister therefore requested information on the number of Jewish officers, both active and reserve, then serving in Bavaria. Although Gebattel conceded that there were quite a few Jewish reserve officers in the kingdom's officer corps, he was quick to point out that only one Jew had received a commission in the active army in the preceding years and that this officer had since retired. Satisfied by this answer, Einem then explained the reasons for the Prussian attitude toward Jewish officer candidates. A Jew, he told Gebattel, "could, on occasion, be a good and even outstanding officer." It was nevertheless a well-established fact that "the entire Jewish character, the entire mentality and behaviour of the individual and of their tribe, is so entirely different from the kind of spirit which fortunately runs through the German officer corps that an infiltration of Jewish elements into the active officer corps would be considered not only harmful, but downright ruinous." Gebattel's response reflected the degree to which Bavarian officers had been Prussianized since 1871: not only did the Prussian war minister's statements correspond "on all accounts" to his personal view, but, as far as he knew, they reflected the prevailing opinion of the military authorities in Munich as well.⁷⁰

Two years after Einem and Gebattel discussed the alleged danger posed by Jews to the Bavarian officer corps, the journal of the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*, or the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith, criticized personnel

⁷⁰ Gebattel to the Bavarian ministry of war, January 11, 1907, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 43. Although the Bavarian minister of war, General Carl von Horn, corrected the numbers of Jewish active and reserve officers which had been provided to the Prussian ministry of war, he nevertheless described Gebattel's assessment of the Bavarian attitude towards Jewish officer candidates as "completely correct." Bavarian ministry of war to Gebattel, February 2, 1907, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 43.

decisions in the Bavarian contingent. Over the preceding years, the military authorities in Munich had sought to prevent Jews from pursuing careers as officers. Despite possessing the necessary qualifications, only three Jewish candidates had been commissioned as reserve officers on average each year. Around half of these officers had been assigned to the contingent's less prestigious supply services, rather than the infantry or cavalry. Bavaria, the author concluded, was "following more and more in the footsteps of Prussia." Confirming Gebtsattel's belief that the opinions expressed by Einem in early 1907 aligned with those in Munich, the Bavarian minister of war scribbled on the article's margins: "pretty accurate."⁷¹ The Prussians, it seemed, could rest assured that developments in the Bavarian contingent were taking a desirable course. The same could not be said for Saxony. Whereas the influence of Ultramontanism or the commissioning of Jews were potential threats to the loyalty of the Bavarian officer corps and the "German-patriotic" sentiments of its members, the admission of Hanoverians into Saxony's contingent was seen in Prussia as a clear and present danger. More disturbingly, these men, who had sworn oaths of allegiance to the exiled King Georg V of Hanover, remained just beyond the reach of the authorities in Berlin.

A gathering point for particularism: Hanoverians in the Saxon officer corps

In January 1875, the British envoy in Dresden, George Strachey, complained at length to his superiors in London. Foremost among his complaints was the living allowance provided by

⁷¹ "Jüdische Einjährige in Bayern," in *Im Deutschen Reich. Zeitschrift des Centralvereins deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*, May 1909, attached to a handwritten note in the Bavarian ministry of war's files, dated May 14, 1909, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2073. See also Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps*, 46; Schmidt, "Die Juden in der Bayerischen Armee," 79.

the Foreign Office. Whereas his colleagues elsewhere in the German empire could afford spacious suburban residences, Strachey found it difficult to maintain a small second-floor apartment in the Saxon capital. It was, he argued, impossible to separate his private life from his official functions. Because he was unable to receive guests and return social invitations, Strachey found the homes of many prominent Saxon families closed to him and his wife. His social isolation naturally restricted his access to information. The Prussian minister of war shared military secrets with his Saxon counterpart and Saxony's foreign minister frequently received copies of diplomatic correspondence from Berlin. In many ways, Dresden was "an official suburb" of the imperial capital and, as such, was "probably unsurpassed as a German 'Ear of Dionysius'." Strachey warned that, without a large increase in his living allowance, Britain's legation in Dresden would be unable to fulfill its information-gathering functions. Although financial considerations were front and centre in Strachey's mind in January 1875, his report also touched on a persistent source of tension between Berlin and Dresden. The Saxon capital was such an excellent source of information for foreign envoys in large part because of its cosmopolitan character. Since the Austro-Prussian War, the diversity in Saxon military circles had been enhanced by the arrival of officers from the disbanded Hanoverian army. These men, whose number steadily increased in the following few years, formed a distinct subgroup within the Saxon contingent with strong dual loyalties.⁷²

Like Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, and the South German kingdoms, King Georg V of Hanover had thrown in his lot with Austria in 1866. The Hanoverian army performed as well as could be expected in the brief campaign. Converged upon by Prussian forces advancing

⁷² George Strachey, British envoy in Dresden, to the British Foreign Office, January 27, 1875, TNA Kew, FO 68, file 159.

from Brandenburg, the Rhineland and Schleswig-Holstein, King Georg and his soldiers narrowly escaped encirclement in mid-June, being forced to abandon their ammunition and baggage train in the process. Hoping for assistance from the Bavarians to the south, the Hanoverian army, numbering around 19,000 men, took up defensive positions at Langensalza, in northwestern Thuringia. On June 27, they routed a smaller force of Prussian *Landwehr* soldiers, mainly middle-age “lawyers and oculists.” Despite this modest victory and without Bavarian support, the Hanoverians were forced to surrender to the newly arrived Prussian forces at the end of June. While his soldiers were issued with railroad tickets and ordered to return home by the Prussians, King Georg went into exile in Vienna. In September 1866, Prussia formally annexed Hanover, along with Hesse-Cassel, Nassau, and Frankfurt.⁷³

The integration of the former kingdom into Prussia began immediately in the fall of 1866. The Prussian ministry of war, eager to exploit Hanover’s manpower in its efforts to complete the three newly established army corps, extended conscription to the province in October 1866. Bismarck was more cautious. Seeking to avoid lasting resentment among Hanover’s population and, more importantly, its political and social elites, the province was afforded limited self-government.⁷⁴ Bismarck’s attempts to smooth Hanover’s path into the kingdom of Prussia were nevertheless complicated by the behaviour of its former sovereign.

⁷³ “Gesetz betreffend die Vereinigung des Königreichs Hannover, des Kurfürstentums Hessen, des Herzogtums Nassau und der Freien Stadt Frankfurt mit der Preußischen Monarchie vom 20. September 1866,” and the Prussian government’s draft legislation, in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2: 252-5. For the military operations in western Germany, see Showalter, *The Wars of German Unification*, 164; Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War*, 75-81.

⁷⁴ Heide Barmeyer, *Hannovers Eingliederung in den preußischen Staat. Annexion und administrative Integration 1866-1868* (Hildesheim: August Lax Verlag, 1983), 81ff; Hans A. Schmidt, “From Sovereign States to Prussian Provinces: Hanover and Hesse-Nassau, 1866-1871,” *Journal of Modern History* 57 (1985), 24-56. For the eagerness of the Prussian military authorities to introduce conscription in the new provinces, see General Albrecht von Roon, Prussian war minister, to the Prussian ministry of state, September 4, 1866, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, I. Hauptabteilung, Rep. 90a, file 4534.

While King Georg entered into negotiations with the Prussians to retrieve his confiscated property, he was unwilling to renounce his throne. In September 1867, Georg's attorney and the future leader of the Catholic Centre Party, Ludwig Windthorst, concluded an agreement that would provide the king with 16 million Thaler in government bonds and securities and return the king's property. The agreement lasted only a few months. While Bismarck sought approval for King Georg's financial compensation in parliament, the king mobilized his supporters against Prussia from exile in Austria. In March 1868, soon after both chambers of the Prussian parliament had approved Windthorst's agreement, Bismarck moved to sequester the income from the king's properties. Over the following decades, the interest from the Guelph Fund, popularly known as the "Reptile Fund," was used for a variety of questionable purposes, including police surveillance of King Georg's supporters, financial assistance for Bismarck's bankrupt political allies, and King Ludwig II of Bavaria's castle projects.⁷⁵

Because of King Georg's refusal to renounce the throne of Hanover, the integration of his former soldiers into the Prussian army remained a problem for the military authorities in Berlin. Believing that it was better to keep one's enemies close, the Prussian ministry of war preferred that Georg's officers enter into Prussian service. To encourage them to do so, the Hanoverians were offered the same terms as the North Germans in 1866 and the Badenese and Hessians in 1871: the equivalent rank in the Prussian army or generous pensions. What the

⁷⁵ Helmut Maatz, *Bismarck und Hannover 1866-1898* (Hildesheim: August Lax Verlag, 1970), 4-14; Stewart A. Stehlin, *Bismarck and the Guelph Problem, 1866-1890: A Study in Particularist Opposition to National Unity* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973), 48-66. For the creation of the Guelph Fund and the use of its interest by Bismarck for questionable personal and political purposes, see Hans Philippi, "Zur Geschichte des Welfenfonds," *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 31 (1959), 190-254; Stewart A. Stehlin, "Bismarck and the Secret Use of the Guelph Fund," *The Historian* 33 (1970), 21-39. The nickname "Reptile Fund" originated from Bismarck's declaration to the Prussian parliament in January 1869 that he would drive Prussia's opponents – "reptiles" – into their holes. Because the Guelph Fund supported police surveillance against Hanoverians and other "enemies of the empire," this nickname was widely used in the press and elsewhere.

Prussian authorities above all feared was that Hanoverian officers would enter the army of another German state. If that occurred, the Saxon envoy in Berlin explained to Saxony's minister-president, Richard von Friesen, in December 1866, the Hanoverians might seek to spread their anti-Prussian and particularistic views.⁷⁶ Once again, it was King Georg who caused headaches for the Prussians: the king, who was determined to eventually return to Hanover, refused to release his officers from their oaths of allegiance. In response, Prussia's war ministry published the terms that had been offered to Hanoverian officers in November 1866. These terms, Georg's former officers were informed, would expire at the beginning of the following year. At the end of December and fearing that his obstructionism might both alienate his support and harm his officers' careers, the king relented and made it known that any of his officers could apply for release from their oaths of allegiance. Hanover's officer corps would not be disbanded, but Hanoverian officers would be free to enter into the service of another monarch. Only nineteen of Hanover's 760 officers applied to be released from their oaths. Despite still owing allegiance to Georg, over 400 Hanoverian officers entered the Prussian army, while 152 chose retirement. Eighty-six officers preferred service in another German state, with seventy-one of these entering the Saxon contingent.⁷⁷

Of course, Hanoverian officers who entered Saxon service after 1866 were compelled to swear an oath of allegiance to Prussia's King Wilhelm as *Bundesfeldherr*. Refusal to join

⁷⁶ Hans von Könneritz, Saxon envoy in Berlin, to Friesen, December 9, 1866, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 3286. Württemberg's envoy in Berlin, Carl von Spitzemberg, likewise informed his government that the Prussians would not approve of the entrance of Hanoverian officers into Saxon service. Spitzemberg to Karl Varnbüler von und zu Hemmingen, Württemberg minister-president, December 24, 1866, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 40/72, file 272.

⁷⁷ Barmeyer, *Hannovers Eingliederung in den preußischen Staat*, 162-3. See also Maximilian von Gise, Bavarian envoy in Dresden, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, December 31, 1866, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2841.

the Prussian army was nevertheless considered to be an act of defiance. For their part, the Saxons were more than willing to accept the Hanoverians. In early 1867, the Saxon war minister, General Alfred von Fabrice, worried that the expansion of the Saxon army into the XII Army Corps would demand more officers than his kingdom could provide. Fabrice's decision to accept the Hanoverians was therefore pragmatic. Still, it created friction with the Prussians. In March 1867, the Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, Colonel Hermann von Brandenstein, reported that the admittance of Georg's former officers into the Saxon contingent had created considerable unease.⁷⁸

In the years following the Austro-Prussian War, the military authorities in Berlin had good reason to believe that Hanoverian officers might transform Saxony into a haven for Prussia's enemies. Following the surrender of Hanover's army after Langensalza, King Georg had been accompanied into exile by some of his most loyal officers. Over the following months, Hanoverian soldiers had travelled through Holland and Switzerland, and thereafter into France. By January 1868, there were over four hundred former Hanoverian soldiers in eastern France. Supported financially by the exiled king in Vienna, the "Guelph Legion" prepared for a conflict that would restore Hanover's dynasty to its throne. Although it was disbanded in February 1870, just a few months before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, the Guelph Legion was a reminder that the loyalty of Hanoverian officers to the North German *Bundesfeldherr* could not be considered undivided.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Colonel Hermann von Brandenstein, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to Fabrice, March 6, 1867, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 84. Less than two weeks later, the Saxon minister of war informed Brandenstein that the King of Saxony had decided to proceed with the admittance of Hanoverian officers into Saxon service. Fabrice to Brandenstein, March 19, 1867, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 22.

⁷⁹ Stehlin, *Bismarck and the Guelph Problem 1866-1890*, 67-84. For the challenge that the dual loyalties of Hanoverian officers presented to the Saxon ministry of war, especially in its relations to the Prussians during the late 1860s, see Buschmann, *Zwischen Bündnis und Integration*, 193-4.

Most narratives of the Hanoverian presence in the Saxon officer corps conclude at this point. The military and political authorities in Berlin nevertheless remained concerned about the presence of Hanoverians in the Saxon contingent in the decades after unification. These concerns were expressed in a number of ways. In the fall of 1872, Crown Prince Albert of Saxony informed the ministry of war in Dresden that he hoped to see the Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin become the next chief of staff of the XII Army Corps. Seeking to accommodate this request, Fabrice proposed an officer from the war ministry, Major von Bülow, as the military plenipotentiary's replacement in the imperial capital. This suggestion was not well-received by the Prussians. In his reply, Bismarck's chief aide, Rudolf von Delbrück, stressed that, even though Bülow was more than qualified for the position, "broader considerations" had to be taken into account. Because the Saxon military plenipotentiary, like his colleagues from Bavaria and Württemberg, participated in sessions of the Bundesrat and therefore had access to sensitive information, it was important that Prussia possessed the fullest confidence in this officer. This could never be the case with Bülow, who, as a Hanoverian, had allegedly betrayed his own army. While his fellow officers had entered Prussian service, Bülow had joined the Saxon contingent.⁸⁰ Fabrice, who countered these objections by pointing out that Hanoverian officers had served in important positions on the Prussian General Staff since 1866, eventually relented and proposed another candidate for the post in Berlin.⁸¹

Fears about the presence of Hanoverian officers in the Saxon officer corps continued to plague the Prussian authorities in the subsequent decades. In the summer of 1878, the chief

⁸⁰ Fabrice to Rudolf von Delbück, president of the imperial chancellery, November 12, 1872, and Delbrück's reply, December 22, 1872, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11248, file 7602.

⁸¹ Fabrice to Delbrück, December 23, 1872, and Fabrice to the commanding general of the XII Army Corps, January 5, 1873, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11248, file 7602.

of the Kaiser's military cabinet, General Emil von Albedyll, forwarded a newspaper article to Bismarck. The article, which the Saxon war minister later claimed was false, alleged that members of the Saxon cadet school had been forced to remove portraits of the Kaiser and Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm from their desks after complaints from their Hanoverian comrades. In a separate, almost simultaneous incident, the commander of a Saxon cavalry regiment, who was a former Hanoverian officer, had been accused of hanging a curtain over the Kaiser's portrait in the officers' mess. Faced with these allegations, Albedyll recommended a tough response. Because it was impossible to intervene directly against either the commander of the Saxon cadet corps or the Saxon cavalry colonel, the chief of the military cabinet proposed an alternative approach: the commanding general of the XII Army Corps, whose appointment was contingent on the Kaiser's approval, should be replaced. In Albedyll's view, at stake was nothing less than the German army's cohesion. The non-Prussian ruling houses could not be allowed to establish sanctuaries for elements whose objective was the destruction of Prussia's influence over the rest of the empire.⁸² Bismarck was likewise deeply concerned by the two incidents. In late August 1878, he dashed off two notes, one requesting additional information from the Prussian envoy in Dresden and another to Albedyll. In the chancellor's opinion, whether the rumours were true or not, something had to be done.⁸³

Bismarck was not satisfied with collecting the views of Albedyll and the Prussian envoy in Dresden. In early September 1878, he sought to make Prussia's position clear to the

⁸² Albedyll to Bismarck, August 20, 1878, PA AA Berlin, R 3204. For the response of the Saxon minister of war, see the reports of the Prussian envoy in Dresden, August 21 and 23, 1878, PA AA Berlin, R 3204.

⁸³ Bismarck to Albedyll, August 28, 1878, PA AA Berlin, R 3204; Bismarck to the Foreign Office in Berlin, August 28, 1878, in *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Neue Friedrichsruher Ausgabe. Abteilung III: 1871-1898*, ed. Michael Epkenhans and Erik Lommatzsch (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), 3:541.

Saxon war minister. The chancellor acknowledged that admitting Hanoverian officers into the Saxon contingent had been necessary, both from a military as well as a political standpoint, after 1866. The reorganization of the Saxon army into a Prussian-style army corps required additional, experienced officers. It had also been assumed that the particularistic sentiments among of these officers and, in particular, their loyalty to King Georg would diminish over time. These hopes had not been realized. Rather than diminishing, Hanoverian particularism and anti-Prussian views among the “Guelph-minded element” had increased in strength. It was unacceptable, Bismarck concluded, that the “military bearers of this spirit” could establish a gathering point within the Saxon officer corps. Not for the first or last time, the chancellor saw enemies all around him. Guelphs and socialists, he argued, had established close relations and, in light of the upcoming confrontation with the “red menace” – the Anti-Socialist Law was passed in October 1878 – it was necessary for Saxony’s war minister to join the fight.⁸⁴ This letter had the desired effect, at least in the short term. In November 1879, Carl von Dönhoff, the Prussian envoy in Dresden, received assurances from Fabrice that the Saxons were seeking to limit the number of Hanoverians in their officer corps. Dönhoff thought the war minister was sincere. Out of six Hanoverians who had passed through the Saxon cadet school in the previous spring, he pointed out, only two had been accepted into Saxon regiments.⁸⁵

The greater vigilance promised by the Saxon war minister in 1878 did little to prevent the sons of Hanoverian noble families from entering Saxony’s contingent. As a result, tensions persisted between Berlin and Dresden. These tensions reached a boiling point in the autumn of

⁸⁴ Bismarck to Fabrice, September 6, 1878, in Epkenhans and Lommatzsch, *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Abteilung III*, 3:547-8.

⁸⁵ Carl von Dönhoff, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to the Foreign Office in Berlin, November 26, 1879, PA AA Berlin, R 3204.

1890. In late November, the Kaiser's civil cabinet forwarded a report from an official in northern Hanover to Chancellor Leo von Caprivi. The official claimed that members of the Hanoverian nobility had gathered on numerous occasions in the preceding months to voice their support for Ernst August, the Duke of Cumberland and son of the now deceased King Georg V. What made these assemblies so concerning was not their increasing frequency, but rather the presence of a number of Saxon officers. In the official's view, their presence at Guelph demonstrations confirmed what Prussian authorities had already suspected: almost a quarter century after Hanover's annexation by Prussia and twenty years after the founding of the German empire, the heads of Hanoverian noble families still encouraged their sons to enter Saxon, not Prussian, service. Of course, viewed in isolation, this was hardly concerning. What was more worrying, however, was that the anti-Prussian sentiments of these officers appeared to be strengthened in the process. If possible, the official recommended, young men from Hanover should be prevented from serving in Saxony.⁸⁶

The official's report caused sufficient concern in Berlin that a broader investigation into the participation of Saxon officers in pro-Guelph demonstrations was soon launched. Less than one week later, the governor of Hanover submitted his own thoughts on the matter to Chancellor Caprivi. The governor's report worsened the fears of the authorities. The Guelph-minded noble families in northern Hanover had continued to display fervently anti-Prussian views ever since the Austro-Prussian War. Moreover, a considerable number of their sons – perhaps as many as fifty – were currently serving in the Saxon contingent.⁸⁷ A number of

⁸⁶ Hermann von Lucanus, chief of the Kaiser's civil cabinet, to Caprivi, November 25, 1890, with the report of the district president of Stade, November 10, 1890, PA AA Berlin, R 3205.

⁸⁷ Ernst Herrfurth, Prussian minister of the interior, to Caprivi, November 29, 1890, with the report of the governor of Hanover, November 24, 1890, PA AA Berlin, R 3205.

equally troubling reports arrived in Berlin over the following months. Their recommendations were almost unanimous: severe punishments for cadets and officers who participated in pro-Guelph meetings and additional measures to prevent the admittance of the sons of “Guelph-minded” Hanoverian noble families into the Saxon officer corps.⁸⁸

Once again, Fabrice promised to do everything in his power to punish the offenders. If any members of the Saxon cadet corps took part in the demonstrations, they would be punished. The Saxon war minister was nevertheless adamant that no active officer had taken part in anti-Prussian meetings. He had even issued instructions to the XII Saxon Army Corps that officers with “demonstratively Guelph attitudes” were to be made known to the military authorities in Dresden, who would thereafter take appropriate measures.⁸⁹ Fabrice’s instructions had been prompted by Kaiser Wilhelm II’s intervention in the matter. In February 1891, the Kaiser told Saxony’s military plenipotentiary in Berlin that he fully understood the loyalty that the older generation of Hanoverian nobles possessed for the Guelph dynasty. What Wilhelm II could not comprehend was the behaviour of their sons. These young men, he insisted, would not be taught to resist the particularism of their fathers in the Saxon cadet corps. They should therefore be compelled to attend military schools in Prussia.⁹⁰ Seen against this background, the results of the investigations that were subsequently carried out into the participation of Saxon officers in pro-Guelph meetings must have been disconcerting. Eight officers were brought before

⁸⁸ For example, see Herrfurth to Caprivi, February 9, 1891, with reports from the district president to the governor, January 3, 1891, and from the governor to Herrfurth, February 1, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 3205.

⁸⁹ Fabrice to Wilhelm von Hohenthal und Bergen, Saxon envoy in Berlin, February 16, 1891, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 3302. See also Dönhoff to Caprivi, February 19, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 3205; Fabrice to Caprivi, March 10, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 3205.

⁹⁰ Colonel Georg von Schlieben, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon ministry of war, February 11, 1891, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 116. See also Hohenthal to Fabrice, February 11, 1891, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10717, file 3302.

courts of honour and the commander of an infantry battalion was discharged from the Saxon contingent. In July 1891, Fabrice's successor – the war minister died in March – found it necessary to once again warn Saxon regiments against accepting Hanoverian officers.⁹¹

In the last decades before the First World War, the Hanoverian presence in the Saxon contingent produced few incidents that attracted as much attention as the investigations of Saxon officers in the winter of 1890-1. That did not mean that Prussia's representatives in Dresden let down their guard. In February 1901, Dönhoff, the Prussian envoy, communicated several personnel changes in the Saxon contingent to Berlin. Six high-ranking officers had either received new posts or entered retirement. Five were native Saxons, while the sixth was a Hanoverian. Dönhoff sent similar reports to his superiors over the following years, carefully noting each time the movement of Hanoverians throughout the Saxon officer corps.⁹² Much more than the dual loyalties among Badenese, Hessians, and North Germans or the presence of Ultramontanism or Jews in the Bavarian officer corps, Saxony's Hanoverian officers were considered a tangible threat to the cohesion of the German army. Both Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II admitted that it was understandable, though regrettable, that so many of King Georg's former officers preferred service in Saxony to commissions in the Prussian army following the Austro-Prussian War. What was more worrying for those who hoped that the "German national idea" would eventually stamp out particularism throughout the empire, however, was the willingness of their sons to follow in their footsteps. As Albedyll pointed

⁹¹ Dönhoff to Caprivi, May 7, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 3205. For the investigations into the eight Saxon officers and the pronounced sentences, see Metzsch to Hohenthal, April 20, 1891, and General Paul von der Planitz, Saxon minister of war, to the Foreign Office in Berlin, July 9, 1891, PA AA Berlin, R 3205.

⁹² Dönhoff to Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow, February 27, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 3240. For later examples of the Prussian envoy's vigilant surveillance of Hanoverians in the Saxon officer corps, see Dönhoff's reports of March 26, 1901, March 26, 1902, April 25 and June 22, 1904, and September 21 and October 31, 1904, PA AA Berlin, R 3240.

out, Saxony's military convention provided the military authorities in Berlin with the means to pressure the government in Dresden into accepting fewer and fewer Hanoverians. Yet the military cabinet and war ministry realized in 1878 and 1890-1 that not even this pressure could calm fears that the Saxon officer corps would become a gathering point for "enemies of the empire." As in Bavaria, Saxony's officers remained just beyond the reach of Prussia.

Conclusion

The German army's contingent-based structure provided the kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg with a voice in the empire's military affairs after 1871. Through the military conventions and treaties that had been signed during the Wars of Unification, the three non-Prussian contingents adopted Prussian equipment, organization, and standards of training, while their soldiers were compelled to swear an oath of allegiance to the *Bundesfeldherr* as Germany's commander-in-chief. In return for these concessions to military standardization and centralization, the three *Kontingentsherren* continued to exercise varying degrees of influence over the deployment of their own units, the administration of military justice, and, perhaps most importantly, the composition of their officer corps. As long as the dual loyalties of Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg officers did not threaten the ability of the German army to perform its duties, there were few concerns in Berlin. The presence of Jewish officers and the alleged influence of Ultramontanism in Bavaria's contingent and, more seriously, the entrance of Hanoverian officers, who had previously sworn oaths of allegiance to the exiled King Georg V, and their sons into the Saxon contingent were greater causes for concern. Precisely because

the Kaiser's authority over the two non-Prussian contingents remained limited in the decades following unification, worries persisted in Berlin that these "enemies of the empire" would undermine the "German-patriotic" sentiments of their comrades-in-arms. Although there were attempts to mitigate these dangers – Pritzelwitz's intervention concerning the Bavarian cadet school, the Prussian war minister's requests for information on the number of Jewish officers in the Bavarian contingent, and Albedyll's proposals to exert pressure on the government in Dresden – there was little that the Prussian authorities could do. At least in peacetime, these officers remained just beyond the reach of the Kaiser's *Kommandogewalt*.

The threat of dual loyalties was even present in the Prussian contingent. Following the Austro-Prussian War, Germany's smaller states had signed military conventions with Prussia that guaranteed their rulers certain, though largely ceremonial, military rights. According to these agreements, the armies of Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, and North Germany were integrated into the Prussian army, becoming Prussian regiments, divisions, and army corps. While they did not possess the same far-reaching authority over their soldiers as the kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, the empire's grand dukes, dukes, and princes nevertheless retained a voice, albeit limited, in military affairs. They were recognized as ceremonial commanders-in-chief and exercised some influence over military justice and the deployment of the battalions and regiments that were recruited in their territories. As a result, the Prussian contingent, like the German army more broadly, was a collection of state-based contingents. In the decades after 1871, the welding together of these disparate fighting forces produced friction between Prussians and non-Prussians. While Badenese and Hessian officers worried about their career prospects, enlisted men chafed under the command of overly harsh Prussian superiors. By

itself, this friction caused little anxiety in Berlin. When combined with intense loyalty to rulers who, while not nearly as influential as the monarchs of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, still possessed some military rights, even the Badenese, Hessians, Oldenburgers, and others within the Prussian contingent could appear less than reliable. In the minds of many high-ranking Prussian officers, small-state loyalties not only posed a threat to the authority of the *Bundesfeldherr* in Saxony's contingent, but among Prussia's soldiers as well.

Chapter Five

Celebrating Kaiser and king: Festive culture in the German army

On June 16, 1871, the Prusso-German troops returned to Berlin. The parade lasted over three hours as regiment after regiment filed through the Brandenburg Gate and along the brightly decorated streets of the new imperial capital. Over one million people gathered in the brilliant sunshine and the entire spectacle was, one observer wrote, “not inferior to the Roman triumphs of old, except indeed that prisoners did not form a part of the procession, and that no other spoils were exhibited beyond captured eagles and banners, and trophies gained in battle.”¹ It seemed, according to the Baroness von Spitzemberg, that all of Berlin was caught up in the excitement: “between the university and the arsenal stood opposite us tribune after tribune full to the breaking point, indeed every roof was covered with people” and the “considerable crowd” that lined the pavement was “barely controllable.” The baroness, who had been born in southern Germany and whose husband had been sent to Berlin as Württemberg’s envoy following the Austro-Prussian War, at the same time marvelled at the appearance of the returning soldiers. “The guards looked superb, so masculine, sunburnt, bearded, the far too uptight Prussian character somewhat relaxed by the campaign, they genuinely offered the most beautiful sight for a patriotic heart.”² Others were equally moved by the scene. Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, Bavaria’s former minister-president and future imperial chancellor who, since the spring of 1871, had sat as a deputy in the newly constituted Reichstag, wrote in

¹ George Bancroft to Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, June 20, 1871, National Archives, College Park, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Microfilm Publication M 44, roll 17. See also Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany. Volume II: The Period of Consolidation*, xi.

² Diary entry for June 16, 1871, in Spitzemberg, *Das Tagebuch der Baronin Spitzemberg*, 126-7.

his memoirs: “I could not suppress the feeling of regret that the opportunity had not been granted to me to have taken part, at least as a spectator, in the events of the war.”³

The Franco-Prussian War provided the most durable foundation upon which the German empire could create a common past after unification. Recognizing its importance, Bismarck had sought to give the return of the Prusso-German troops to Berlin a suitably “German” appearance. Too much emphasis on the unveiling of the statue of King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, which had also been scheduled for the afternoon of June 16, would, Bismarck argued, be ill-advised and possibly cause “misunderstandings” with the empire’s other federal states. It was important that the parade could be viewed by all in attendance as “an eminently German celebration.”⁴ The chancellor made other attempts to underscore the national character of the victory festivities. Although the Prussian Guard Corps formed the vanguard of the returning troops and Prussian regiments vastly outnumbered their non-Prussian counterparts, representatives of Germany’s smaller ruling houses were invited to Berlin and delegations from the army’s other contingents, despite the initial opposition of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, were somewhat unceremoniously patched together into a “combined battalion” that marched alongside the Prussians.⁵ The Kaiser’s order of the day similarly paid tribute to the complex structure of the German empire. Among the names of recipients of distinctions

³ Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, *Denkwürdigkeiten des Fürsten Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst*, ed. Friedrich Curtius (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1907), 2:63.

⁴ Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt*, 144; Bismarck to Trescow, June 14, 1871, in *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Abteilung III: 1871-1898*, ed. Konrad Canis, Lothar Gall, Klaus Hildebrand, and Eberhard Kolb (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), 1:127-8.

⁵ Bismarck to Georg von Werthern, Prussian envoy in Munich, May 26, 1871, in Canis et al., *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Abteilung III: 1871-1898*, 1:112. For the initial opposition of Ludwig II to the participation of Bavarian troops in the festivities in Berlin, see Oskar von Soden, Württemberg envoy in Munich, to Johann von Wächter-Lautenbach, Württemberg minister-president, May 31, 1871, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 205.

and honours were several non-Prussian officers. Two warrior princes – Grand Duke Friedrich Franz II of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Crown Prince Albert of Saxony – were appointed as inspectors-general, while the commanding general of the II Bavarian Army Corps, General Jakob von Hartmann, was elevated within the Prussian Order of the Red Eagle.⁶

While the presence of representatives from Germany's ruling houses and delegations from the German army's non-Prussian contingents indeed lent a national guise to an otherwise Prussian celebration, many of the observers on the streets of Berlin still took pride in their state-based allegiances. Describing the festivities in the imperial capital, Maximilian Pergler von Perglas, the Bavarian envoy, wrote that the "immeasurable crowd" that had greeted the returning troops "expressed a most animated enthusiasm for the Kaiser, the generals, and the men," while also displaying an "exceptional affection" for the Bavarians. This reaction had been made possible because the latter "were conspicuous and easily identified among the masses of troops by the (fortunately) still existing difference in uniforms that made them recognizable as 'Bavarians' by the population."⁷ Writing two days later, the Baroness von Spitzemberg's husband, the Württemberg envoy, likewise heaped special praise on his countrymen. Of course, the Kaiser and the Prussian regiments had been welcomed by a "harrowing, constantly recurring storm of hurrahs." However, the "combined battalion" of South Germans, especially the Bavarians and Württembergers, had "generated the highest pitch in the joyous demonstrations" of the spectators. Even though the unique appearance of the Württemberg soldiers "had not least contributed to making them the most popular troops"

⁶ "Gnaden Beweise am 16. Juni 1871, dem Tage des Einzuges der Truppen in Berlin," BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 2, file 376.

⁷ Maximilian Pergler von Perglas, Bavarian envoy in Berlin, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, June 16, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2651.

in Berlin on the afternoon, Spitzemberg concluded that their uniforms were not the focus of attention; they were merely “the mark of distinction for the heroes of Champigny.”⁸

That victory in the Franco-Prussian War would not be interpreted solely through the lens of German nationalism was confirmed by events elsewhere in the empire during the summer of 1871. In June and July, triumphal returns were also staged in the non-Prussian capitals. The first of these events occurred on June 29. On that day, the Württemberg troops marched through the streets of Stuttgart, which were “exquisitely and picturesquely decorated in green.” They then paraded for the king and queen in front of the royal palace. Following the parade, Stuttgart’s city council hosted a festive banquet for high-ranking officers and other dignitaries.⁹ Two weeks later, at the other end of the empire in Saxony, thousands made the journey from smaller towns and the countryside in order to welcome the XII Army Corps back to Dresden. Triumphal arches decorated the parade route through the Saxon capital and the festivities concluded with a review of the Saxon troops by the elderly King Johann.¹⁰ Similar celebrations took place in Munich in mid-July. Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, who attended the parade in his capacity as the wartime commander of the “South German army,” recorded in his diary: “the city was resplendent in the richest decoration” and “all the inhabitants were astir,” while even the rural population had “flocked in droves” to the Bavarian capital.¹¹ In contrast to events in Berlin, the local authorities made little effort to portray the return of the

⁸ Carl von Spitzemberg, Württemberg envoy in Berlin, to Wächter-Lautenbach, June 18, 1871, HStA Stuttgart, E 50/03, file 165.

⁹ Adalbert von Rosenberg, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Foreign Office in Berlin, July 1, 1871, PA AA Berlin, R 3353.

¹⁰ Ludwig von Paumgarten-Frauenstein, Bavarian envoy in Dresden, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, July 11, 1871, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2844; Joseph Hume Burnley, British envoy in Dresden, to the British Foreign Office, July 14, 1871, TNA Kew, FO 68, file 153.

¹¹ Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm’s diary entry for July 16, 1871, in Meisner, *Kaiser Friedrich III. Kriegstagesbuch von 1870/71*, 427-8.

Bavarian troops as a “German” event and the kingdom’s symbols were everywhere on full display. The festivities in Munich, one observer wrote, had a “predominantly Bavarian character” and “Bavarian colours and flags were so dominant that black, red, and white and black, red, and gold nearly disappeared.” Even the appearance of the Bavarian soldiers failed to reflect the national unity that had recently been achieved on the battlefields of France: only “Bavarian ribbons” were visible on their uniforms or tied to their weapons.¹²

Creating a common past in the German empire therefore involved the integration of state-based loyalties with a common national narrative. The same process took place in the German army. The military rights of the non-Prussian monarchs and the army’s contingent-based structure more generally ensured that national and state-based allegiances persisted among Bavarian, Prussian, Saxon, and Württemberg soldiers following unification. At times, these dual loyalties created considerable anxiety in Berlin, especially when they appeared to threaten the ability of the army to perform its duties. However, when celebrated alongside one another on holidays, anniversaries, and other festive occasions, dual loyalties could strengthen the army’s cohesion. While sections of Germany’s middle class commemorated the Prusso-German victory over Emperor Napoleon III and the French army each year on September 2 – Sedan Day – Prussian and non-Prussian soldiers celebrated battles from the Wars of Unification in which their own regiments or contingents had taken part. In doing so, they expressed both their loyalty to their kingdom as well as its role in the achievement of national unity. The Kaiser’s birthday celebrations were likewise suitable festive occasions for soldiers of the three non-Prussian contingents. Because every recruit swore allegiance to the

¹² Soden to Wächter-Lautenbach, July 16, 1871, HStA Stuttgart, E 50/05, file 205.

Bundesfeldherr as German commander-in-chief, at least in wartime, Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers could celebrate imperial birthdays without betraying their loyalties to their own monarchs. The same was true of regimental culture, especially the commemoration of regimental anniversaries, while the widespread practice of appointing members of Germany's ruling houses as ceremonial regimental colonels, or *Regimentschefs*, brought soldiers into contact with the empire's other monarchs, thereby strengthening ties between the contingents. By ensuring that allegiances to the Kaiser and to the three *Kontingentsherren* coexisted in barracks rooms and on parade grounds, the army's festive culture – or cultures – reminded Bavarians, Saxons, Prussians, and Württembergers that they were also German soldiers.

The “invention of tradition” and the Franco-Prussian War

Nation-building in the German empire, Eric Hobsbawm writes, required the “invention of tradition,” or the manufacture of holidays, rituals, and symbols that would create a common past for Germans and thereby establish loyalty to the new empire.¹³ The “national” struggle against France during the “Wars of Liberation” at the end of the Napoleonic Wars provided one foundation upon which traditions could be invented. In February 1913, Kaiser Wilhelm II therefore travelled to Königsberg, the capital of East Prussia, in order to take part in the celebrations marking the one-hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the campaign against French forces in Germany. A few months later, in August 1913, he visited the South German kingdom of Bavaria. In Kelheim, on the banks of the Danube River, a choir of almost two

¹³ Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 273-9. See also the introduction to the same volume. Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” 1-14.

thousand singers performed *Die Wacht am Rhein*, the patriotic hymn composed by the Swabian poet Max Schneckenburger during the diplomatic confrontation with France in 1840.¹⁴ The high point in the year's festive calendar was the unveiling of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* in October 1913. The 91-meter-high monument, constructed in the Saxon city of Leipzig with donations from choir, gymnastics, marksmen, and veterans associations, commemorated the "Battle of the Nations," which had been fought in October 1813 between Napoleon's armies and the combined forces of Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Sweden. More than 100,000 people travelled from across the German empire to attend the unveiling ceremony. Although the Battle of the Nations had failed to end the Napoleonic Wars – the French emperor would only be decisively defeated two years later at the Battle of Waterloo – speeches during the ceremony and the torrent of books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles that appeared in the preceding months reinterpreted it as "the German people's hour of birth" and the starting point for a national awakening that would lead to the founding of the empire in 1871.¹⁵

As the German empire's leading monarch, the Kaiser was expected to take part in nation-building activities after 1871. Wilhelm II nevertheless found it difficult to embrace the monument project at Leipzig. He refused to become a patron of the *Patriotenbund*, the association that supervised the building of the monument, probably because he disapproved of the architect's design. After arriving on the morning of the ceremony and taking part in the unveiling, Wilhelm II quickly departed Leipzig just as the evening festivities, headlined by the

¹⁴ Wolfram Siemann, "Krieg und Frieden in historischen Gedenkfeiern des Jahres 1913," in *Öffentliche Festkultur. Politische Feste in Deutschland von der Aufklärung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Dieter Düding, Peter Friedemann, and Paul Münch (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), 300-4.

¹⁵ Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, "Mythos und Geschichte. Leipziger Gedenkfeiern der Völkerschlacht im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert," in *Nation und Emotion. Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Etienne François, Hannes Siegrist, and Jakob Vogel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 111-32, especially 122-6.

city's illumination, were beginning.¹⁶ For different reasons, many of Germany's other rulers also struggled to integrate themselves and their dynasties into a common historical narrative centered on the Napoleonic Wars. Whereas King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia had abandoned Napoleon in early 1813, some of the smaller German states had continued to support the French emperor throughout the Wars of Liberation. Saxony's Wettin dynasty possessed an especially problematic past. In the spring of 1813, King Friedrich August I had remained loyal to Napoleon and Saxons had fought alongside the French at Leipzig. Saxony had paid a high price for its king's decision: at the Congress of Vienna, Prussia annexed over half of the kingdom's territory and Friedrich August only narrowly escaped with his crown. References to this uncomfortable past, the Prussian envoy in Dresden wrote in February 1913, would have to be avoided during the unveiling of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal*.¹⁷

The Franco-Prussian War offered more suitable symbols with which Germans – and their rulers – could identify. Perhaps the most well-known among these was Helmuth von Moltke, the chief of the General Staff and architect of Prussia's victories in the Wars of Unification. After 1871, Moltke's contribution to national unity was preserved through both official promotion and popular resonance. This combination was apparent in October 1890 when the “grey field marshal” celebrated his ninetieth birthday. In Karlsruhe, the day was “festively celebrated,” while schools cancelled classes and, in their places, organized patriotic lectures for the students that emphasized the significance of Moltke's achievements between

¹⁶ Steffen Poser, “Die Jahrhundertfeier der Völkerschlacht und die Einweihung des Völkerschlachtdenkmals zu Leipzig 1913,” in *Feste und Feiern. Zum Wandel städtischer Festkultur in Leipzig*, ed. Katrin Keller (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1994), 206-12.

¹⁷ Alfred von Bülow, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, February 9, 1913, PA AA Berlin, R 3226.

1866 and 1871. In Württemberg, his birthday was observed “in brilliant fashion.” Perhaps the most enthusiastic festivities occurred in the kingdom of Saxony, however. Beginning on the previous day with “popular festivities,” Moltke’s birthday was marked with the flagging of all public and a number of private buildings in the Saxon capital. “The celebration,” Prussia’s envoy in Dresden wrote, was “not only to be regarded an act of homage by the Saxon people for the illustrious strategist,” but acquired “still greater importance through the sentiments of gratitude for the recreation of the German empire.”¹⁸ Even less prominent figures than Moltke enjoyed lofty praise throughout Germany for their roles in the Wars of Unification. During a visit to Stuttgart in March 1872, the inhabitants of the city enthusiastically welcomed General August von Werder, the Prussian wartime commander of the Badenese and Württemberg troops. His visit, the British envoy wrote, provided the Württembergers with “an opportunity of testifying their admiration of the popular hero of the Siege of Strasburg,” and, as a result, gave rise to public displays of appreciation. That evening, “a large crowd assembled under the windows of the hotel where he was stopping and performed a serenade in his honor.”¹⁹

The Prusso-German victory over the French forces of Emperor Napoleon III at the Battle of Sedan in September 1870 provided an obvious focal point for the invention of tradition in the German empire. Like the Battle of Leipzig, the victory at Sedan had not ended the Franco-Prussian War, and fighting had continued into the following year. The battle, which resulted in the capture of the French emperor and the entire French army and produced an

¹⁸ Karl von Eisendecker, Prussian envoy in Karlsruhe, to Chancellor Leo von Caprivi, October 26, 1890; Philipp zu Eulenburg, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Caprivi, October 28, 1890; and Carl von Dönhoff, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to Caprivi, October 27, 1890, GStA PK Berlin-Dahlem, III. Hauptabteilung MdA I, file 9822.

¹⁹ Report of the acting British envoy in Stuttgart to the British Foreign Office, March 5, 1872, TNA Kew, FO 82, file 153.

outpouring of patriotic enthusiasm across Germany, nevertheless made a deep impression on German nationalists. As a result, demands for the creation of a national holiday on September 2 appeared in the press immediately following unification. In March 1871, the *Karlsruher Zeitung* published a petition of the German Association of Liberal Protestants that had been signed by eighty-eight professors, publishers, civil servants, newspaper editors, and church officials. The petition called upon the Kaiser to support the annual celebration of the “re-foundation of the German empire in a general national and religious holiday.” The Kaiser showed little interest in supporting the celebration. His answer to the petition’s authors was therefore cautious: the establishment of a national holiday for the new empire should not be decreed, but rather emerge out of the “free impulses” of the German public as had been the case with the first commemorations of the Battle of Leipzig in the autumn of 1814.²⁰

Despite the absence of official support, Sedan Day celebrations were planned and staged across the German empire beginning in the early 1870s. Much to the disappointment of German nationalists – and probably much to the delight of Kaiser Wilhelm – Sedan Day never developed into a national holiday, however. The commemorations were instead confined to the Protestant, middle-class sections of the population. Moreover, municipal councils often hesitated to support the work of festival committees and employers remained unwilling to cancel working days, further limiting the scope of the celebrations.²¹ Sedan Day received an

²⁰ Fritz Schellack, *Nationalfeiertage in Deutschland von 1871 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), 71-2. See also Hartmut Lehmann, “Friedrich von Bodelschwingh und das Sedanfest. Ein Beitrag zum nationalen Denken der politisch aktiven Richtung im deutschen Pietismus des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 202 (1966), 542-73.

²¹ Oliver Zimmer, *Remaking the Rhythms of Life: German Communities in the Age of the Nation-State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 230-53, especially 242-5. More generally, see Gerhard Birk, “Der Tag von Sedan. Intentionen, Resonanz und Widerstand (1871-1895),” *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde und Kulturgeschichte* 10 (1982), 95-110.

especially lukewarm reception in South Germany. In Bavaria, the Patriots' Party, which had been formed following the Austro-Prussian War, repeatedly denounced the celebrations as a Protestant attempt to create a historical narrative that marginalized Catholics. The Bishop of Mainz's condemnation of the festivities at the height of the *Kulturkampf* in 1874 strengthened opposition to Sedan Day among Bavaria's Catholics. When, in 1880, the seven-hundredth anniversary of the Wittelsbach dynasty coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Battle of Sedan, Bavarian symbols and popular attachment to the kingdom's ruling house overshadowed the celebrations of Germany's achievements in 1870-1.²² Even the empire's leading monarch undermined the Sedan Day celebrations. In addition to refusing to provide official support, Wilhelm reviewed the Prussian Guard Corps each year on the anniversary of the Battle of Sedan, though not in his capacity as Kaiser, but rather as King of Prussia. This distinction was even understood by the Russian Tsar. After attending the review in September 1872, the Tsar proposed a toast to the "valiant Prussian army" during a banquet in the royal palace.²³

The celebration of Sedan Day in the German army was further complicated by two factors. First, only a small number of troops remained in the garrisons during the month of September; most were involved in the annual autumn manoeuvres. As a result, few soldiers could take part in parades, festive banquets, or other celebrations. Under the circumstances, Prussian and non-Prussian military authorities were reluctant to issue official instructions for

²² Erwin Fink, "For Country, Court and Church: The Bavarian Patriots' Party and Bavarian Regional Identity in the Era of German Unification," in *Germany's Two Unifications: Anticipations, Experiences, Responses*, ed. Ronald Speirs and John Breuilly (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 164-5; Theodor Schieder, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 85-6.

²³ Pergler von Perglas to the Bavarian foreign ministry, September 8, 1872, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 2652. See also Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, 31.

the flagging of barracks or the participation of officers and enlisted men.²⁴ The disinterest of the army contributed to the increasing political importance of Sedan Day. Reporting in September 1873, Prussia's envoy in Stuttgart, Anton von Magnus, wrote that the city's festival committee had distributed its program for that year's festivities. They included bonfires, cannon salutes, church services, processions of students and their teachers, and speeches by local notables.²⁵ In September 1882, Britain's envoy in Dresden, George Strachey, likewise commented on the civilian character of the celebrations. The holiday had been observed in Saxony "in the usual, unassuming, non-official way," and the only "outward signs of festivity were a limited display of flags from houses, a few extra gas jets at night, and a short musical performance in the great square." Even the newspapers, Strachey added, had argued "that the chief significance of the day of Sedan was political, not military, and that the event celebrated each year on September 2 was not so much the defeat of France as the birth of Germany."²⁶

The second factor that prevented widespread acceptance of the Sedan Day celebrations in the German army was that the Battle of Sedan was not the only battle from the Franco-Prussian War that resonated with the army's contingents. State-based differences in the war's commemoration were especially evident in the Württemberg contingent, whose troops had not been present at Sedan. Reflecting this absence, in August 1872, King Karl of Württemberg selected the anniversary of the Battle of Wörth, during which the Württemberg troops had distinguished themselves, in order to announce the promotion of both division commanders in

²⁴ Kirn, *Soldatenleben in Württemberg*, 191. The Bavarian war ministry was especially reluctant to issue official circulars concerning Sedan Day. Nils Freytag, "Sedantage in München. Gemeindefeiern, Komiteefeste und Vereinsgedenken," *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte* 61 (1998), 392-3.

²⁵ Anton von Magnus, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Bismarck, September 3, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 3354.

²⁶ George Strachey, British envoy in Dresden, to the British Foreign Office, September 4, 1882, TNA Kew, FO 68, file 166.

the Württemberg XIII Army Corps.²⁷ The anniversaries of battles in which Württembergers had played a prominent role filled the South German contingent's festive calendar in the subsequent decades. The most important of these was the anniversary of the Battle of Champigny, which had taken place outside Paris at the beginning of December 1870 and which, in the view of many in the kingdom, had proven the combat effectiveness of Württemberg's soldiers to the Prussians. In 1883, King Karl selected this anniversary for the presentation of commemorative battle streamers – made of crimson silk with a black border, the royal colours of Württemberg – to those Württemberg regiments that could trace their lineage back over one hundred years. Eleven years later, in 1894, Karl's successor, King Wilhelm II of Württemberg again chose "Champigny Day" for the presentation of new colours to eight newly formed infantry battalions and several reserve and *Landwehr* units.²⁸

The commemoration of events from the Franco-Prussian War followed a similar pattern in Saxony. In 1873, the King of Saxony selected the anniversary of the Battle of St. Privat for the presentation of a silver ring for the colours of the third battalion of the 101st Saxon Grenadier Regiment. In the accompanying order of the day, King Johann emphasized the importance of that anniversary and called upon "his soldiers" to demonstrate the same dedication to duty that Saxon troops had shown in 1870 in future campaigns with their "German comrades in arms."²⁹ The presentation of colours to newly formed units and the

²⁷ Karl Pfusterschmid von Hartenstein, Austro-Hungarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, August 18, 1872, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA VI Württemberg, box 35.

²⁸ Ludwig von Wesdehlen, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Bismarck, November 30, 1883, PA AA Berlin, R 3380; Theodor von Holleben, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, December 3, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 3383. For the significance of the anniversary of the Battle of Champigny in the Württemberg contingent, see also Kirn, *Soldatenleben in Württemberg*, 193.

²⁹ Eberhard zu Solms-Sonnenwalde, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to the Foreign Office in Berlin, August 20, 1873, PA AA Berlin, R 3195.

swearing of the oath of allegiance for Saxon recruits also occurred on the anniversaries of battles from the Franco-Prussian War that resonated more powerfully with the Saxon contingent. On the anniversary of the Battle of Villiers, which, like the Battle of Champigny, had taken place during the Siege of Paris in December 1870, the King of Saxony personally presented colours to three newly formed Saxon infantry regiments. A delegation of the 108th Saxon Infantry Regiment, which had played an important role in the battle, formed the honour guard for the ceremony. Somewhat annoyed, the Prussian envoy in Dresden shortly afterwards reported to Berlin: “in none of the speeches that were given on this occasion was the relationship of the Saxon troops to Kaiser and empire ever brought up.”³⁰

The Prussian envoy in Dresden might have disagreed in December 1897, but the commemorations of battles from the Wars of Unification through the lens of state-based loyalties contributed to the creation of a common past in the German army. Saxons or Württembergers could celebrate their own contingent’s victories as well as the contribution of those victories to national unity. These same celebrations could also strengthen ties between the army’s contingents and the empire’s ruling house. In 1895, Kaiser Wilhelm II planned a sequence of festive events that began with his own birthday in January and culminated in October in the unveiling of a monument to his father, Kaiser Friedrich III, on the site of the Battle of Wörth.³¹ The battle, which had taken place at the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War in August 1870, had particular importance for Bavaria’s contingent: as part of Crown

³⁰ Dönhoff to Chancellor Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, December 2, 1897, PA AA Berlin, R 3239. The presentation of colours and the swearing of oaths of allegiance routinely occurred on the anniversary of the Battle of Villiers – “one of the greatest days of glory for the Saxon army” – in subsequent years. See Hans zu Hohenlohe-Oehringen, Prussian envoy in Dresden, to Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow, December 3, 1906, PA AA Berlin, R 3240; Alfred von Bülow to Bethmann Hollweg, December 3, 1913, PA AA Berlin R 3240.

³¹ Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt*, 152-7.

Prince Friedrich Wilhelm's "South German army," its soldiers had been at the centre of the fighting. In July 1895, the Bavarian minister of war, General Adolph von Asch, therefore suggested that the Bavarian government arrange for a delegation of officers to attend the unveiling ceremony. "Considering the purpose and the location of the celebration," and because it was the Kaiser's "fervent wish" that officers from the 1st Bavarian *Uhlán* Regiment and an entire company of Bavarian infantry participate in the event, Asch firmly believed that Bavarian soldiers should be present.³² Wartime loyalties also brought the South Germans to the imperial capital. In February 1897, Prince Regent Luitpold approved another proposal from his war minister to send a delegation of officers from the 6th Bavarian Infantry Regiment to the unveiling of the "national monument" to Kaiser Wilhelm I in Berlin. The prince regent at the same time granted a request from the regiment's commander to place a wreath at the base of the monument to the former *Bundesfeldherr* of the German army.³³

The integration of state-based loyalties into a common national past was therefore at times actively encouraged by the empire's monarchs and their advisors. This was also the case when, in the summer of 1894, a retired Bavarian officer published a call for the construction of a monument to General Ludwig von der Tann, who had commanded the I Bavarian Army Corps in 1870-1 and who had died ten years later. The Prussian envoy in Munich, Guido von Thielmann, recommended that in light of "the good brotherhood in arms that the First Bavarian Corps maintained with our troops at Sedan and in the Loire, it would surely have a positive

³² General Adolph von Asch, Bavarian war minister, to Prince Regent Luitpold of Bavaria, July 16, 1895, with the prince regent's approval, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2617.

³³ Asch to Prince Regent Luitpold of Bavaria, February 26, 1897, with the approval of the prince regent, February 27, 1897, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2621. Luitpold's decision to approve the laying of a wreath on the monument was undoubtedly influenced by the knowledge that the Saxon and Württemberg contingents intended to lay wreaths at the same ceremony, something Asch did not neglect to include in his proposal.

influence on the sentiments in the Bavarian army if the monument project found a warm reception with us.” The Kaiser might consider donating to the endeavour, Thielmann wrote, and even the Prussian officer corps, whose regiments “had fought shoulder to shoulder with the Bavarians,” could be persuaded to support the Bavarian monument.³⁴ There was, however, no progress until early 1897 when a committee was formed under the direction of the Bavarian war minister. Thielmann’s successor as Prussian envoy in Munich, Anton von Monts, soon afterwards reported that Prince Regent Luitpold had agreed to donate 1,000 Marks to the monument and that two Bavarian princes each intended to contribute 500 Marks. Monts nevertheless recommended caution. The Kaiser, he wrote, should be reminded “that it is a question of a monument for a deceased Bavarian general” and that “exceeding the sum that the prince regent had allocated” would not be advisable.³⁵ In the Foreign Office’s view, however, financial assistance from Berlin was necessary: “the support of the undertaking by His Majesty the Kaiser lies in the interest of the domestic politics of the empire.”³⁶

In the decades after 1871, Sedan Day emerged as a popular celebration in parts of the German empire. Several obstacles prevented the participation of German soldiers in these celebrations, however. Because the annual autumn manoeuvres were held in the first half of September, barracks and parade grounds were empty on September 2. Large-scale festive events among the troops were therefore impossible. More importantly, Sedan Day did not

³⁴ Guido von Thielmann, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Caprivi, July 3, 1894, PA AA Berlin, R 2749.

³⁵ Anton von Monts, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Hohenlohe, January 9, 1897 and January 27, 1897, PA AA Berlin, R 2753.

³⁶ Adolf Marshall von Bieberstein, state secretary of the Foreign Office, to Arthur von Posadowsky-Wehner, state secretary of the imperial treasury, draft of February 8, 1897, PA AA Berlin, R 2753. The imperial treasury raised no objections to the contribution by the Kaiser and Wilhelm II thereafter approved the transfer of the funds to the monument committee. For this correspondence, see Posadowsky-Wehner to Marshall von Bieberstein, February 16, 1897, and the imperial treasury office to Marshall von Bieberstein, March 26, 1897, with the approval of the Kaiser from March 15, 1897, PA AA Berlin, R 2754.

resonate equally with all German soldiers. While Württembergers had not even taken part in the battle, Bavarians and Saxons commemorated other engagements from the Franco-Prussian War in which their own regiments or contingents had distinguished themselves. “Champigny Day” and the anniversaries of the Battles of St. Privat, Villiers, and Wörth were instead preferred dates for the presentation of colours to newly formed regiments or the swearing of oaths of allegiance by recruits. Even though the German army’s festive calendar remained diverse as a result, the commemoration of the Wars of Unification through the lens of state-based loyalties contributed to the creation of a common past for German soldiers. At times, and with some encouragement from monarchs and their advisors, these events could also strengthen the bond between German soldiers and their *Bundesfeldherr*. This bond was the focus of another semi-official event in the German empire: the birthday of the Kaiser.

Raising a glass to Kaiser and king: Birthdays in the German army

In the spring of 1878, the secretary of the United States legation in Berlin, H. Sidney Everett, described the celebrations that had taken place in the imperial capital on March 22. Kaiser Wilhelm I’s birthday, Everett wrote, had been “observed as a general holiday in the usual way,” with flags flying above every house and the main thoroughfares being illuminated in the evening. From ten o’clock in the morning until two o’clock in the afternoon, the Kaiser had received members of the royal family and his household, high-ranking military officers, foreign diplomats, and representatives of Germany’s other ruling houses. At four o’clock, a dinner was held for the royal family in the palace of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm. Musical

entertainment was provided and “a very handsome and lavish buffet supper” was laid out at midnight, bringing an end to the day’s festivities.³⁷ Even greater significance was attached to imperial birthdays following the accession of Wilhelm II in 1888. Each year, on January 27, Kaiser’s family, representatives of the empire’s federal states, ambassadors and other foreign dignitaries, government ministers, high-ranking military officers, and leading members of the imperial and Prussian parliaments assembled at the royal palace in Berlin and, one by one, offered the Kaiser their best wishes for the upcoming year. The celebration then took to the streets. In the afternoon, Wilhelm II appeared before cheering crowds, attended a military parade, and oversaw the changing of the guard at Berlin’s armoury. A court banquet and a series of performances in the state opera house concluded the busy festive schedule.³⁸

It should not be surprising that the birthday of the Kaiser, who was, at the same time, the King of Prussia, was celebrated in such an extravagant manner. Already in the early nineteenth century, specific regulations had been laid out for the festivities on the occasion of Prussian royal birthdays, not only at court in Berlin, but in schools and churches throughout the kingdom.³⁹ After unification, these festivities were gradually adopted across the German empire. As with Sedan Day, the imperial birthday celebrations had the potential to divide Germans along confessional, political, and regional lines, and similar to the annual festivities on September 2, the Kaiser’s birthday was unevenly observed. However, unlike Sedan Day, the imperial birthday celebrations were more suitable festive occasions for the German army’s

³⁷ H. Sidney Everett, secretary of the United States legation in Berlin, to Secretary of State William M. Evarts, March 25, 1878, National Archives, College Park, MD, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Microfilm Publication M 44, roll 41.

³⁸ Frank Bösch, “Das Zeremoniell der Kaisergeburtstage,” in *Das politische Zeremoniell im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1918*, ed. Andreas Biefang, Michael Epkenhans, and Klaus Tenfelde (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2008), 53-76, especially 61-70.

³⁹ Schellack, *Nationalfeiertage in Deutschland*, 19-22.

contingents. This was for two reasons. First, as *Bundesfeldherr*, the Kaiser represented an appropriate focal point for celebrations in all officers' messes and barracks rooms. Second, Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers could celebrate the supreme warlord alongside their own *Kontingentsherr* without one monarch necessarily overshadowing the other. The army's festive culture was therefore flexible enough to make room for both Kaiser and king.

Historians are for the most part agreed that the Kaiser's birthday represented another failed attempt at national integration of the German empire. Isabel Hull ranks the celebrations among the "least successful dynastic rituals" of the imperial period and as having had a similar importance for the appeal of monarchical rites and symbols to the generation that did not experience the Wars of Unification as the perfunctory court balls and receptions, formal dinners, and Christmas and New Year's celebrations in Berlin.⁴⁰ Imperial birthdays were indeed never celebrated unanimously as a national holiday. Like the Sedan Day celebrations, this was in part because Kaiser Wilhelm I refused to officially endorse the festivities. Although the first large-scale festivities on the occasion of the Kaiser's birthday were staged in the imperial capital in March 1872, and even though this event was attended by members from most of the German ruling houses, there were notable absences, including the kings of Bavaria and Württemberg and the Duke of Brunswick.⁴¹ The absence of these three sovereigns above all reflected the perceived threat of the imperial birthday to the monarchical images of the

⁴⁰ Isabel V. Hull, "Prussian Dynastic Ritual and the End of Monarchy," in *German Nationalism and the European Response, 1890-1945*, ed. Carole Fink, Isabel V. Hull, and MacGregor Knox (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 34-5. See also George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 92-3. For the reasons for the failure of the Kaiser's birthday as a widely celebrated national holiday in the Rhineland, see Ute Schneider, *Politische Festkultur im 19. Jahrhundert. Die Rheinprovinz von der französischen Zeit bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges (1806-1918)* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1995), especially 201-2.

⁴¹ Schellack, *Nationalfeiertage in Deutschland*, 18-19.

smaller German ruling houses. The strongest resistance to the extension of this festive tradition came from Bavaria. In 1871, the Bavarian government flatly rejected proposals to incorporate an intercessory prayer “for Kaiser and empire” into the official church liturgy. Its reason? The purpose of such a prayer was to “provide a titular preference that is due exclusively to the highest bearer of all sovereignty and rights in the state” and that could not be provided to any “second person before or after the territorial sovereign.”⁴²

Daniel Kirn has likewise described the celebrations on the occasion of the Kaiser’s birthday, at least in Württemberg, as a mere “formality.” Although festive banquets were hosted by public associations and festive speeches were given by local dignitaries across the kingdom, especially during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II, these events did not compare with the adoration that Württembergers expressed towards their own ruling house on the occasion of the king’s birthday.⁴³ The birthdays of Germany’s other twenty-one monarchs of course remained important festive occasions following unification. This was especially true in the army’s non-Prussian contingents. Having sworn oaths of loyalty to their *Kontingentsherren*, soldiers raised their glasses and toasted the health of their king each year. Like imperial birthdays, these events were also occasions on which public spectacle could strengthen the legitimacy of monarchy. In April 1876, the Prussian envoy in Dresden reported that a large number of Saxon regiments had paraded in the city on the King of Saxony’s birthday. This event, he wrote, reflected the rapidly growing interest in the army “in all classes of the population since unification.” Whereas military parades had previously been held infrequently

⁴² Michael B. Klein, *Zwischen Reich und Region: Identitätsstrukturen im Deutschen Kaiserreich (1871-1918)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2005), 277-8.

⁴³ Kirn, *Soldatenleben in Württemberg*, 187.

in the Saxon capital and, when they did occur, had consisted of only “a few regiment,” on this occasion, “the entire court society, as well as members of both houses of parliament were in attendance at the parade and had reserved their places” on the tribunes.⁴⁴

The birthday of a king could also provide opportunities for soldiers of the state-based contingents to express their comradeship in arms. From the late 1880s onwards, it became tradition for the band of the Railway Regiment to perform in the Württemberg legation on the morning of the King of Württemberg’s birthday. In March 1889, the band played several patriotic pieces, including the *König Karl Marsch* and the *Württembergers Lied*. After a festive banquet, which was attended by several Prussian officers, the celebrations moved to the officers’ mess of the Railway Regiment. The Württemberg envoy later described the scene: “all the officers of the regiment, Colonel Knappe at their head, several non-commissioned officers and men of other companies and most of the Württemberg non-commissioned officers and men posted to Berlin ... took part in the ‘King’s festival’ whereby the good comradeship that links the Württembergers with the Prussian brothers in arms was demonstrated.”⁴⁵ In April 1894, the Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin reported similar scenes of comradeship on the King of Saxony’s birthday. Whereas Saxon officers who were stationed in Berlin and Saxon reserve and *Landwehr* officers who lived in the surrounding area had assembled on the king’s birthday, a parade of the regiment’s two Saxon companies had taken place the following day. Prussian officers also participated in the festivities. The officers of the Railroad Regiment and the Prussian 2nd Guard *Uhlans* Regiment hosted a banquet for their Saxon comrades and

⁴⁴ Solms-Sonnenwalde to Chancellor Bülow, April 24, 1876, PA AA Berlin, R 3198.

⁴⁵ Ferdinand von Zeppelin, Württemberg envoy in Berlin, to Mitnacht, March 14, 1889, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/03, file 182.

even the Chief of the General Staff, General Alfred von Schlieffen, and the commanding general of the Prussian Guard Corps had been in attendance.⁴⁶

In the German army, the birthday of a *Kontingentsherr* nevertheless had to share the stage with the Kaiser's birthday. Speaking to an assembly of officers in Berlin on the occasion of Wilhelm II's birthday in January 1914, the chief of the General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke, touched on the importance of the event for both Prussians and non-Prussian alike. In his speech, Moltke the Younger expressed his delight in celebrating "the army's most beautiful festive day, the birthday of our all-highest commander-in-chief" and marvelled at the "feeling of comradely solidarity" shown on the occasion by the officers of the general staff that "in itself brought together the members of all German federal contingents in common labour for Kaiser and empire."⁴⁷ Even the cancellation of public festivities often did not prevent the army from observing imperial birthdays. Following the assassination of the Russian Tsar Alexander II in March 1881, for example, the public festivities for the birthday of Wilhelm I were cancelled. However, a military banquet that had been hosted by the Prussian commanding general of the XIII Army Corps had still taken place.⁴⁸ Similarly, in the aftermath of the death of Queen Victoria of England in January 1901, the official festivities of the Kaiser's birthday were postponed. Nevertheless, the military festivities went ahead as planned with festive dinners for the officers, including a banquet in the Prussian war ministry. Commenting on the continuation of the festivities within the army, the Baroness von Spitzemberg wrote in her diary: "all

⁴⁶ Colonel Paul Vitzthum von Eckstädt, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Saxon war ministry, April 29, 1894, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 120.

⁴⁷ Diary entry for January 27, 1914, Helmuth von Moltke, *Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente 1877-1916. Ein Bild vom Kriegausbruch, erster Kriegsführung und Persönlichkeit des ersten militärischen Führers des Krieges*, ed. Eliza von Moltke (Stuttgart: Der Kommende Tag A.G. Verlag, 1922), 375-6.

⁴⁸ Karl von Tauffkirchen-Guttenberg, Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, March 23, 1881, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3041.

birthday celebrations are cancelled this year, only the military dinners are taking place, a difference that one can absolutely not understand, just as little as so much else.”⁴⁹

The celebration of the Kaiser’s birthday received widespread acceptance in the army’s contingents from the early 1870s onwards. In March 1874, the Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, Anton von Magnus, observed that the imperial birthday had been observed in Württemberg “with the general involvement of the population” and that all of the official buildings, the churches, and the majority of the private residences in the Württemberg capital had been decorated in German colours. Moreover, an imperial flag had been flown between two Württemberg flags above the royal palace. More importantly, Stuttgart’s garrison had taken part in the festivities. On the day before the Kaiser’s birthday, Magnus wrote, the officers of the 119th Württemberg Grenadier Regiment had held a dinner during which the regiment’s commander delivered an “enthusiastic and, as I am everywhere assured, very well-received speech.” On the day of the festivities, the Prussian commanding general of the XIII Army Corps, General Emil von Schwartzkoppen, hosted his own banquet for Württemberg officers and members of the ruling house.⁵⁰ Similar celebrations occurred in garrisons throughout Saxony. One observer wrote in March 1875 that the Kaiser’s birthday had been “celebrated as a veritable national festival” in Dresden. In Leipzig, Chemnitz, Zwickau, and other smaller Saxon garrisons, festive dinners and other celebrations had taken place. On the morning of March 20 – two days before the imperial birthday – the band of the 101st Saxon Grenadier Regiment had conducted a performance on the street in front of the Prussian legation in

⁴⁹ Diary entry for January 27, 1901, Spitzemberg, *Das Tagebuch der Baronin Spitzemberg*, 405; Schellack, *Nationalfeiertage in Deutschland*, 46-7.

⁵⁰ Magnus to Bismarck, March 23, 1874, PA AA Berlin, R 3355.

Dresden. Whereas the associations of Saxon reserve and *Landwehr* officers had observed the imperial birthday on the preceding weekend, the officer corps of the remaining Saxon regiments had celebrated the event on March 22. The birthday festivities had, the observer concluded, assumed an “authentically patriotic” character throughout Saxony.⁵¹

Even Bavarian soldiers adopted the imperial birthday as a festive tradition in their contingent. Festive banquets and other celebrations therefore became commonplace in the officers’ messes and barracks rooms of Bavarian regiments in the decades after unification. The Prussian envoy in Munich, Georg von Werthern, was able to report to Berlin in March 1883 that the Kaiser’s birthday had been observed with a festive banquet for 170 guests. Moreover, the city hall, state buildings, the Prussian legation – but, interestingly, only a few private houses – were flagged on the occasion. Moreover, Werthern pointed out that the “customary dinners” had taken place in the officers’ messes and barracks rooms of Munich’s garrison. Prince Leopold of Bavaria had dined with a cavalry regiment, while Prince Arnulf took part in the festivities in the officers’ mess of an infantry regiment.⁵² Over the next few years, Werthern submitted annually submitted reports describing the festivities in the Bavarian capital. In March 1884, he wrote that not only were more private houses decorated for the occasion, but imperial flags had even been raised above the Bavarian war ministry and the city’s barracks. The following year, in March 1885, numerous Bavarian reserve and *Landwehr* officers assembled on March 21 for a festive dinner during which Prince Leopold toasted the Kaiser with “warm and flourishing words.” On the same day, the officers of the other regiments

⁵¹ Solms-Sonnenwalde to the Foreign Office in Berlin, March 23, 1875, PA AA Berlin, R 3197.

⁵² Werthern to Bismarck, March 18, 1883, PA AA Berlin, R 2720.

stationed in Munich hosted similar celebrations, and both Prince Leopold and the Bavarian minister of war had dined with the officers of a cavalry regiment.⁵³

As with Bavaria's relationship to the empire more generally, the Kaiser's birthday created a few tense moments between Berlin and Munich. Following his accession in June 1888, Kaiser Wilhelm II sought to transform his birthday into a genuine national holiday. These efforts raised eyebrows in South Germany, especially in Bavaria. It was one thing to express loyalty to the Kaiser and *Bundesfeldherr* on his birthday. It was an entirely different matter to transform those celebrations into an event that might overshadow loyalty to the kingdom's Wittelsbach dynasty. As the result, the Bavarian diplomatic and representatives in Berlin were periodically summoned by the Kaiser in order to provide explanations of the perceived lack of festive enthusiasm in Bavaria. In February 1892, Wilhelm II interrogated Bavaria's military plenipotentiary to Berlin, General Hermann von Haag, at a court ball concerning rumours that the customary festive banquets in the officers' messes of the Bavarian contingent had not taken place that year.⁵⁴ Haag went to great pains to explain to the Kaiser that, rather than representing a Bavarian effort to marginalize the celebration of the Kaiser's birthday, the death of Duchess Louise of Bavaria immediately before the scheduled festivities had resulted in the cancellation of the festive banquets, both at court and among government ministers.⁵⁵ Despite these tensions, the appeal of the Kaiser's birthday festivities within the

⁵³ Werthern's reports to Bismarck, March 23, 1884, and March 22, 1885, PA AA Berlin, R 2722.

⁵⁴ General Hermann von Haag, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Bavarian war ministry, February 12, 1892, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2602. For Wilhelm II's efforts to transform his birthday into a national holiday and, in the process, attach the suffix "the Great" to his grandfather's name, see Klein, *Zwischen Reich und Region*, 279-80.

⁵⁵ General Adolf von Heinleth, Bavarian war minister, to Haag, February 14, 1892, as well as the Haag's report of February 20, 1892 which communicated the satisfaction of the Kaiser with the Bavarian explanation, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2602.

German army remained largely undiminished, even in the Bavarian contingent. In January 1907, one observer wrote that the festivities in Munich's garrison "again confirmed that the officer corps of the Bavarian army is animated by intense German national feeling and that [its members] only sporadically pursue particularistic sentiments."⁵⁶

Like Sedan Day, the Kaiser's birthday never became a national holiday. Unlike the annual celebrations of the Prusso-German victory over Napoleon III, however, imperial birthdays resonated more powerfully with both Prussian and non-Prussian soldiers. There were two reasons for this greater resonance. First, Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers had sworn oaths of allegiance to the Kaiser as *Bundesfeldherr* and, as a result, imperial birthdays could be seen as expressions of loyalty to the supreme warlord who, as in 1870-1, would command the entire German army in wartime. Second, imperial birthdays did not overshadow the birthday celebrations of the empire's lesser monarchs. Soldiers who had also pledged loyalty to their *Kontingentsherr* could take part in both festive events, often alongside officers and enlisted men from other contingents. The German army's festive culture therefore provided space for state-based and national loyalties, strengthening ties between the contingents in the process. Even more than birthday festivities, regimental culture, especially the appointment of ceremonial colonels and the commemoration of regimental anniversaries, created opportunities to celebrate Kaiser and king.

⁵⁶ Report of the Prussian military attaché in Munich to the Prussian war ministry, January 28, 1907, PA AA Berlin, R 2759.

From ballrooms to barracks: Regimental culture in the German army

The regiment was the most identifiable organization for most nineteenth-century soldiers. Whereas brigades, divisions, and army corps passed on orders from an army's high command and coordinated the movement of units on the battlefield, their headquarters were often far-removed from a regiment's garrison in peacetime or located well behind the front in war. By contrast, the men of a regiment ate, slept, and drilled together in peace and fought, suffered, and died in close proximity to one another during war. The regiment's centrality to a soldier's experience has often been recognized. John Keegan has argued that the regiment is "the most significant of Britain's military institutions, the principal vehicle of the nation's military culture ... and a factor by no means without significance in the country's political and social history." Not only did the regimental system allow the British authorities to rapidly expand a small professional army into the mass conscript forces of the First and Second World Wars, the emergence of a rigid hierarchy of regiments based on past performance on the battlefield, connections to particular recruiting districts, the corporate structure of their officer corps, and the location of peacetime garrisons, especially when these garrisons were near large cities or provided easy access to the monarch, encouraged fierce allegiance among their members. This "sense of regimental difference," Keegan concludes, may have even prevented the emergence in the British army of a distinct and singular officer class with political ambitions.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ John Keegan, "Regimental Ideology," in *War, Economy and the Military Mind*, ed. Geoffrey Best and Andrew Wheatcroft (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 3-18. For the importance of the regiment in British military history, see also David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Weston, "The Army: Mother, Sister and Mistress: the British Regiment," in *The Defence Equation: British Military Systems: Policy, Planning and Performance*, ed. Martin Edmonds (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1986), 139-55.

The importance of the regiment in the armies of continental Europe has largely been overlooked. Perhaps because universal military service ensured that recruits served for short periods of time in a regiment's ranks before being released back into civilian society, it has been assumed that few soldiers retained strong connections to their units. Yet, as Wencke Meteling shows, "regimental ideologies" developed in the French and German armies in the second half of the nineteenth century. These ideologies, which were especially powerful for the active officer corps, manifested themselves in the publication of regimental histories, the veneration of fallen members, and the ceremonies that accompanied the placing of battle honours on a unit's colours, all of which in turn tied the civilian population more closely to their local regiments.⁵⁸ In the German army, an important element in a regiment's ideology was the relationship with its ceremonial colonel, otherwise known as the *Regimentschef* or *Regimentsinhaber*. In addition to an active officer who commanded the unit, most German regiments possessed a ceremonial colonel. This honorary title, which was awarded by the regiment's royal commander-in-chief to a leading member of another ruling house, either German or foreign, was considered a token of a monarch's favour. Occasionally, non-royal officers who had enjoyed outstanding careers received this title. Ceremonial colonels did not have day-to-day responsibilities, but rather participated in regimental celebrations and received deputations of the regiment's officers at his court on important occasions, such as his own birthday, marriage, or wedding anniversary. The practice of bestowing these honorary titles was so widespread in the decades following the Wars of Unification that it came to resemble

⁵⁸ Wencke Meteling, "Regimentsideologien in Frankreich und Deutschland, 1870-1920," in *Militär in Deutschland und Frankreich 1870-2010. Vergleich, Verflechtung und Wahrnehmung zwischen Konflikt und Kooperation*, ed. Jörg Echternkamp and Stefan Martens (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 25-48.

a veritable trade in royal personalities. In the process, it bound the regiments of the army's non-Prussian contingents more closely to the House of Hohenzollern, while legitimizing the military authority of the other *Kontingentsherren*.

The role of regimental colonels has not been a subject of great interest to historians. As part of a more extensive study of the British regimental system, David French notes that regimental colonels in the British army during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries wielded considerable influence. They were involved in the selection and appointment of officers, personally interviewing candidates and ensuring that only those who were considered socially acceptable were admitted into an officers' mess. They also oversaw regimental associations that raised funds for former members and their families, published regimental histories and journals, and carried on regimental traditions in the form of annual dinners and so-called "Old Comrades Days."⁵⁹ By contrast, Daniel Kirn suggests that *Regimentschefs* were insignificant personalities in the lives of the officers and men of the Württemberg contingent under the German empire. Reference to the connection between the regimental colonel and the regiment represented only the background to the *Chefjubiläen*, or festivities that were held on the anniversaries of the colonel's appointment. These events simply allowed the personnel of a regiment "to come together unofficially and take lunch together," something that alleviated the boredom of garrison life.⁶⁰ The relationship between a regimental colonel and a regiment could indeed be superficial: the telegrams that were sent by the Habsburg emperor on the occasion of his appointment as regimental colonel to the 17th Saxon *Uhlán* Regiment were

⁵⁹ French, *Military Identities*, 54-7, 79-85. The position of regimental colonel was regulated in 1920 in an attempt to encourage a "spirit of comradeship and regimental pride" throughout the British army. As part of this effort, regimental colonels, who had previously been appointed for life, were to retire at the age of 70.

⁶⁰ Kirn, *Soldatenleben in Württemberg*, 183-4.

formulaic and emotionless expressions of this relationship.⁶¹ Yet, within the German army, *Cheffjubiläen* and the presence of delegations of officers at the birthdays, service anniversaries, and even weddings of regimental colonels created ties between the state-based contingents.

The maintenance of the relationship between regimental colonels and their regiments was generally undertaken through the dispatch and reception of delegations of officers at the courts of the German ruling houses on the occasion of *Cheffjubiläen* and other festive events involving the regimental colonel. Although these events involved tedious and time-consuming court ceremonial, they nevertheless provided opportunities for personnel of an otherwise self-contained contingent to engage and socialize more widely and thereby acquire a sense that they might indeed belong to a larger army. In September 1871, a delegation of officers from the 4th Bavarian Infantry Regiment was sent to Stuttgart in order to participate in the festivities accompanying the silver wedding anniversary of King Karl of Württemberg. The Bavarians, together with officers of the 25th Prussian Infantry Regiment, to which Württemberg's ruler had also been appointed regimental colonel, were given an audience with the king, received invitations to a court ball, dined with the king and queen at the royal palace, were presented with several Württemberg honours, and attended the races in Cannstadt, sitting in the royal tribune.⁶² Over two decades later, a delegation of officers from the 47th Prussian Infantry Regiment, from Lower Silesia, was met with an "exceedingly gracious reception" from its ceremonial colonel, Prince Ludwig of Bavaria. Immediately after arriving in Munich, the Prussian officers were invited to dinner, during which the officers presented the prince with a

⁶¹ Dönhoff's reports to Caprivi, November 25, 1891 and April 3, 1892, PA AA Berlin, R 3237.

⁶² Report of the commander of the 4th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, Colonel Wilhelm Kohlermann, to the commanding general of the garrison of Metz, September 28, 1871, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2649.

gift – a silver figurine of the flagbearer of the first battalion of the 47th Infantry – that “visibly and happily surprised” the latter. Several of the Prussian officers were awarded the second class of the Bavarian military service order. On the return journey from Munich, the Prussians stopped briefly in Ingolstadt in order to visit the officers’ mess of the 10th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, a unit that Prince Ludwig could also count among “his” regiments.⁶³

The mere fact that two regiments possessed the same *Regimentschef* could also result in an exchange of invitations for festive events that had nothing to do with the regimental colonel. In March 1889, thirty-seven officers from the 1st Prussian Foot Guards visited the officer corps of the 101st Saxon Grenadier Regiment in Dresden. This visit, which occurred because Kaiser Wilhelm II had been appointed as regimental colonel to both regiments, was, according to the Prussian envoy, “awaited with bated breath” and the Saxon officers made every effort to celebrate their Prussian comrades’ stay “as enjoyable as possible.” The regiment’s barracks were decorated with German, Prussian, and Saxon flags and numerous lanterns lit the way to the officers’ mess, in which a bust of Wilhelm II, as well as life-sized portraits of Kaiser Wilhelm I and King Albert of Saxony, had been surrounded by flowers. A festive banquet for the officers of both regiments finally ended around four o’clock the next morning. The following day, the Prussians – probably with heavy heads – had breakfast with the King of Saxony. They were also received by the commanding general of the XII Army Corps and attended a court ball. The presence of Prussian officers, Carl von Dönhoff wrote to Berlin, had produced “great satisfaction” in both court and military circles, and “the benefit of

⁶³ Report of the Prussian military attaché in Munich, Major Kurt von Pritzelwitz, to the Prussian ministry of war, February 15, 1893, PA AA Berlin, R 2745.

Table 9 – Infantry regiments with *Regimentschefs*, 1914⁶⁴

| | Prussian | Bavarian | Saxon | Württemberg |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|-------------|
| Member of kingdom's ruling house | 11 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| Member of another German ruling house | 26 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| Member of a foreign ruling house | 13 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Non-royal <i>Regimentschef</i> | 13 | - | 1 | - |
| Total regiments in contingent | 166 | 24 | 17 | 10 |

⁶⁴ Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der deutschen Heere*, 2:1ff.

such association for the promotion of comradeship and the feeling of shared identity between the Prussian and Saxon officer corps” had been repeatedly stressed following their visit.⁶⁵

The practice of appointing *Regimentschefs* became widespread in the decades before the First World War. In the process, it attracted the attention of the authorities who, in turn, sought to regulate the relationship between the holders of these ceremonial positions and the officers of their regiments. In November 1896, the Bavarian war minister highlighted the problems with the introduction of regimental officers to *Regimentschefs*. It had become an “act of courtesy” for regimental commanders to apply for royal permission in order to personally introduce themselves at the court of their regimental colonels as soon as possible after their appointments. However, the travel regulations for Bavarian military personnel did not permit reimbursements to officers for the associated travel and accommodation costs. The Bavarian minister of war therefore recommended two measures that would ease the financial burden of the relationship with the regimental colonel on its officers. In the future, the commander of a Bavarian regiment with a *Regimentschef* who was German sovereign or prince would be obligated to personally introduce himself at the appropriate court soon after his appointment. Having received permission for such a visit, the officer would receive reimbursement from Bavaria’s military budget in order to cover the costs of travel and accommodation.⁶⁶

The increased frequency of *Chefjubiläen* and other celebrations involving regimental colonels likewise encouraged the Bavarian ministry of war to tighten regulation of other

⁶⁵ Dönhoff to Bismarck, March 6, 1889, PA AA Berlin, R 3236.

⁶⁶ Asch to Prince Regent Luitpold, November 26, 1896, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2644. This proposal was approved by the prince regent and promulgated as a royal decree on December 9, 1896. For example, the commander of the 6th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, Colonel Göringer, received permission to visit the court of Kaiser Wilhelm II in Berlin, Horn to Prince Regent Luitpold, March 26, 1907, with the approval of the prince regent from March 26, 1907, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2651.

aspects of these relationships. In January 1911, the minister of war published a decree that attempted to bring the practice of gift giving to *Regimentschefs* in line with practices throughout the German army. Such gifts, according to the ministry of war, would only receive royal approval if they were occasioned by “special and infrequent” celebrations and if the gift itself was deemed appropriate to the event. As with the travel and accommodation costs associated with the introduction of regimental commanders, the ministry of war was also concerned that individual officers were bearing disproportionate expenses for such gifts. In an attempt to avoid “greater financial demands on the individual officer,” the ministry of war therefore recommended that Bavarian regiments adopt the already widely accepted practice of a single gift for which officers of a regiment would together contribute funds. Finally, in order to further reduce costs, the ministry of war advised regimental commanders to contact the other regiments to which their *Regimentschefs* had been appointed and thereby coordinate gifts.⁶⁷

Contributing to the proliferation of *Regimentschefs* in the decades after unification was the belief that their appointment represented an important element in a monarch’s military authority. This was especially true of the King of Bavaria. In March 1871, Siegmund von Pranckh, the Bavarian minister of war, proposed to King Ludwig II that, following recent political events and the accompanying changes to certain personal titles, the designations of a handful of Bavarian regiments would have to be updated. Moreover, Pranckh suggested that the Prussian and German crown prince, who had recently commanded the Bavarian troops in the war against France and who enjoyed considerable popularity, both in the Bavarian contingent and the civilian population, could be appointed as regimental colonel to one of

⁶⁷ Decree of the Bavarian war ministry, January 27, 1911, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2644.

“vacant” regiments in the Bavarian contingent. In doing so, the minister of war proposed the 1st Bavarian *Uhlán* Regiment for consideration. Whereas the king consented to the changes to the designations proposed by the minister of war, he nevertheless gave his minister of war a dressing down concerning his proposal of Friedrich Wilhelm as *Regimentschef* of the 1st *Uhlánen*. Ludwig reminded his war minister that “the bestowal of regiments is an object of my free initiative and, in the future, any suggestion in this direction should cease.”⁶⁸

While the ability to appoint *Regimentschefs* remained a jealously guarded prerogative of Germany’s monarchs after 1871, this extension of this practice beyond the empire’s borders occasionally caused anxiety in Berlin. The Prussian military authorities were particularly worried about foreign perceptions of the German army. In the spring of 1898, a group of officers from the 19th Bavarian Infantry Regiment Bavaria travelled to Rome in order to be received by the king of Italy, Umberto I, whom Prince Regent Luitpold had recently appointed as *Regimentschef* to this regiment. The Bavarian officers remained in Rome for five days, were given an audience and dined with the king, were awarded with Italian military decorations, and were provided with a guided tour of the city’s attractions. Thereafter, the delegation travelled to Naples in order to view the “wonders of art and nature” before returning to their garrison. As the German ambassador in Rome wrote to Berlin, “care had been taken that the appearance of Bavarian officers in Rome did not carry a particularistic Bavarian character.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ General Siegmund von Pranckh, Bavarian war minister, to King Ludwig II, March 5, 1871, with the marginal comments of the Bavarian king from March 9, 1871, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2651. The Bavarian minister of war had, in order to reflect the assumption of the title of Kaiser by the King of Prussia, proposed a change to the designation of the 6th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, to “Königlich bayerisches 6. Infanterie-Regiment Kaiser Wilhelm König von Preußen.”

⁶⁹ Anton Saurma von der Jeltsch, German ambassador to Rome, to Hohenlohe, June 23, 1898, PA AA Berlin, R 2756. See also the report of Britain’s legation in Munich concerning the despatch of the Bavarian delegation to Rome and the presence of the Italian plenipotentiary at a review of several regiments of the Munich garrison. British envoy in Munich to the British Foreign Office, July 7, 1898, TNA Kew, FO 30, file 290.

Despite these precautions, the visit of the Bavarian officers and the behaviour of the Bavarian legation in Rome caused some concern in Berlin, particularly among Wilhelm II's entourage. As Philipp zu Eulenburg wrote to the secretary of the Foreign Office, Bernhard von Bülow, in July 1898, the German military attaché in Rome had not been present at the time of the Bavarian visit to Rome and had therefore not been able to submit a full report on the events to Berlin. More seriously, Bavaria's representative in Rome had neither informed his colleague, the German ambassador, nor Eulenburg about the prince regent's despatch of the Bavarian officers to the Italian capital. The Kaiser, greatly annoyed by this omission, ordered that, in the future, "in similar cases" such a "circumvention of the imperial embassy by the legations of the federal states must not be tolerated." The failure of the Bavarian legation was not simply seen as a procedural mistake by the Prussians. According to Eulenburg, there was a danger that the Bavarian officers "could give the impression abroad that there are different armies in Germany or even interests that run counter to one another." As a result, Berlin needed be kept informed of all such highly sensitive official visits to foreign capitals.⁷⁰

While the appointment of German kings, grand dukes, and princes as regimental colonels contributed to a knitting together of the German army's contingents, regimental anniversaries allowed Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers to simultaneously express national and state-based loyalties. In the decades after unification, officers and enlisted men were more than enough opportunities to do so. In June 1882, the Württemberg envoy in Munich, Oskar von Soden, reported that a recent wave of regimental anniversaries, or

⁷⁰ Eulenburg to Bülow, July 29, 1898, PA AA Berlin, R 2756. The Prussian envoy in Munich, Anton von Monts, was also to receive a dressing down for failing to inform the Foreign Office of the Bavarian officers' visit to Rome.

Regimentsjubiläen, had swept through southern Germany. Such celebrations, had not merely been “orchestrated with artistic and martial splendor, but rather in a manner that gives the spectator and observer an impression of exaggeration and permits him and others to ask themselves: what actually are the motives of festivals that easily wear themselves out through their frequent repetition.”⁷¹ Soden and the population of South Germany could be forgiven for having had enough of regimental anniversaries at the end of the nineteenth century. Beginning almost immediately after 1871 and becoming increasingly more common throughout the 1880s, regiments from all of the army’s contingents commemorated their foundations, as well as other significant events in their histories, frequently in an extravagant manner.

These occasions were significant events in a regiment’s festive calendar. The program for the one-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Prussian 8th *Leib* Grenadier Regiment, which took place in the regimental garrison in Frankfurt an der Oder in the spring of 1908, makes clear that these events required extensive planning and preparation by the regiment’s officers. This program included the following elements: reveille at seven o’clock in the morning performed by the regimental band; the arrival of former members of regiment and the receipt of commemorative badges at nine o’clock; a religious service shortly before ten o’clock followed by the arrival of Kaiser Wilhelm II; a parade of the active soldiers and former members of the regiment; festive meals for the veterans in local establishments and for the active soldiers in the regimental barracks at one o’clock in the afternoon; entertainment, including choral singing, gymnastics, fencing, bicycle riding, and games, in the presence of the Kaiser as well as the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and his wife in the early

⁷¹ Soden to the Württemberg foreign ministry, June 30, 1882, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 252.

evening; and, finally, individual celebrations and festive games for each of the companies of the regiment beginning at eight o'clock in the evening.⁷²

Like the celebrations that maintained the relationship between *Regimentschefts* and their regiments, these anniversaries could sometimes cause concern in Berlin. In October 1880, Carl von Dönhoff, Prussia's envoy in Dresden, wrote that the commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Saxon *Gardereiter* Regiment – a regiment that possessed “a specifically Saxon character, not entirely free of a particularistic complexion” – was unlikely to be held in the autumn. Because the king was not in the Saxon capital and therefore unable to take part in the festivities, the officers of the regiment had decided to postpone the commemoration of the anniversary until the following spring. The proposed date of the regiment's anniversary, June 14, 1881, the anniversary of the Battle of Friedland, was from the Prussian point of view problematic: although the Saxon *Gardereiter* Regiment had particularly distinguished itself at Friedland, it had done so under Napoleon's command and against the combined Prusso-Russian army. Dönhoff tried to influence the date of the *Regimentsjubiläum*. In a conversation with Saxony's war minister, he expressed his disappointment in the choice of anniversary and instead raised the possibility of the king's birthday for the festivities.⁷³ In the spring of 1881, the anniversary again became the subject of Dönhoff's reports. When he learned that the Saxon officers still intended to commemorate the *Gardereiter* regiment's founding on June 14, Dönhoff immediately complained. The anniversary, according to Fabrice, could not be held on the king's birthday – these festivities would be held shortly after Easter

⁷² “Einladung zum 100 jähr. Stiftungsfest des Leib-Grenadier-Regiments König Friedrich Wilhelm III. (1. Brandenburgischen) Nr. 8 am 6. Juni 1908 in Frankfurt a.d. Oder,” BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 10-II, file 32.

⁷³ Dönhoff's reports to Bismarck, October 27 and November 7, 1880, PA AA Berlin, R 3209.

and, since the men of the regiment would have to be given leave and therefore not be present in the barracks, a parade on the occasion could not be held. The king, the war minister concluded, would nevertheless determine the date of the commemoration.⁷⁴

Regimentsjubiläen more often contributed to the creation of a common past in the German army. On the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the 125th Württemberg Infantry Regiment in May 1909, over 15,000 former members of the regiment assembled in Stuttgart, including veterans from the Franco-Prussian War. Because so many of these veterans were no longer physically capable of marching in the ranks with their younger comrades, the regiment provided a number of wagons so that they could once more parade before the King of Württemberg.⁷⁵ In addition to expressing a connection between the former members and the regiment and the kingdom's dynasty, this anniversary, Bavaria's envoy wrote, pointed to a broader connection between the individual soldiers and the empire. Such an event was "a gratifying sign in times in which the subversive elements aspired so zealously to create antagonism between the people and the army." The seemingly endless ranks of veterans, some having served with the regiment in France and being led by their former officers, "re-established once again the bonds that embrace the former soldiers, old and young, upper and lower class, in the same way in loyalty to King and Fatherland."⁷⁶

At times, the existence of relationships between regimental colonels and regiments underscored the link between a regiment and the larger German army. On the two-hundredth

⁷⁴ Dönhoff to Bismarck, April 8, 1881, PA AA Berlin, R 3210.

⁷⁵ Karl von Below-Rutzau, Prussian envoy in Stuttgart, to Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow, May 10, 1909, PA AA Berlin, R 3385.

⁷⁶ Karl von Moy de Sons, Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, to Bavarian foreign ministry, May 10, 1909, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3067.

anniversary of the foundation of the 2nd Bavarian Infantry Regiment in June 1882, the regiment's officers participated in a religious service and hosted a festive banquet. Late in the evening, the arrival of a congratulatory telegram from Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, the regiment's colonel, was greeted with three cheers. The atmosphere in the banquet hall, the Prussian envoy wrote, recalled that during Friedrich Wilhelm's visit to Munich on the occasion of the return of the Bavarian troops to their capital in July 1871.⁷⁷ At other times, delegations from one contingent might simply be invited to participate in the regimental anniversary of a regiment from another contingent without there being any formal connections between the two units. On the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of its foundation in December 1901, the 104th Saxon Infantry Regiment, which was garrisoned in Chemnitz, hosted a delegation of Prussian Guards officers. After taking part in the festivities, the Prussians travelled to Dresden and were received in the royal palace by King Albert of Saxony and his brother, Prince Georg, dined with Prince Friedrich August and his wife, and, finally, were invited to breakfast in the officers' mess of the 108th Saxon *Schützen* Regiment. Whereas the officers of the Prussian delegation "had expressed themselves extremely pleased by the repeatedly brilliant reception," the same officers had left behind "the best impression" in Saxony.⁷⁸

Regimental anniversaries and the relationships between regimental colonels and the officers of their regiments could occasionally create anxiety in Berlin. In the view of the Prussian authorities, the decision to celebrate a regiment's foundation on the anniversary of a battle from the Napoleonic Wars or the presence of Bavarian officers in a foreign capital appeared to underscore the dangers of dual loyalties. These elements of the German army's

⁷⁷ Werthern to Bismarck, June 30, 1882, PA AA Berlin, R 2739.

⁷⁸ Dönhoff to Bülow, December 11, 1901, PA AA Berlin, R 3240.

festive culture nevertheless contributed to the creation of a common past among German soldiers and strengthened ties between the state-based contingents. Not only did the events accompanying the appointment of a regimental colonel often bring Prussians and non-Prussians together at banquets, weddings, and other events, but allegiances to Kaiser and to king coexisted side-by-side during regimental anniversaries. While Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers could thereby acknowledge that they possessed both a *Bundesfeldherr* and a *Kontingentsherr*, they were also reminded that they belonged to a larger German army.

Conclusion

Dual loyalties remained one of the defining characteristics of the German army between the Wars of Unification and the end of the First World War. Soldiers from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg swore oaths of allegiance to both the Kaiser as *Bundesfeldherr* and their own monarch as *Kontingentsherr*. They also served in their own regiments, divisions, and army corps, and were occasionally commanded by members of their own ruling houses. Precisely because the Kaiser's *Kommandogewalt* was limited in peacetime by the military conventions and treaties with the non-Prussian kingdoms, dual loyalties caused considerable anxiety in Berlin. In the view of the Kaiser's military cabinet and the Prussian war ministry, it was possible that Saxons, Württembergers, and, in particular, Bavarians might at some point be forced to decide between following the orders of the Kaiser or their own king. Even more worrying were the alleged attempts by Jews, Hanoverians, and Ultramontanes to undermine the "German-patriotic" sentiments of their comrades-in-arms in the cadet schools and officer

corps of the non-Prussian contingents. In the decades after unification, it must have appeared that the army's contingent-based structure produced far more problems than it solved.

The same dual loyalties that created fears in Berlin could also strengthen the cohesion of the German army, however. The creation of a common past among German soldiers, as in the empire more broadly, involved the integration of state-based loyalties with a common national narrative. The most durable foundation for this national narrative was victory in the Franco-Prussian War. Whereas Sedan Day never took hold in the German army for historical and technical reasons, other battles from the Wars of Unification presented more suitable festive occasions for soldiers from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg. On these occasions, soldiers could express their allegiance to both their kingdoms and the empire by celebrating events that resonated profoundly in their contingents but that had also contributed to national unity. Having sworn allegiance to the *Bundesfeldherr*, non-Prussian soldiers could likewise observe the Kaiser's birthday without betraying their loyalty to their own monarchs. At the same time, the practice of appointing ceremonial regimental colonels from Germany's ruling houses brought Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers into contact with the Kaiser and the empire's other monarchs. It also gave soldiers from the Prussian and non-Prussian contingents opportunities to interact with one another on holidays, anniversaries, and other occasions, thereby strengthening ties between the army's contingents. Festive culture in the German army was an amalgamation of state-focused and national events. By providing space for both the Kaiser and the non-Prussian kings, this culture – or cultures – reminded Bavarians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers that they had also become German soldiers in 1871.

Chapter Six

Enduring the trenches: The German army in the First World War

In the early afternoon of July 31, 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm II signed an order in the *Sternensaal* of the Berlin *Schloss* that declared an “imminent threat of war” throughout the German empire. The Kaiser’s decision to sign this order, the third of seven stages in the mobilization of the German army, had been reached only after several days of intense and, at times, heated discussions with his closest military and political advisors. The chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, supported by high-ranking officials in the Foreign Office, wished to wait for Russia’s response to the declaration of war on Serbia by Germany’s ally, Austria-Hungary. The chief of the General Staff, Helmut von Moltke the Younger, and the Prussian war minister, Erich von Falkenhayn, instead pressed for war. The military men above all feared that time was not on Germany’s side: failure to act would allow France and Russia to complete their preparations for war. The “great symphony” of the Schlieffen Plan, dependent on speed, would be derailed before its conductor, Moltke, even arrived on stage. When news reached Berlin shortly before noon that Russia’s Tsar Nicholas II had ordered mobilization, Wilhelm signed the order prepared by Falkenhayn and put an end to this “intolerable” situation.¹

The Kaiser’s order made war likely, but not inevitable. In the last days of July, active soldiers on leave with their families had already returned to their regiments, field exercises and manoeuvres had been cancelled, and the staffs of the wartime corps and divisions had begun to assemble. The declaration of an “imminent threat of war” only authorized the commanding

¹ Annika Mombauer, “A Reluctant Military Leader? Helmuth von Moltke and the July Crisis of 1914,” *War in History* 6 (1999), 417-46, especially 433-46; John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Into the Abyss of War and Exile, 1900-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1085-9.

generals of the eleven army corps stationed along the empire's eastern and western frontiers to call up the oldest age groups of the male population still eligible for military service. Even at this late stage, any measures that might be difficult to reverse, such as the purchase of horses for the artillery, cavalry, and supply trains, were, the Prussian military authorities had reminded the twenty-five army corps in January 1914, to be avoided.² Yet few in military circles still believed that peace was possible after the Kaiser's decision. General Karl von Wenninger, Bavaria's military plenipotentiary, described in his diary the jubilant scenes when he entered the Prussian war ministry on the afternoon of July 31: "glowing faces everywhere, shaking of hands in the corridors; one congratulates oneself for having taken the leap."³ This excitement was justified: only a few days later, the German empire was at war.

Research has shown that the spontaneous celebrations that followed the outbreak of war in August 1914 were confined to certain groups in German society. Crowds of students and middle-class professionals assembled in many city centres and in front of train stations, cheering the Kaiser and pinning flowers to the chests of the departing soldiers. For many young men who had been told heroic tales of the Battle of Sedan by their grandfathers and who had learned about the Franco-Prussian War in classrooms, there was an overpowering sense of adventure and the feeling of being part of an historic moment. However, in the countryside and the working-class districts of the cities, dominant emotions ranged from fear to indifference. In rural Bavaria, as Benjamin Ziemann points out, concerns about national honour fell

² Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918* (London: Arnold, 1997), 56-7. For the protocol of the meeting of the chiefs of staff of the twenty-five army corps with representatives of the Prussian General Staff and ministry of war, see Werner Knoll and Hermann Rahne, "Bedeutung und Aufgaben der Konferenz der Generalstabschefs der Armeekorps in Frankfurt a.M. am 21. Januar 1914," *Militär-geschichte* 25 (1986), 55-63.

³ Wenninger's diary entry for July 31, 1914, printed in Schulte, "Neue Dokumente zu Kriegsausbruch und Kriegsverlauf 1914," 139-40.

completely by the wayside as men worried about the upcoming harvest and women and children tearfully said farewell – often for the last time – to brothers, husbands, and sons.⁴ Even the Kaiser understood that Germany was deeply divided along geographic, political, and religious lines. Wilhelm’s speech from the throne on August 4, in which he famously declared “I know no more parties, I know only Germans,” attempted to bridge divides that might eventually erode popular support for the war.⁵ These and other attempts ultimately came up short. In the final weeks of the war, Carl-Georg von Treutler, the Prussian envoy in Munich, wrote that discouraging news from the front had made a deep impression on the inhabitants of Bavaria. There was a noticeable “ill-disposition towards the North” in South Germany and Treutler daily heard complaints about the “outbreaks of hatred” that Prussians experienced on the trains and in the streets. The seemingly endless casualty lists and the shortages of food caused by the Allied blockade had, after four years of war, rekindled old antagonisms between Prussia and the rest of the empire. Although unhappy with the wartime behavior of their own sovereign, King Ludwig III, many Bavarians, according to Treutler, held the Kaiser and the Prussian-dominated Supreme Command responsible for the current “serious situation.”⁶

Alongside efforts to better understand the impact of the First World War on German society, historians have begun to explore the experiences of the army’s ethnic minorities on

⁴ For an analysis of the “August experiences,” see Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially 58-114. Benjamin Ziemann has examined the reactions of the rural population of Bavaria to the outbreak of the war. Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany*, 15-27. For the responses of German Catholics to the First World War more generally, see Patrick J. Houlihan, *Catholicism and the Great War: Religion and Everyday Life in Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵ Kaiser Wilhelm II’s speech from the throne, August 4, 1914, *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstages*, XIII. Legislatur Periode, Eröffnungssitzung (Berlin: 1914/16), 306:1-2.

⁶ Carl-Georg von Treutler, Prussian envoy in Munich, to Chancellor Georg von Hertling, October 4, 1918, PA AA Berlin, R 2509.

the battlefield. In peacetime, the military authorities in Berlin had been uncertain that these men would remain loyal to the Kaiser. During the war, and as defeats at the front mounted, suspicion of the army's non-German soldiers increased. Beginning in 1915, Alsatians were transferred to the Eastern Front and Poles were dispersed among ethnically German units. As the war continued, officers expressed doubts about the loyalty of the army's small number of Danish-speaking soldiers.⁷ The Supreme Command's treatment of these minorities during the war proved counterproductive. Growing resentment created by restrictions on home leave, censorship of letters, and discriminatory transfer policies convinced many Alsatians, Danes, and Poles who otherwise might have loyally served the Kaiser to surrender to the enemy.⁸ Fears of a potential fifth column eventually also impacted military effectiveness. One week after the armistice, General Max Hoffmann, chief of staff of German forces on the Eastern Front, seethed at the Supreme Command's instructions to withdraw as slowly and orderly as possible from Russia. This was entirely unrealistic: the troops in the East consisted only of the "oldest age groups," who longed to return home, and "masses of Alsace-Lorrainers."⁹

The dual loyalties among ethnic German soldiers also presented a problem for the military authorities during the First World War. In the summer of 1914, Bavarians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers marched off to the battlefield in self-contained formations and, for the most part, under the command of their own officers. In some cases, they were led by members of their own ruling houses. The scope and intensity of the conflict placed enormous

⁷ Christensen, "Fighting for the Kaiser," 267-82; Kramer, "*Wackes* at war," 105-21; Watson, "Fighting for Another Fatherland," 1137-66.

⁸ Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten*, 252-84; Ziemann, "Fahnenflucht im deutschen Heer," 121-9.

⁹ Hoffmann's diary entry for November 19, 1918, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Generalmajors Max Hoffmann*, ed. Karl Friedrich Nowak (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1929), 1:219.

strain on the army's peacetime organization. Having taken operational control of the entire German army, the Supreme Command – as the General Staff became known during the war – was forced to replace massive casualties and respond to rapidly developing situations on geographically distant fronts. As a result, individual soldiers and entire regiments were often transferred from one contingent to another. However, there were limits to the integration of Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers into the Prussian military structure, even in wartime. Confronted with a sustained campaign from the non-Prussian governments and their military representatives at General Headquarters, and concerned about the morale of the soldiers in the trenches, the deputy chief of the Supreme Command, General Erich Ludendorff, ended the “mixing” of the contingents in late 1916 and undertook a large-scale reorganization of the German units at the front. Ludendorff's change of course revealed the continued importance of compromise in Germany's military affairs. Even at the height of an industrial war, the Prussian military authorities refused to destroy a military structure that strengthened the monarchical foundations of the empire and thereby served both Prussian and non-Prussian interests. It could not prevent complete collapse in the fall of 1918, but the German army's contingent-based structure proved remarkably durable throughout the First World War.

Under the Kaiser's command: Prussians and non-Prussians at the front

German mobilization, which began on the morning of August 2, had been painstakingly planned by the Prussian General Staff in Berlin. Once mobilization was announced, hundreds of thousands of reservists who had completed their active service and, after returning to civilian

life, had undergone periodic training were required to make these units combat-ready. At the same time, small cadres of active officers were assigned to additional formations created only after the outbreak of war: these consisted mainly of reservists and the younger cohorts of the *Landwehr*. In total, almost four million men were mobilized in the summer of 1914.¹⁰ Once these men had been assembled in their garrisons, the carefully prepared “military travel plan” went into effect. Civilian traffic was suspended on specific transportation routes and, over the fourteen days needed for this deployment, trains, each consisting of fifty-four wagons, passed along these routes approximately every ten minutes carrying men and horses to the empire’s eastern and western borders. Already in peacetime, the timetable had been worked out to the last detail. Units were allowed brief stops at specific stations where warm food, coffee, and water were provided, and a network of officers ensured the progress of the transports and reported any problems to Berlin. In its planning, the General Staff’s railway section tried to consider every eventuality. On the evening of August 1, Wilhelm Groener, the section’s chief, assured his subordinates that everything would proceed smoothly. He asked not to be troubled with minor details in the following days. When one officer asked whether he should be notified if one of the bridges over the Rhine River were destroyed by the French, Groener responded: “that’s not necessary, all arrangements have been made for that.”¹¹

Even though the Kaiser became the commander-in-chief of the entire German army immediately upon the declaration of war, the German army remained first and foremost a

¹⁰ Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:329-38.

¹¹ Groener, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 143. For the work of the Prussian General Staff’s railway section, see Buchholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian War Planning*, 287-307.

Table 10 – Mobilization of the German army, August 1914¹²

| | Prussia | Bavaria | Saxony | Württemberg | Total |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------|-------------|-----------|
| Army corps | 19 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 25 |
| Reserve corps | 12 | 1 | 1 | - | 14 |
| | | | | | |
| Divisions | 39 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 51 |
| Reserve divisions | 26 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 31 |
| Cavalry divisions | 10 | 1 | - | - | 11 |
| | | | | | |
| Officers | 103,772 | 12,828 | 8,630 | 4,524 | 129,754 |
| Other ranks | 2,864,082 | 408,779 | 274,923 | 154,912 | 3,702,696 |
| Total mobilized strength | 2,967,854 | 421,607 | 283,553 | 159,436 | 3,832,450 |
| | | | | | |
| % of total mobilized strength | 77.4 | 11.0 | 7.4 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| | | | | | |

¹² Hermann Cron, *Geschichte des Deutschen Heeres im Weltkriege 1914-1918* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1990), 329-47; Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee*, 4:329-30.

collection of state-based contingents. Among the most conspicuous reminders of this decentralized structure was the presence of the military plenipotentiaries from the non-Prussian kingdoms at the Kaiser's General Headquarters. According to an agreement with Prussia, Bavaria's military plenipotentiary would accompany the Prussian war minister into the field. However, nothing had been agreed with the Saxons and Württembergers. As a result, in 1912, the ministries of war in Dresden and Stuttgart had sought approval from the director of the central department in the Prussian ministry of war, General Rudolph von Wachs, for the appointment of wartime representatives for their kingdoms. A Bavarian, it was argued, could not be the only non-Prussian representative with the field armies. Wachs was above all concerned about that the size of the Kaiser's headquarters. If anything, he argued, the number of staff officers should be reduced. In the summer of 1914, the Saxon and Württemberg military plenipotentiaries – working hand-in-hand – were able to gain Prussian approval for their own appointment to the General Headquarters.¹³ This was especially important for the Württembergers. The Bebenhausen Convention of 1893 placed personnel decisions in the hands of the Kaiser's military cabinet. It was therefore in the kingdom's interests to maintain a direct line of communication between General Headquarters and Stuttgart.¹⁴

In August 1914, the Saxon and Württemberg military plenipotentiaries – General Traugott Leuckart von Weißdorf and General Friedrich von Graevenitz – followed Kaiser Wilhelm II's headquarters to the front. They were accompanied by a Bavarian representative,

¹³ General Friedrich von Graevenitz, Württemberg military plenipotentiary in Berlin, to the Württemberg ministry of war, July 30, 1914, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/4, file 1526; Report of General Traugott Leuckart von Weißdorf, Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin, August 1, 1914, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 76. See also Walker, "Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire," 125.

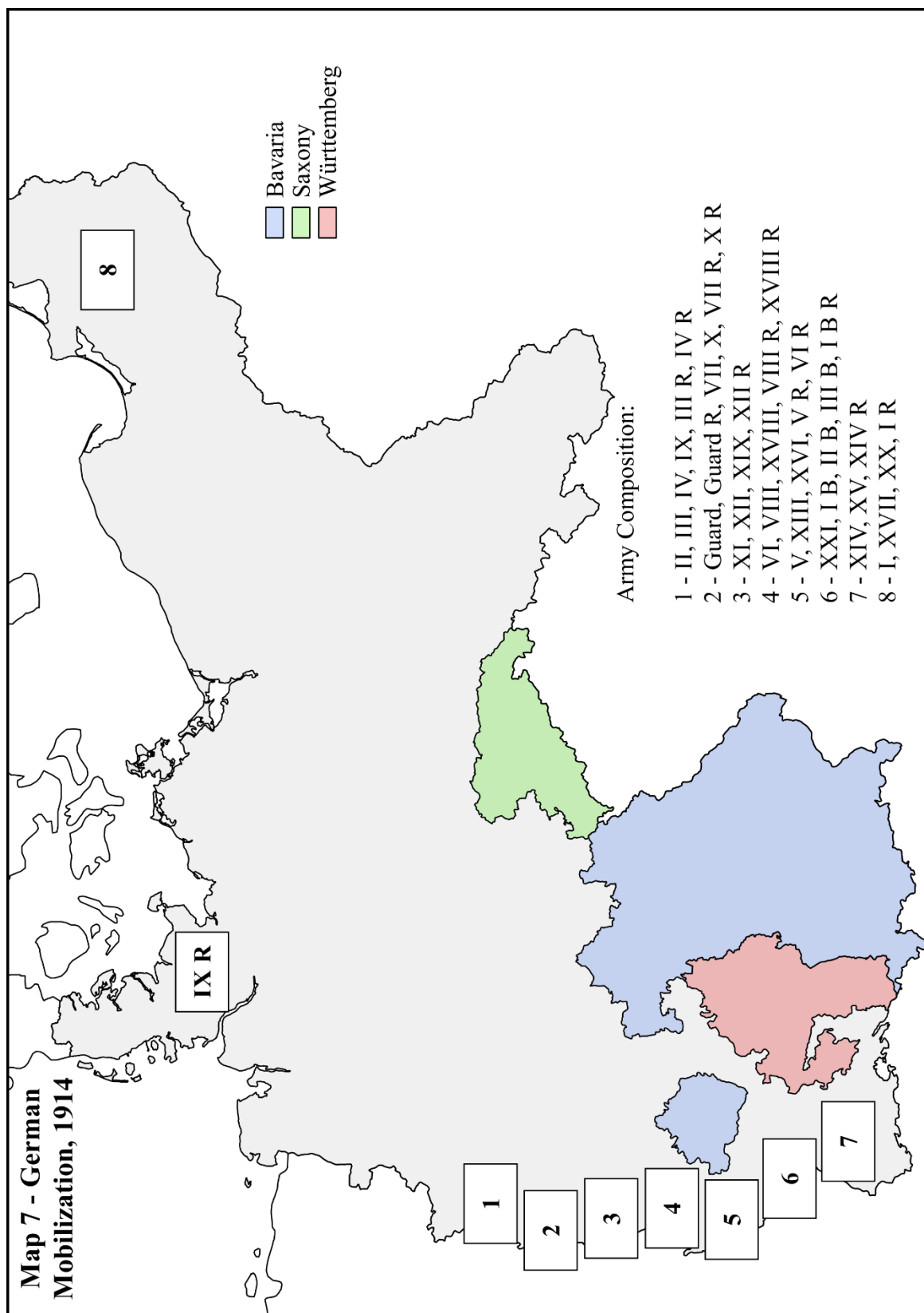
¹⁴ Draft of the Württemberg ministry of war's request for the attachment of its military plenipotentiary to the mobile staff of the Prussian ministry of war, August 1, 1914, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/4, file 1526.

General Karl von Wenninger.¹⁵ Throughout the rest of the war, these officers functioned as intermediaries between the Supreme Command and the war ministries in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart. Their activities fell into two categories. On the one hand, these officers were responsible for providing accurate and up-to-date information to their superiors about operations at the front and, more importantly, about the activities of the units from their respective contingents. Although officers of the Supreme Command regularly briefed the military plenipotentiaries, this information was for the most part gathered during frequent visits to the front and through conversations with high-ranking Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg officers. On the other hand, the military plenipotentiaries were expected to represent the interests of the men from their contingents, their ministries of war, and their monarchs against any and all Prussian encroachments. Although they did not possess the authority to offer advice on the deployment and use of units, they routinely voiced their concerns to the chief of the Supreme Command. As before the war, these officers received instructions from their war ministers, but they were also expected to perform their duties independently by demonstrating initiative and the ability to cultivate reliable contacts among Prussian officers.¹⁶

In carrying out their duties, the military plenipotentiaries were faced with numerous obstacles. Foremost among these was access to information. Some Prussian officers, fearing that sensitive information might find its way to the public, were reluctant to pass on details

¹⁵ For the composition and movements of General Headquarters, see Walther Hubatsch, "Großes Hauptquartier 1914/18. Zur Geschichte einer deutschen Führungsinstitution," *Ostdeutsche Wissenschaft* 5 (1958), 423-35.

¹⁶ Frederick F. Campbell, "The Bavarian Army," 258-62; Walker, "Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire," 125-6. For a description of the activities of the Württemberg military plenipotentiary, see the postwar reports of Graevenitz, April 1919, and his successor, Colonel Max Holland, April 6, 1919, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 245.



about developments at the front or future operations. Others gave the military plenipotentiaries only out-of-date information.¹⁷ At the same time, the Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg officers at General Headquarters were often treated as outsiders by their Prussian comrades, especially following defeats. In early September 1914 and following the failure of Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria's Sixth Army to break through the French forts around Nancy, Wenninger noted the change in attitude among Prussian staff officers: "the first week in the new headquarters was for me, as the only Bavarian, as unpleasant as the weeks in Koblenz were delightful – the thermometer rises and falls with the operational performance of our army!"¹⁸ As the war progressed, the military plenipotentiaries also complained that they were being bypassed, even by members of their own contingents. In early 1916, Bavaria's military plenipotentiary learned that Bavarian officers and officials were at General Headquarters only by coincidence. Without knowing in advance that the government in Munich intended to send Bavarians to the front, he complained that it was impossible for him to perform his duties. He therefore requested that all Bavarian personnel report directly to him.¹⁹

The decentralized structure of the German army made itself felt in other ways. Beginning in the autumn of 1914, the monarchs of the non-Prussian kingdoms undertook visits to the front. These visits were conducted for two reasons. First, they allowed King Ludwig III

¹⁷ Campbell, "The Bavarian Army," 262-3. See also Wenninger's diary entries for late August and early September, 1914, in Schulte, "Neue Dokumente zu Kriegsausbruch und Kriegsverlauf 1914," 151-62. On August 31, the Bavarian military plenipotentiary complained to Falkenhayn about the scarcity of information. In response, the Prussian minister of war pointed out that not even the Kaiser was provided with accurate information: "he doesn't learn more than the diplomats and the members of his entourage, mainly the number of prisoners, artillery, etc." The Kaiser, he continued, learns "nothing about what is in the works, but rather only what has happened and only the positive."

¹⁸ Letter from September 6, 1914, in Schulte, "Neue Dokumente zu Kriegsausbruch und Kriegsverlauf," 168.

¹⁹ General Karl Nagel zu Aichberg, Bavarian military plenipotentiary at General Headquarters, to the Bavarian ministry of war, March 15, 1916, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 29.

of Bavaria, King Friedrich August III of Saxony, and King Wilhelm II of Württemberg to perform their roles as *Kontingentsherren* in front of their troops. Because their journeys to the front received extensive coverage in the newspapers, they also served to enhance the reputations of the monarchs' ruling houses at home. Second, their presence at General Headquarters enabled them to maintain contact with the Kaiser and the Supreme Command and thereby exert a degree of influence on the war effort. As a result, these visits often had crowded itineraries.²⁰ The trip of King Wilhelm II of Württemberg to the Western Front in early 1916 provides a good example. On the evening of January 29, the king, accompanied by the Württemberg war minister, left Stuttgart for northeast France. Over the next five days, he met with high-ranking Prussian officers, the Bavarian crown prince, and the commanders of the army corps and divisions in which Württembergers were serving. Wilhelm's nephew and heir, Duke Albrecht of Württemberg, at the time commanding the Fourth Army in Flanders, even provided a tour of the battlefield around Ypres. At almost every stop along the way, the king conducted inspections of Württemberg units, lunched and dined with Württemberg officers, and visited wounded Württembergers in their hospital beds. After this whirlwind tour of the front, Wilhelm and his entourage returned to Stuttgart on the morning of February 4.²¹

Throughout the war, the Kaiser and the non-Prussian monarchs also took their roles as ceremonial regimental colonels seriously. As late as the spring of 1918, when the German armies were desperately seeking to end the war before the full weight of American manpower

²⁰ King Ludwig III of Bavaria's visits to the front and their practical and symbolic importance are discussed in detail by Stefan März, *Das Haus Wittelsbach im Ersten Weltkrieg. Chance und Zusammenbruch monarchischer Herrschaft* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2013), 248-58.

²¹ Report of the King Wilhelm II of Württemberg's ninth visit to the front, which took place between January 29 and February 4, 1916, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/3, file 488. This file contains the reports of all fourteen visits by Wilhelm II to the front during the war. The first of these visits took place in mid-September 1914 and the last at the end of January 1918.

could be felt on the Western Front, Ludwig III of Bavaria visited the headquarters of both the Kaiser and the Bavarian crown prince, carefully setting aside time to renew acquaintances with the officers of his Saxon and Württemberg regiments in the nearby sectors of the front.²² As in peacetime, the dedication which the non-Prussian monarchs gave to these relationships reflected their eagerness to portray themselves as *Kontingentsherren*. Often, considerable sums were dedicated for this purpose. In November 1914, the Bavarian monarch announced that he intended to distribute Christmas gifts to the Prussian, Saxon, and Württemberg regiments that bore his name. In total, 67,000 Marks had been set aside for this purpose. Although some suggested that Saxon King Friedrich August III, himself the colonel of Bavarian and Württemberg regiments, should do the same, both the king and the Saxon ministry of war disagreed. Because of the war, the funds were simply not available.²³ Such frugality did not deter Ludwig III of Bavaria. In late December 1915, over 3,000 tobacco pipes made from Nymphenburg porcelain and bearing a relief of the Bavarian monarch arrived for the soldiers of one Saxon regiment. Another 28,000 pipes – valued at 60,000 Marks – had simultaneously been sent to Austro-Hungarians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers serving elsewhere.²⁴

Studying the war experience of regiments, Wencke Meteling argues, reveals the ways in which the French and German armies responded to the enormous casualties and tactical

²² Karl Moser von Filsek, Württemberg envoy in Munich, to the Württemberg minister-president, Carl von Weizsäcker, May 9, 1918, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand E 50/05, file 238.

²³ Reports of the Saxon envoy in Munich, Robert von Stieglitz, November 23, 1914 and November 30, 1914, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10722, file 131. Response of the Saxon foreign minister, Christoph Vitzthum von Eckstädt, December 5, 1914, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10722, file 131. In place of gifts, Friedrich August III intended to hand out Saxon decorations to his non-Saxon regiments at the front.

²⁴ Leuckart to the Saxon ministry of war, December 23, 1915, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 78. The gifts were also distributed to Bavarians serving in the marines and aboard the German battleships *Wittelsbach* and *Prinzregent Luitpold*.

challenges of industrial warfare.²⁵ It can also cast light on the resilience of the army's festive culture. German soldiers continued to observe regimental anniversaries during the war. Despite the unpredictability of events at the front and the shortages of goods behind the lines, these events often closely mirrored peacetime celebrations. The frequency of these celebrations at the front created concern as the war progressed, resulting in attempts to limit their scope. In January 1916, the King of Württemberg approved a proposal from one infantry regiment to postpone the commemoration of its anniversary until after the war. Despite having been informed of the king's decision, another Württemberg regiment, whose officers "placed particular value on celebrating the anniversary even during the war," sought official approval for the celebration of its own anniversary at the front. Although this request was granted, King Wilhelm II sought to avoid similar events for the remainder of the war. In September 1916, the Württemberg war ministry reminded all units that the seriousness of the situation meant that deputations from regiments bearing the king's name could not be received in Stuttgart and that the otherwise obligatory congratulatory telegrams had to cease.²⁶

Friedrich August III's reluctance to distribute Christmas gifts to non-Saxon regiments and Wilhelm II's desire to prevent unnecessary railroad and telegraph traffic reveal that some of the army's peacetime practices were questioned during the First World War. This was

²⁵ Wencke Meteling, "German and French Regiments on the Western Front, 1914-1918," in *Untold War: New Perspectives in First World War Studies*, edited by Heather Jones, Jennifer O'Brien, and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 23-61.

²⁶ For Wilhelm II's decision to approve the wartime festivities, see the 121st Infantry Regiment to the 51st Infantry Brigade, January 16, 1916 and February 9, 1916, and Marchtaler to the XIII Army Corps, February 18, 1916, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 33/2, file 635. Only a few days before, the king had approved the postponement of another regiment's anniversary celebrations until after the war. See the Württemberg ministry of war to the 126th Infantry Regiment, January 13, 1916, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 33/2, file 635. The king's wish to limit wartime festivities was communicated to Marchtaler only much later. See General Gustav von Starkloff, Wilhelm II's adjutant general, to the Württemberg ministry of war, September 14, 1916, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 33/2, file 635.

especially true of unit designations. The expansion of the peacetime army during mobilization and the creation of additional formations in the subsequent months had been undertaken rapidly and, in some cases, with little or no concern for the existence of units with similar designations in other contingents. As the Saxon and Württemberg ministries of war complained in the spring of 1916, some units had received distinctive prefixes or numbers, but many had not. The result was administrative chaos. Because the ministries of war were unaware whether or not units from their contingents were serving with a particular formation or on a particular sector of the front, orders were delayed, casualty lists were delivered to the incorrect authorities, and supplies arrived at railheads far-removed from their intended recipients. Even the delivery of mail to soldiers in the trenches and the work of the Red Cross behind the lines were hampered. In the spring and summer of 1916, the ministries of war and their subordinates therefore sought to re-establish a uniform system of unit designations for official correspondence.²⁷ These efforts were only partially successful. In late 1917, the Prussian war ministry complained that several new units had recently received identical numerical designations.²⁸

Confusion and delays also arose because of the distinctive uniform designs and badges worn by non-Prussian soldiers. Here, the rights of the *Kontingentsherren* came into conflict with the pressures for greater cohesion of the German army in wartime. When new uniform regulations were introduced in Prussia in the autumn of 1915, King Ludwig III of Bavaria

²⁷ Order of the Württemberg ministry of war, "Kenntlichmachung württembergischer Truppenteile in Aufschriften usw.," May 19, 1916, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/11, file 347; an identical order of the Saxon ministry of war, May 30, 1916, thereafter forwarded to the Württemberg ministry of war, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 77/1, file 191. For efforts to establish a uniform system of unit designations for the four contingents, see the deputy commanding general of the III Bavarian Army Corps to the Württemberg ministry of war, July 3, 1916, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/11, file 347.

²⁸ Württemberg ministry of war to the deputy commanding general of the XIII Army Corps, March 23, 1917, with the complaint of the director of the General War Department in the Prussian ministry of war, General Ernst von Wrisberg, February 5, 1917, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 77/1, file 185.

strongly opposed the changes. The king, according to the Prussian envoy in Munich, regretted “the disappearance of the wonderful old uniforms” and delayed the introduction of the new uniforms based on the Prussian design for a considerable time while he considered which elements of the older Bavarian uniforms should be carried over to the new ones. The Bavarian minister of war, General Otto Kress von Kressenstein, clearly disagreed and even considered submitting his resignation over the issue. The king eventually relented and the new uniforms were introduced.²⁹ The issue reared its head again in the last year of the war. When Kaiser Wilhelm II issued a cabinet order introducing a new badge for soldiers who had served in the trenches, it was the Bavarian war ministry that raised objections this time. The federal treaty of November 1870 granted the king of Bavaria the authority to approve or reject changes to the insignia and uniforms of his contingent. Because the badge would be distributed to Bavarians, the war ministry expected to be consulted before its introduction.³⁰

The army’s federal structure not only created confusion, but also distrust and suspicion. This was evident in the first months of the war. In the autumn of 1914, General Max von Hausen, the Saxon commander of the Third Army at the beginning of the war, had taken extended sick leave. After several months, Hausen returned to full health. Yet, because his repeated requests for a return to active service were ignored by the Kaiser’s military cabinet,

²⁹ Report of the Prussian legation in Munich, April 7, 1916, PA AA Berlin, R 2760. For the reaction of the Bavarian minister of war to the king’s opposition, see Karl Demeter, “Otto von Kress als bayerischer Kriegsminister,” *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte* 6 (1933), 106-7. As a result of these and other disagreements, the relationship between Ludwig III and Kress deteriorated and, in December 1916, the minister of war submitted his resignation and was replaced by General Philipp von Hellingrath. Mindful that this ministerial change might have a negative impact on public opinion, Ludwig III appointed Kress as the ceremonial colonel of the 6th Bavarian Cheavulegers Regiment following his resignation. See the cabinet order of King Ludwig III of Bavaria, December 7, 1916, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 2679.

³⁰ Departmental circular of the Bavarian ministry of war, March 14, 1918, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 90. See also the instructions to the Bavarian military plenipotentiary, March 11, 1918, March 13, 1918, and March 15, 1918, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 90.

Hausen became a staunch critic of Prussian personnel decisions.³¹ In April 1916, the promotion of a Saxon general to command of an army had, one observer noted, “removed the heartache” of Hausen’s absence from the front.³² Others believed that non-Prussians were consistently passed over for high-commands. General Otto von Moser, a Württemberger, complained that his Prussian superior would never think to recommend a non-Prussian for high command or staff positions.³³ In the summer of 1915, Moser, now commanding a division on the Eastern Front, questioned the ability of Prussians generals to successfully prosecute the war. Moser’s division had been involved in intense fighting and, as a result, had suffered severe losses. At the end of July, it was at just over half strength. In order to keep the men moving forward, his Prussian superior had ordered Moser to punish stragglers. Not only was Moser unwilling to do so – his division had spent twenty days in the trenches during which his soldiers had been given only cold canned food to eat – he also condemned his Prussian superiors for having no sense of the strategic situation. Their orders, Moser wrote, were instead motivated only by the single thought: “to everywhere and as strongly as possible seize the Russian bull by the horns.”³⁴

In the view of many outside Prussia, personnel problems were not the only evidence of Prussian arrogance. As the war progressed, the Supreme Command seemed to be less and less concerned about the wishes of the non-Prussian kingdoms. In mid-1916, the Saxon military plenipotentiary, Leuckart von Weißdorf, expressed frustration. The Saxon war minister had recently ordered Leuckart to approach the Supreme Command with a request directly from the

³¹ Hoffmann, “Die sächsische Armee im Deutschen Reich,” 322-5.

³² Ulrich von Schwerin to Bethmann Hollweg, April 22, 1916, PA AA Berlin, R 3240.

³³ Moser to Graevenitz, February 19, 1915, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 660/095, file 22.

³⁴ Moser, commander of the 107th Division, to the adjutant of the Württemberg minister of war, July 23, 1915, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 660/027, file 8. Moser’s division was so understrength in the summer of 1915 that he estimated it contained more horses than front-line soldiers.

King of Saxony. Friedrich August III had become disappointed with the wartime role of the Saxon troops. Since the opening months of the war, when they had advanced through Belgium and into northeastern France as part of the right wing of the German armies, the Saxons on the Western Front had largely been confined to the defensive. In the king's opinion, at least one large Saxon formation – preferably, the XII Army Corps – could be transferred from France to the East, where it would have a better chance of taking part in offensive operations. This request clearly irritated the Prussians. After insisting that such a decision could only be made by the chief of the Supreme Command, General Erich von Falkenhayn, one Prussian general rather tersely advised Leuckart to offer a tour in the trenches to any member of the king's entourage who disapproved of the Saxons' current assignment. Despite this setback, Leuckart persisted. In a conversation with Falkenhayn a few days later, he again suggested that the XII Army Corps could be sent to the East. Leuckart was no more successful on this occasion than he had been earlier. One last attempt to gain the support of the Kaiser for Friedrich August's request was brushed aside with a joke.³⁵ The XII Army Corps remained in the West.

It required only a short mental leap for the commanders and representatives of the non-Prussian kingdoms to conclude that Prussian officers did not have the best interests of their comrades in mind. In September 1914, Graevenitz, the Württemberg military plenipotentiary at General Headquarters, felt compelled to explore this issue. During the first weeks of the war, rumours had reached him that General Max von Fabeck, the Prussian commander of the XIII Army Corps, had repeatedly ordered frontal attacks against enemy positions without adequate

³⁵ General Horst Edler von der Planitz, commander of the XII Army Corps, to the Saxon ministry of war, July 2, 1916, with the commander of the Seventh Army's report to Falkenhayn, June 24, 1916; Leuckart's report to the Saxon ministry of war, June 29, 1916, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 71.

artillery support. The lives of Württembergers, according to these rumours, had been thrown away by a Prussian general. Graevenitz was determined to uncover the truth. After three visits to the front failed to produce any evidence of Prussian callousness, he felt confident enough to dismiss the accusations. Nevertheless, in conversation with several Württemberg officers, Graevenitz had learned that Fabeck's uncompromising attitude and penchant for criticism had severely damaged morale among his subordinates. Over the following months, he used his connections at the Supreme Command and in Kaiser Wilhelm II's entourage in order to bring about a change in command. In the spring of 1915, Fabeck was reassigned.³⁶

As the war progressed, Württembergers became less and less confident that their Prussian comrades had their best interests – and safety – at heart. When, in the spring of 1916, Graevenitz learned that a regiment of the 2nd Landwehr Division – a formation that was largely recruited in Württemberg – had suffered numerous cases of typhus, he visited this unit's trenches around Verdun. Graevenitz tried repeatedly to convince the Prussian commander to withdraw the Württembergers from the front. When this was unsuccessful, he requested assistance from Stuttgart. The minister of war could only provide a temporary relief; a few days later, ten thousand bottles of wine were despatched to the division.³⁷ In his postwar report, Colonel Max Holland, who had served as Württemberg's military plenipotentiary in the summer and autumn of 1918, wrote that soon after assuming his responsibilities he had become

³⁶ Graevenitz's postwar report, written in April 1919, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 245. Already in peacetime, Fabeck had earned the nickname "the cross of the South" in Württemberg's military circles and had quarrelled intensely with the minister of war in Stuttgart over the division of authority between the commander of the XIII Army Corps and Württemberg's military administration. See Walker, "Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire," 114-23.

³⁷ Graevenitz's report to Württemberg's ministry of war, April 11, 1916, with Marchtaler's marginal comments concerning the shipment of wine to the 2nd Landwehr Division, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 74. Graevenitz's efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Württembergers are also mentioned in his postwar report, which was written in April 1919, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 245.

aware that Württembergers were treated differently by the Supreme Command. Over the course of the war, Württemberg units had suffered higher losses and had still performed much better than troops from Bavaria, Prussia, and Saxony. Their reward? As the Western Front collapsed following the failure of the spring offensives in 1918, the Württembergers, according to Holland, were constantly deployed in the most threatened sectors and only rarely received rest behind the lines. In the final months of the war, Holland repeatedly raised the issue with Ludendorff, stressing that Württemberg units required more frequent and extended periods of rest than their comrades if they were not to be completely burnt out.³⁸

Even more galling were perceived attempts by the Prussian-dominated Supreme Command to diminish the accomplishments of the other contingents. This practice had become apparent to the Saxon envoy in Munich, Robert von Stieglitz, by mid-1915. In the preceding months, several South German newspapers had published articles detailing the heroic exploits of Bavarians and Prussians at the front. By contrast, Saxon regiments were not clearly identified in many articles and Saxon newspapers had failed to adopt some of the same features – such as the so-called *Ehrentafel* – which were common in South Germany. Stieglitz was convinced that more was at stake than simply bad press. The belief that Saxony had not made the same sacrifices as the rest of the empire could seriously harm the war aims of Saxony's monarch and the political influence of the kingdom after the war.³⁹ Those closer to the front attributed more malevolence to the lack of recognition for Saxon achievements. At the height

³⁸ Colonel Max Holland's postwar report, April 6, 1919, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 245.

³⁹ Stieglitz's reports to the Saxon foreign ministry, June 26, 1915, July 8, 1915, July 20, 1915, and August 15, 1915, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 10722, file 126. The Saxon envoy sent numerous examples of South German newspaper articles in which Saxon regiments had either not been identified or erroneously designated as Prussian. It was self-evident, according to him, that a reader in Saxony would recognize a particular regiment as Saxon. The same could not be said of readers in the rest of the empire.

of the Somme battles in 1916, the Saxon military plenipotentiary, Leuckart von Weißdorf, reported that Saxons had taken part in a recent counterattack, but only the neighbouring Prussians had been mentioned in the official report, or *Heeresbericht*. During a subsequent visit to the Supreme Command, Leuckart pointed out this omission to a number of Prussian officers. When, only a few days later, Saxon troops were again overlooked in a *Heeresbericht*, Leuckart not only registered a complaint, but asked several officers at the front to go out of their way to praise Saxon efforts in their reports.⁴⁰ In the view of many, two years of having fought side-by-side in the trenches had done little to convince the Prussian officers of the Supreme Command that their non-Prussian comrades were doing their bit for the empire.

New problems: The “mixing” of the state-based contingents, 1914-16

Complaints of discrimination against non-Prussian officers by the Kaiser’s military cabinet, the perceived lack of recognition for the contributions of the three smaller contingents, and apparent displays of callousness towards soldiers from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg were, in some cases, justified. In other cases, traditional South German stereotypes of Prussians, personal grievances, and frustration at the course of the war combined to create friction between General Headquarters and the empire’s ministries of war. Much more frequently though, the Supreme Command’s deployment and replacement practices strained relations between the state-based contingents, especially during the first half of the war. Beginning in the autumn of 1914, many of the peacetime army’s formations were broken up

⁴⁰ Leuckart to the Saxon ministry of war, July 25, 1916, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 54.

and their component units transferred to wherever they were most urgently needed. Over the following winter, the German army also underwent a large-scale reorganization as new divisions were assembled from a combination of wartime volunteers and active and reserve units with combat experience. Finally, the enormous casualties of the opening months of the war meant that trained replacements need to be integrated into existing regiments, battalions, and companies as quickly as possible and on a scale unforeseen in peacetime. None of these measures could have been accomplished with strict adherence to the military conventions and treaties with the non-Prussian kingdoms. As a result, they provoked severe criticism from the military authorities in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart who were concerned that the war would lead to greater centralization of the army. Although it was generally acknowledged outside Prussia that compromises were unavoidable, and despite the efforts of the Supreme Command to mitigate the impact of its deployment and replacement practices on the army's federal structure, the "mixing" of the state-based contingents became increasingly contentious.

The German army's losses between August and December 1914 were among the heaviest of the entire war. In these five months, German casualties numbered approximately 800,000 men. Of these, 116,000 were killed, or almost three times as many as during the entire Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.⁴¹ Unsurprisingly, the right flank of the German armies that invaded Belgium and France at the beginning of the war and were heavily engaged during the Battle of the Marne had suffered terrible losses. At the end of September, Leuckart forwarded summaries of the combat strengths of units from the XII and XIX Army Corps to the Saxon ministry of war. These two formations – together comprising almost the entire peacetime

⁴¹ Herwig, *The First World War*, 119. The Prusso-German armies had suffered 45,000 men killed in 1870-71.

contingent of the Saxon kingdom – had been assigned to the Third Army during mobilization and had been decimated in the first few weeks of fighting. Whereas an infantry regiment in wartime consisted of over three thousand men, only three of the eight regiments of the XII Army Corps possessed more than a third of that strength. In fact, the 178th Infantry Regiment could muster fewer than four hundred officers and men. By comparison, the XIX Army Corps had suffered fewer casualties. However, even in this formation, half of the infantry regiments were at or below fifty percent of their mobilized strength by the second half of September.⁴² The massive losses of the Saxon contingent did not go unnoticed at General Headquarters. In October, Graevenitz, the Württemberg military plenipotentiary, reported a conversation with Leuckart to his superiors in Stuttgart. On a recent visit to the front, his Saxon counterpart had come across an infantry regiment from the XII Army Corps commanded by a staff officer and with a *Landwehr* officer and two officers from other regiments as its three battalion commanders. Not a single active officer remained with the regiment.⁴³

Following mobilization, there were still approximately two million trained reservists who had not been assigned to either the field armies or rear area commands. In addition, three million men had not received any training in peacetime but were still eligible for military service. As Groener noted in August 1914, the problem in the war's early stages was not so

⁴² Leuckart to the Saxon ministry of war, September 26, 1914, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 76. The military plenipotentiary provided updated combat strengths for Saxon units at the beginning of October. Between September 21 and October 1, the arrival of replacements had made good some of the losses in the XII Army Corps, though seven of its eight infantry regiments were still below half strength. The XII Reserve Corps, which had been formed from Saxon reservists during mobilization, had lost a total of 263 officers and 9,990 men killed, wounded, or missing since the beginning of the war. Leuckart to the Saxon ministry of war, October 6, 1914, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 76.

⁴³ Graevenitz's report to the Württemberg war ministry, October 10, 1914, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 56. According to Graevenitz, one Prussian officer had also recently remarked that a West Prussian regiment from the II Army Corps was so understrength that it had been consolidated into a single company.

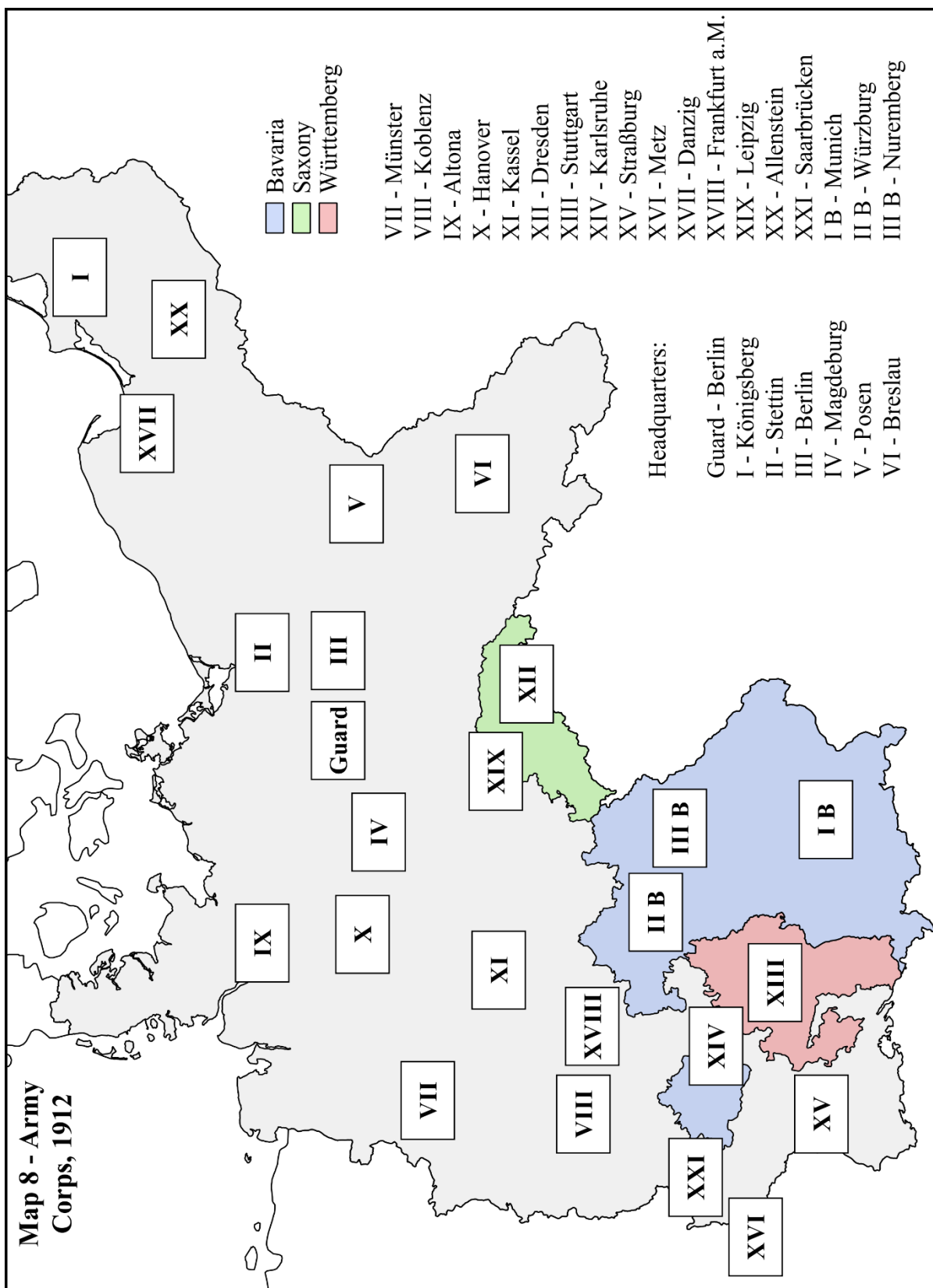
much a lack of recruits, but rather their arming and clothing. Experienced officers were also in short supply.⁴⁴ These problems were only made worse by the decision to create new wartime formations. Just two weeks after mobilization, Falkenhayn, as Prussian war minister, ordered the formation of five new Prussian reserve corps. These, as well as a mixed Saxon-Württemberg corps – the XXVII Reserve Corps – and a Bavarian reserve division, consisted of activated reservists and partially trained wartime volunteers. Over the following winter, four additional Prussian reserve corps and a Bavarian reserve division were formed from newly trained recruits. The transition from a war of movement to trench warfare at the same time required new technical units, such as artillery and pioneer battalions, supply columns, and machine-gun and trench mortar companies, which placed greater demands on the available manpower. As a result, there was a monthly shortfall of 100,000 trained replacements in early 1915.⁴⁵ It was therefore next to impossible, the Saxon war minister concluded in September 1914, to provide replacements to existing units *and* create new formations.⁴⁶

Under these wartime pressures, the peacetime practice by which each army corps recruited personnel largely from within their own districts collapsed. This was not unprecedented. Already before the war, the uneven population growth throughout the empire had forced the Prussian ministry of war to transfer recruits from the populous industrial centres

⁴⁴ Groener, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 159. For the available German manpower after mobilization, see Herwig, *The First World War*, 119.

⁴⁵ Dieter Dreetz, "Methoden der Ersatzgewinnung für das deutsche Heer 1914 bis 1919," *Militärgeschichte* 16 (1977), 701-2; Ernst von Wrisberg, *Erinnerungen an die Kriegsjahre im Königlich Preußischen Kriegsministerium. Heer und Heimat 1914-1918* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1921), 15-18, 24-5. For Falkenhayn's role in the creation of new formations and their deployment at the front in the autumn of 1914, see Holger Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn. Politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1994), 174-6.

⁴⁶ General Karl von Wilsdorf, Saxon war minister, to Leuckart, September 30, 1914, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 76.



in the Rhineland and the larger cities, such as Berlin, to the more sparsely populated army corps districts in East Prussia and Pomerania. Fears about the reliability of recruits from Alsace-Lorraine and the Polish-speaking areas of Prussia resulted in further divergences from the traditional practice of territorial recruitment. In 1912, less than half of the army's 14,000 Alsace-Lorrainers were serving in the *Reichsland* and, in the decades before the war, thousands of Poles completed their military service in Brandenburg and the Rhineland while a corresponding number of ethnic German recruits were transferred eastwards.⁴⁷ During the war, the ties between army corps and their recruitment districts were quickly loosened and, in some cases, broken entirely. Army corps suffered casualties at different rates and some districts possessed more trained recruits than others. As a result, replacements were often assigned from wherever they were available to wherever they were most urgently required. In September 1914, the Bavarian minister of war angrily observed that no one had even bothered to tell him that Bavarian officers had been transferred to other units.⁴⁸

Badenese soldiers, who did not have a separate military administration to complain on their behalf to the Prussian ministry of war and Supreme Command, were especially affected by wartime replacement practices. Article One of Baden's military convention designated the grand duchy's army as a "component part" of the Prussian army, while, according to Article

⁴⁷ Hermann Rahne, *Mobilmachung. Militärische Mobilmachungsplanung und -Technik in Preussen und im Deutschen Reich von Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1983), 104-5, 112-13. For the treatment of Alsace-Lorrainers and Poles by the Prussian military authorities before the war, see Boysen, *Preußische Armee und polnische Minderheit*, 29-46; Silverman, *Reluctant Union*, 70-4.

⁴⁸ The Bavarian minister of war, General Otto Kreß von Kressenstein, to Wenninger, September 24, 1914, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 89. More generally, see Wrisberg, *Erinnerungen an die Kriegsjahre im Königlich Preußischen Kriegsministerium*, 90.

Two, the Baden's army corps was to remain "undivided."⁴⁹ Already in December 1914, it was clear that the Supreme Command and Karlsruhe had different interpretations of this agreement. As the grand duke's adjutant-general wrote to the commander of the XIV Army Corps, the Prussians frequently intervened in the allocation of replacements to Badenese units. Men who had been temporarily transferred to other posts or who had recovered from wounds at home were also prevented from rejoining their old regiments and assigned elsewhere, often to Prussian units. Although morale in the trenches could only be improved by ensuring that soldiers from similar backgrounds served with one other or were reunited with their former comrades, "around 10,000 men from Baden are sent to the most diverse regiments in the East and West, *Landwehr* regiments in Russia, the XVIII Army Corps, Hessian regiments, the 201st-209th Reserve Regiments, etc."⁵⁰ A few months later, the Badenese minister-president complained to Moy de Sons, the Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, that the war had highlighted the disadvantages of the grand duchy's military convention. Grand Duke Friedrich II, who wished to see his soldiers remain in self-contained units, had recently protested against the assignment of Badenese replacements to a Prussian regiment on the Eastern Front. These protests fell on deaf ears, increasing the resentment of the grand duke towards Berlin.⁵¹

The assignment of replacements and the transfer of personnel between the contingents was not the only practice of the Supreme Command which heightened tensions between Berlin

⁴⁹ "Militärkonvention zwischen dem Norddeutschen Bund und Baden vom 25. November 1870," in Huber, *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 2:343-6.

⁵⁰ Grand Duke Friedrich II's adjutant general to General Theodor von Watter, commander of the XIV Army Corps, December 8, 1914, BA MA Freiburg, Bestand N 125, file 24. In peacetime, the XVIII Army Corps recruited its personnel from the grand duchy of Hesse.

⁵¹ Moy de Sons to the Bavarian foreign ministry, February 19, 1915, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3072. Between 1887 and 1918, the Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart also functioned as his government's representative to Baden.

and the non-Prussian ministries of war. Following defeat at the Battle of the Marne, Falkenhayn, as the new chief of the Supreme Command, sought to outflank the British and French armies by shifting forces from the Lorraine to Flanders. At the same time, the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian armies in Galicia meant that German strength had to be transferred to the Eastern Front during the winter of 1914-15. As a result, the troops of the three non-Prussian contingents, united at the beginning of the war, were dispersed across the various theatres of operations. Reporting in October 1914, the Württemberg military plenipotentiary, Graevenitz, informed his superiors that the two divisions of the XIII Army Corps had been broken up and were now serving on different sectors of the Western Front. The Württemberg 26th Division had been combined with a Hessian reserve division within Crown Prince Rupprecht's Sixth Army, while the 27th Division had been transferred to the Fifth Army. Meanwhile, Duke Albrecht's Fourth Army had been disbanded and its staff sent north to Flanders. Once there, the heir to the Württemberg throne found himself in command of the five new Prussian reserve corps which had been organized following mobilization.⁵²

The Prussian military authorities were caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, the chief of the Supreme Command required flexibility to respond to ever changing situations on a number of fronts, while the minister of war in Berlin was under considerable pressure to expand the peacetime structure of the army with limited resources. On the other hand, the military agreements with the non-Prussian kingdoms enabled their monarchs and ministers of war to exert pressure on the Kaiser and his military advisors to revise the wartime organizational practices. The result was a willingness at General Headquarters to compromise.

⁵² Graevenitz to the Württemberg ministry of war, October 10, 1914, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 56.

In the spring of 1915, Falkenhayn reaffirmed to the Bavarian military plenipotentiary that the Supreme Command would seek the king of Bavaria's approval for the transfer of Bavarian officers to non-Bavarian units.⁵³ In the same month, the Prussian ministry of war approved the removal of six companies of Württembergers from a Bavarian infantry regiment. These men were thereafter combined with two newly formed companies to create an entirely Württemberg infantry regiment.⁵⁴ At times, the Prussian military authorities were even willing to ignore complaints from high-ranking Prussian officers against the special treatment of the state-based contingents. In March 1915, similar complaints lodged by the commander of the XIV Reserve Corps – a formation which consisted of one Badenese and one Württemberg division – were rejected by the Kaiser's military cabinet. In the view of the Prussian general, too many Badenese officers had been transferred to new formations and too many Württemberg officers remained under his command. Not only was this unfair, but the uneven transfer of so many officers threatened to undermine the combat effectiveness of the Badenese division. Despite the strength of these arguments, the military cabinet reminded the Prussian general that only Württemberg's king could approve the transfer of officers belonging to his contingent.⁵⁵

Falkenhayn nevertheless carefully avoided committing to a large-scale reorganization of the formations at the front. In fact, throughout the first two years of the war, the Supreme Command categorically refused to take any steps towards the separation of personnel from the

⁵³ Supreme Command to Nagel, June 4, 1915, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 89.

⁵⁴ Württemberg ministry of war to the Prussian ministry of war, June 19, 1915, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 77/1, file 189. The new regiment, the Württemberg 122nd Reserve Infantry Regiment, nevertheless remained with the 4th Bavarian Division.

⁵⁵ The chief of staff of the Second Army to General von Lyncker, the chief of the Prussian military cabinet, March 19, 1915, with the complaint of General Hermann von Stein, commander of the XIV Reserve Corps, March 16, 1915, and Lyncker's reply, March 22, 1915, BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 1, 5.

state-based contingents. In doing so, the chief of the Supreme Command and his subordinates consistently referenced operational considerations. In the summer of 1915, Nagel, the Bavarian military plenipotentiary, reported to his superiors in Munich that plans had recently been drawn up in the Supreme Command to reorganize several mixed divisions. According to these plans, the 2nd *Landwehr* Division would be transformed into a Württemberg formation, the 39th Reserve Division into a Bavarian formation, and the 33rd Reserve Division into a Prussian formation. Falkenhayn had rejected these proposals. The soldiers, he argued, had developed a close comradeship in the trenches which would be destroyed if the units were separated from one another. Although Nagel remained skeptical and suggested that the Bavarian ministry of war formally request that the Supreme Command carry through this reorganization, Kress von Kressenstein, the minister of war, refused.⁵⁶

By the autumn of 1915, the situation had changed. As the Bavarian minister of war informed Nagel, the Supreme Command had recently made several organizational changes and, as a result, the arguments which Falkenhayn had employed in the summer were no longer sustainable. The military plenipotentiary was therefore instructed to work towards the consolidation of Bavarians in their own formations. In his petition to the Supreme Command, Nagel pointed out the difficulties which the breakup of Bavarian formations caused for the assignment of replacements. Again referencing the situation at the front, the Bavarian request was rejected.⁵⁷ The pressure from the military plenipotentiary was not without success. In

⁵⁶ Nagel to Kress von Kressenstein, July 25, 1915, and Kress von Kressenstein's response, August 4, 1915, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 93.

⁵⁷ Kress von Kressenstein to Nagel, October 7, 1915, and Nagel to the Supreme Command, October 13, 1915, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 93. In his response to the Bavarian military plenipotentiary's request, Falkenhayn again promised to return to the matter when the situation at the front improved. Nagel to Kress von Kressenstein, October 16, 1915, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 93.

December 1915, the Bavarian war ministry informed Nagel that the Supreme Command had finally decided to reorganize the 39th Reserve Division into a Bavarian formation.⁵⁸

The German army endured some of the most costly fighting of the war in 1916. In February, Falkenhayn began his assault on the fortress of Verdun which would continue until the autumn. Even before the “mill on the Meuse” ceased grinding, the British opened an offensive on the Somme which compelled Falkenhayn to transfer large numbers of troops from elsewhere in order to prevent a complete collapse of the front. The German defences held. However, at the end of 1916, the Supreme Command estimated that its armies had suffered almost two million casualties, including 350,000 killed, over the preceding twelve months. During the most intense period of fighting between July and October, the armies in the West had lost 800,000 men killed, wounded, or missing. Worse still, the entrance of Romania into the war in the summer had increased the empire’s enemies.⁵⁹

Following Falkenhayn’s dismissal at the end of August, the newly appointed chief of the Supreme Command, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, and Erich Ludendorff, his deputy chief, introduced a series of measures which were intended to more fully mobilize manpower and material resources. Only days after his appointment, Hindenburg ordered an increase in the production of equipment and munitions. At the beginning of December, the Reichstag passed the Auxiliary Service Law which conscripted all male Germans between the ages of seventeen and sixty for labour on farms or in factories. The newly created War Office within

⁵⁸ Bavarian ministry of war to Nagel, December 6, 1915, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 93.

⁵⁹ Herwig, *The First World War*, 244-66. For the impact of the First World War on the German home front, see Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ute Daniel, *The War from Within: German Working-Class Women in the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1997); Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

the Prussian ministry of war was tasked with overseeing the resulting increased production. In addition to ensuring that war-related industries received sufficient manpower, Hindenburg and Ludendorff worked to put as many Germans into uniform as possible. During the winter of 1916-17, those men who had been designated fit for duty in the rear areas and who had recovered from their wounds were formed into new divisions. Together with the recruitment class of 1898, which was called up three months early, the Supreme Command had assembled over one million more men by the spring of 1917.⁶⁰

Against this backdrop, the Prussian envoy in Munich submitted a series of reports in the summer and fall of 1916 that detailed at length the impact of the war and the accompanying food shortages on the re-emergence of particularism in Bavaria. Although Bavarian soldiers had entered the war with the same enthusiasm as the men from the other contingents and had demonstrated the same courage as their Prussian, Saxon, and Württemberg comrades, signs of disillusionment and resentment were becoming more and more evident among Bavarian soldiers. In particular, rumours circulated that Prussians at the front treated non-Prussians with contempt and that a noticeable arrogance frequently characterized their communications with Bavarians. Moreover, the envoy reported that it was widely accepted in South Germany that Prussians habitually ordered Bavarian units to attack well-entrenched British and French positions and, if the Bavarians were successful, the Prussians took credit.⁶¹ Reports from the front also mentioned friction between the state-based minorities of the army. The Bavarian

⁶⁰ Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 65-82; Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany, 1914-1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 149-249. For the formation of new divisions in the winter of 1916-17, see Wrisberg, *Erinnerungen an die Kriegsjahre im Königlich Preußischen Kriegsministerium*, 26-8.

⁶¹ Reports of the Prussian envoy in Munich, Carl-Georg von Treutler, to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, June 23, 1916 and November 2, 1916, PA AA Berlin, R 2736.

military plenipotentiary in General Headquarters reported in August 1916 that an entire company of Bavarians had been wiped out when Saxon troops prematurely withdrew from their trenches. When the Bavarians arrived to relieve their comrades, they found only French troops. One particularly disturbing incident in the 14th Bavarian Reserve Division, a formation which was composed of Bavarians and Prussians, was considered grounds for the transfer of the Prussians elsewhere.⁶²

This concern for the combat effectiveness of “mixed” formations dovetailed with pressure from the non-Prussian ministries of war. Under instructions from their ministries of war, the military plenipotentiaries repeatedly raised objections to this “mixing” of the contingents. The friction between the Supreme Command and Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart reached its height in the autumn of 1916. This was in part the responsibility of the Bavarian crown prince. In the summer of 1916, he harshly and perhaps unfairly criticized Nagel for not defending Bavaria’s military rights tenaciously enough.⁶³ In response, Nagel, along with his Saxon and Württemberg colleagues, consistently applied pressure on both Falkenhayn and his successors at the Supreme Command, Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Whereas Leuckart complained to several Prussian officers on a number of occasions, Graevenitz directly confronted Ludendorff in a tense conversation at the beginning of October 1916. In addition

⁶² Nagel to the Bavarian ministry of war, August 25, 1916, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1830. For the incident in the 14th Bavarian Division, see the decree of the Bavarian ministry of war, October 12, 1916, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 93.

⁶³ For the dissatisfaction of the crown prince with Nagel’s efforts at General Headquarters, see Nagel to the Bavarian ministry of war, August 18, 1916, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MilBev Berlin 91, and, for Rupprecht’s conflicts with the Supreme Command and hostility to perceived Prussian attempts to diminish the military independence of Bavaria, see Dieter J. Weiß, *Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern (1869-1955). Eine politische Biographie* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2007), 110-18, 139-43; Holger Afflerbach, “Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern im Ersten Weltkrieg,” *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 75 (2016), 21-54.

to condemning the lack of sensitivity concerning the wishes of the non-Prussian monarchs, Graevenitz pointed out how easily several mixed divisions – the largely Saxon 183rd Division and the mainly Württemberg 54th Reserve Division – could be transformed into homogenous Saxon or Württemberg formations. Before leaving the Supreme Command, the Württemberger argued his case with another Prussian staff officers. In this surprisingly candid conversation, he received confirmation of something the three military plenipotentiaries had already suspected: all previous attempts to reunite the contingents of the three non-Prussian contingents had failed because Falkenhayn had been opposed to such a measure.⁶⁴ Graevenitz must therefore have been optimistic as he departed the Supreme Command. Less than one week later, he received confirmation that his visit had been a success. On October 6, 1916, Ludendorff issued a circular which promised to respect the federal structure of the army.⁶⁵

The “reuniting” of the state-based contingents took place in the winter of 1916-17. The reorganization of the army was carried out following suggestions from staff officers in the field. In November 1917, the Seventh Army informed the Supreme Command that the 47th Landwehr Division, which was predominantly a Saxon formation, contained one Prussian infantry regiment and that a single Saxon regiment had been attached to the otherwise Prussian 211th Division. The army’s chief of staff proposed the exchange of these two regiments. Even though the staff of the infantry brigade attached to the 47th Landwehr Division was composed of Prussian officers, the reorganization of the two formations would ensure that both the

⁶⁴ Leuckart to the Saxon ministry of war, August 25, 1916 and September 10, 1916, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 54; Graevenitz’s report to the Württemberg ministry of war, October 1, 1916, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 114.

⁶⁵ Order of the chief of the General Staff of the field army, October 6, 1916, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/11, file 351. See also Cowan, “A Picture of German Unity?” 147-8.

Prussians and Saxons served alongside members of their own contingents.⁶⁶ The homogenization of the divisions at the front occasionally required more extensive reorganization. In February 1917, the mixed Prussian-Württemberg 8th *Ersatz* Division was thoroughly reorganized. Not only was the Prussian divisional staff replaced by one composed of Württemberg officers, but new artillery, medical, and supply units had to be formed with personnel from the South German kingdom. Moreover, a Württemberg infantry regiment was transferred from the Eastern Front to replace the Prussians.⁶⁷ In other cases, regiments were reorganized in order to create homogenized units. At the end of January 1917, a single Saxon battalion was removed from a Württemberg reserve field artillery regiment in the 54th Reserve Division and replaced with Württemberg personnel in the rear areas and in replacement depots. Only a few weeks later, the formation of two Saxon *Landwehr* divisions in the East required the reorganization of no fewer than seven mixed Prussian-Saxon infantry regiments.⁶⁸

Hand-in-hand with the reuniting of the state-based contingents was a consolidation of the brigades and divisions of the state-based contingents which had been scattered throughout the theatres of operations since the autumn of 1914. Less than two weeks after the Supreme Command promised to avoid the “mixing” of the state-based contingents within formations, a second circular clarified the difference between the permanent subordination of Prussian divisions and their tactical attachment to army corps. Following lengthy consultation with the

⁶⁶ Seventh Army to the Supreme Command, November 17, 1916, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, Heeresgruppe Kronprinz Rupprecht 177. The two regiments in question were the Saxon 103rd Reserve Infantry Regiment and the Prussian 186th Infantry Regiment.

⁶⁷ Order of the Württemberg ministry of war, February 1, 1917, and the order of the Prussian ministry of war, February 2, 1917, BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 3, file 1229. The Württemberg 122nd Infantry Regiment was transferred from the Eastern Front in order to replace the departing Prussians.

⁶⁸ Württemberg ministry of war to the Supreme Command, January 30, 1917, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 77/1, file 189. For the creation of the two Saxon *Landwehr* divisions in the East and the necessary reorganization, see the order of the Supreme Command, February 15, 1917, BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 3, file 1229.

ministries of war in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart, a supplement to this circular was issued in January 1917. Whereas the kings of Saxony and Württemberg agreed to the Supreme Command's circular from October, it was acknowledged that the permanent subordination of Bavarian divisions to non-Bavarian army corps required the previous approval of the king of Bavaria.⁶⁹ In the following weeks and months, the detached formations of the three smaller contingents were consolidated, either within their previous army corps or within their own armies. At the end of January, the chief of staff of the Crown Prince of Bavaria's army group, General Hermann von Kuhl, informed his subordinates that, at the insistence of the Supreme Command, a large-scale reorganization would take place in the coming months. Moreover, the entire I Bavarian Reserve Corps would be transferred back to the Sixth Army – the “Bavarian” army at the outbreak of the war – and the two Bavarian reserve divisions would be placed under its command.⁷⁰ Just over one month later, Ludendorff informed the Saxon military plenipotentiary that arrangements had been made to consolidate the scattered formations of the XII Army Corps by the end of March 1917.⁷¹

The Supreme Command's circulars issued in the autumn and winter of 1916-17 did not prevent further tensions between the state-based contingents. At times, the situation at the front compelled Ludendorff to issue orders which contravened the instructions against the “mixing” of soldiers from across the empire. In early July 1918, the assignment of 5,000 Saxon soldiers to Prussian units elicited a complaint from the Saxon military plenipotentiary who reminded

⁶⁹ Order of the Supreme Command, October 17, 1916, BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 1, file 9; Supplement to the Supreme Command's order, dated January 1917, BA MA Freiburg, Bestand PH 1, file 10.

⁷⁰ Kuhl, chief of staff of Army Group Crown Prince Rupprecht, to the headquarters of the First, Second, Sixth, and Seventh Armies, January 29, 1917, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, Heeresgruppe Kronprinz Rupprecht 179.

⁷¹ General Hans von Eulitz, Saxon military plenipotentiary in General Headquarters, to Wilsdorf, March 12, 1917, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 57.

Ludendorff of the terms of his kingdom's military convention and the Supreme Command's circular from October 1916.⁷² Nevertheless, the Prussian reaffirmation of the rights of the Bavarian, Saxon, and Württemberg monarchs did highlight the fact that the First World War, rather than overcoming the barriers between the contingents, strengthened the army's federal structure. Ludendorff's change of course also calmed fears in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart that the war would lead to the disappearance of the empire's non-Prussian military institutions. As a result, when Germany's governments discussed postwar military reorganization in 1918, the debate turned to expansion, rather than abolition, of the army's contingent-based structure.

Centralization or status quo? Postwar expectations for the German army

The friction between the soldiers of the state-based contingents and the periodic complaints from their ministries of war and monarchs on the home front were not simply insignificant irritations for the Supreme Command. Because the strained relationship between a Bavarian staff officer and his Prussian superior or the poor morale of a Saxon regiment within a Württemberg division threatened combat effectiveness, these issues were taken seriously. For many of the same reasons, the army's administrative structure increasingly came under scrutiny over the course of the First World War. For some, mainly Prussian observers, the experience of total war seemed to require a greater degree of centralization of the army's military administration. These non-Prussian ministries of war, it was argued, only created additional bureaucratic obstacles to the complete mobilization of the manpower and material

⁷² Eulitz to Wilsdorf, July 6, 1918, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 75.

resources of the empire. In the opinion of others, in particular those in positions of power in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart, the division of the army's administration was an absolute necessity. It was incomprehensible, they pointed out, that a single ministry of war could oversee all aspects of the German war effort and, more importantly, take into account the diverse needs of the empire's different regions. The resulting debate over postwar military reorganization reached a climax in the spring and summer of 1918. It also underscored the durability of the army's state-based structure after four years of industrial war.

General Hermann von Stein, who served as Prussian minister of war from the autumn of 1916 until the last month of the war, wrote in his memoirs that “consciously or unconsciously” the belief that an imperial ministry of war should be established gained ground among Prussian officers. From time to time, his subordinates even approached him with proposals which would have consolidated Prussian control over the administration of the entire army, finally achieving what Moltke the Elder had demanded in the late 1860s.⁷³ Such views were not restricted to the military administration in Berlin, however. Already in the spring of 1916, the Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart went to great pains to describe a conversation between Fabeck, who, after his transfer in the spring of 1915, commanded an army on the Eastern Front, and his Württemberg dinner guest. During the meal, the Prussian general somewhat crassly remarked that the office building of the commander of the XIII Army Corps in Stuttgart was perhaps the worst in the entire empire. It was no matter, Fabeck continued, since a separate Württemberg military administration would almost certainly be abolished after the war and the

⁷³ Hermann von Stein, *Erlebnisse und Betrachtungen aus der Zeit des Weltkrieges* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler, 1919), 102. At the beginning of the war, Stein was quartermaster general in the Supreme Command and, from September 1914, commander of the XIV Reserve Corps. In October 1916, he succeeded Wild von Hohenborn as Prussian minister of war and served in this post until the autumn of 1918.

– presumably Prussian – commanding general would be able to move into the ministry of war’s much more impressive building. Marchthaler, the Württemberg minister of war, chalked Fabeck’s tactless statements up to bitterness: the Prussian had clearly not forgotten his conflict-plagued prewar tenure in South Germany. The Bavarian envoy was more cautious in his assessment. Although it was certainly true that the Prussian military authorities had in no way proved capable of handling the numerous new responsibilities which the war had produced, Fabeck was not alone in his viewpoint. Only recently, an influential North German conservative had likewise voiced his skepticism over the future existence of the non-Prussian ministries of war. As he put it, why could these not simply be abolished?⁷⁴

The reorganization of the Prussian ministry of war in the autumn of 1916 and the tightening of its control over not only manpower, but also the agricultural and industrial sectors, seemed to represent concrete efforts toward the centralization of the military administration. Among his first actions as Prussian minister of war, Stein countersigned two decrees in early November which created the *Kriegsamt*, or war office. This new structure, under the control of Groener and so large that a number of hotels in Berlin had to be requisitioned in order to provide its personnel with adequate accommodation, was responsible for all matters pertaining to the mobilization of the German economy for the war. Because of its wide-ranging authority, the creation of the war office was almost immediately met with opposition from outside Prussia. As a result, separate economic offices were established in

⁷⁴ Karl von Moy de Sons, Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart, to the Bavarian foreign ministry, April 12, 1916, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3072. The Bavarian was quick to point out that the Württemberg government would defend its ministry of war with “tooth and nail,” all the more so because nearly every Prussian commanding general had made himself unpopular in Stuttgart. According to rumours, Fabeck had even sacrificed the lives of the Württembergers under his command at the beginning of the war in order to achieve promotion. Württemberg blood had therefore paid for the Prussian general’s appointment as commander of an army on the Eastern Front.

Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, and representatives of the non-Prussian ministries of war were assigned to the war office in Berlin. Moreover, even though the army corps districts had been placed under his command, Groener was forbidden to issue orders directly to the Bavarian deputy commanding generals. Despite these concessions to the federal structure of the army, the activities of the war office remained a constant source of friction.⁷⁵ The resulting resentment had reached such a point by the summer of 1918 that the Austro-Hungarian envoy in Dresden argued that the coordination of wartime production had contributed to a particularistic backlash in certain parts of the empire. Specifically, many Saxons felt that their industry had been consistently disadvantaged in the awarding of contracts and the delivery of coal and other raw materials by the war office. Complaints were also commonplace that the distribution of foodstuffs – always a concern for an agriculturally weak industrial region – either occurred too late or failed to meet the needs of the population. Whereas particularism, in the “good old German tradition,” had previously directed itself at all others, economic centralization had made Prussia the main object of dislike in Saxony during the war.⁷⁶

Because the demands for the centralization of the army’s administration and the creation of structures to coordinate agriculture and industry across the empire threatened their positions, the non-Prussian ministries of war increasingly sought ways to emphasize their contributions to the German war effort in the second half of the war. This was especially true of the Württemberg war ministry. In the spring of 1917, one observer noted that Marchthaler,

⁷⁵ Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany*, 190-4. For the tensions between Bavaria and Prussia following the creation of the war office, see Campbell, “The Bavarian Army,” 245-9.

⁷⁶ Report of the Austro-Hungarian delegation in Dresden to the Austrian-Hungarian Foreign Office, August 14, 1918, ÖStA HHStA Vienna, PA V Sachsen, box 56-5. More surprising, the report concluded that the resentful mood in the Saxon population had led many to sympathize with Bavaria, something which would have been unheard of before the war.

the war minister, was determined to justify the expenses for a separate military administration, thereby ensuring that it did not “fall victim to the pressure for cost-cutting after the war.” Mimicking his Prussian counterpart, the Württemberg minister of war had recently invited a number of South German journalists, mayors, and parliamentary deputies to accompany him on inspections of the rear areas of the Western Front. These and other measures, the observer concluded, were primarily intended to “make his office popular” throughout the kingdom.⁷⁷

Marchthaler thereafter stepped up his efforts to strengthen his position. Above all, he was concerned that the conclusion of hostilities could initiate a broader discussion of army’s administration. He therefore laid out his arguments in favour of preserving a separate ministry of war in a lengthy memorandum written in the final months of the war. Since the summer of 1914, the activities of the Württemberg ministry of war had increased enormously, requiring the expansion of existing departments and the creation of new ones. Its officers had also ensured that the call up of recruits, the granting of leave to soldiers at the front, the allotment of industrial contracts, and even the purchase of horses had corresponded to economic conditions in Württemberg. It was doubtful that a military administration in Berlin would have paid such close attention to the needs of the South German kingdom. If these were not reasons enough, Marchthaler argued that abolishing the non-Prussian ministries of war would not reduce expenditures. In the case of Württemberg, the king would still possess certain military rights and, as a result, an imperial ministry of war would have to include separate offices for his contingent. It was best to leave the army’s administration alone after the war.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Moy de Sons to the Bavarian foreign ministry, April 13, 1917, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3073.

⁷⁸ Memorandum of the Württemberg ministry of war, “Reichskriegsministerium-Kontingentskriegsministerium,” no date, though likely written in 1918, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/3, file 683. A shorter position paper was composed in the spring of 1918 and in response to Saxon fears that the ministry of

Along with the shaping of public opinion and the preparation of memoranda, there were other attempts to place the Württemberg contribution to the German war effort in the best possible light. Shortly before the end of the war, the Saxon military plenipotentiary in General Headquarters forwarded a statistical table to his superiors in Dresden. This table provided a breakdown of German losses since the summer of 1914 divided not only by rank and type of casualty, but also by contingent. Most strikingly, this table, which had been put together in the Württemberg ministry of war and distributed in General Headquarters by Colonel Max Holland, Württemberg's military plenipotentiary, showed that Württemberg, with the smallest population of the four kingdoms, had suffered the highest percentage of combat deaths. Moreover, according to the table, fewer Württembergers had been recorded as missing in action – having deserted or been captured – than Bavarians, Prussians, or Saxons.⁷⁹

Considered alongside Holland's efforts to prevent the Supreme Command from relying too heavily on Württemberg formations in the final months of the war, the intention of this statistical table is clear: not only had Württembergers given their lives in greater numbers for the empire, but they were also more reliable than their German comrades-in-arms. There is additional evidence that the war ministry sought to emphasize the combat effectiveness of formations from Württemberg. During the war, the war ministry collected statements by

war in Dresden could be abolished after the war. Memorandum of the Württemberg ministry of war, "Zur Frage der Aufhebung der Kriegsministerien der Bundesstaaten mit eigener Militärverwaltung," April 10, 1918, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 660/027, file 24. For Marchtaler's efforts to justify the preservation of his ministry, see also Walker, "Prusso-Württembergian Military Relations in the German Empire," 137-40.

⁷⁹ Eulitz to the Saxon ministry of war, October 26, 1918, with a statistical table, "Gesamtverluste der deutschen Armee, getrennt nach Bundesstaaten. Stand am 30.9.18," SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 70. According to the table, the prewar population of Württemberg was 2,437,574. During the war, units from Württemberg suffered 62,881 combat deaths, 169,440 wounded, and 17,363 missing in action, or 10.2 percent of the kingdom's prewar population. This percentage was higher than that for Bavaria (8.8), Prussia (9.6), and Saxony (9.0). The percentage of Württembergers who were reported as missing in action (0.71) also compared favourably to that for Bavaria (0.98), Prussia (1.10), and Saxony (0.95).

Prussians about the accomplishments of Württembergers. In one of these collections, a Prussian general praised the Württemberg 204th Division's "first-rate reputation," which had been further enhanced in 1917 through its men's "unparalleled bravery as it brought the enemy's attempt to break through the lines to a halt despite heavy losses."⁸⁰

The Saxons shared many of the Württembergers' concerns. More so than his South German counterpart, however, the Saxon minister of war, General Karl von Wilsdorf, made extensive use of constitutional arguments in favour of preserving the army's existing administration. In doing so, he followed the example of his prewar predecessors who had stubbornly refused to reconsider Saxony's military relationship with Prussia. In a memorandum composed in early 1918 and subsequently shared with the ministry of war in Stuttgart, Wilsdorf argued that the creation of an imperial ministry of war was both unnecessary and unlikely. It was unnecessary because the non-Prussian ministries of war had proven time and again that consideration for the peculiar conditions in their respective kingdoms had greatly benefitted the German war effort. Centralization of the military administration would – and this was the crux of Wilsdorf's argument – also be extremely difficult to undertake. Not only would the creation of an imperial ministry of war require an amendment to the empire's constitution, but Saxony's own constitution as well as the kingdom's military convention with Prussia would likewise have to be rewritten.⁸¹ In fact, the minister of war was much more interested in expanding his limited independence from Prussia

⁸⁰ "Wortlaut der Anerkennungen über Leistungen württembergischer Truppenverbände durch preussische Heerführer im Jahre 1917," HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/11, file 748. This collection was put together for the director of the Central Department in the Württemberg ministry of war, Captain Erwin Tritschler, and, after the war, found its way into the Württemberg war archive.

⁸¹ Memorandum of the Saxon ministry of war, no date, though likely composed in early 1918 and thereafter forwarded to the Württemberg ministry of war, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/3, file 683.

in military matters for the benefit of Saxon soldiers. In the summer of 1918, Wilsdorf secured his monarch's signature on a decree which effectively made promotion in the Saxon junior officer corps based on merit, not the *Anciennität* principle, which was based on time served in a position and which continued to inform the military cabinet's personnel decisions. According to the Saxon minister of war, this measure was necessary because it was precisely those officers up to the rank of regimental commander who had to endure the greatest dangers and whose bravery could influence the outcome of the war. It was therefore unfair and unwise to apply such a rigid principle to lower-ranking Saxon officers.⁸²

This insistence on the empire's existing constitutional structure meant that Saxony took it for granted that it would retain its own military administration after the war. Indeed, a separate Saxon contingent and ministry of war would, many in Dresden suggested, play an important role in securing the kingdom's specific war aims. Already in the opening weeks of the war, the non-Prussian monarchs had made it known in Berlin and at the Supreme Command that they expected their fair share of the spoils in the event of a successful conclusion to the war. King Ludwig III of Bavaria had been the first to do so. In August 1914, the Prussian envoy in Munich recorded that the king had "nothing against Prussia enlarging itself, but Bavaria must also receive something."⁸³ In the following months, the possibility emerged that the

⁸² Even more infuriating for the Saxons was the tendency of the military cabinet, under pressure from the Supreme Command, to disregard the *Anciennität* principle when filling high-ranking positions during the war. For example, in the summer of 1918, Ludendorff informed Eulitz that, as far as Saxon officers were concerned, General Adolph von Carlowitz was under consideration for the command of an army even though General Hans Krug von Nidda was senior. Because he would therefore be passed over in favour of a junior officer, Eulitz feared that Krug would resign his position as a corps commander and thereby create a public controversy in Saxony. Hoffmann, "Die sächsische Armee im Deutschen Reich 1871 bis 1918," 335-9.

⁸³ Quoted in Reiner Pommerin, "Bundesstaaten und Reichsleitung. Zur Entstehung deutscher Kriegsziele 1914," *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift* 74 (2015), 10. For the emergence of war aims in the smaller states of the German empire during the war, see Karl-Heinz Janßen, *Macht und Verblendung. Kriegszielpolitik der deutschen Bundesstaaten 1914/18* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1963).

Reichsland might be partitioned between the two kingdoms after the war. Whereas, for Saxony, the acquisition of territory on the western frontier was not feasible, a division of Alsace-Lorraine between Bavaria and Prussia nevertheless threatened to upset the balance of power within the empire. The Saxons therefore set their sights on compensation in the East, claiming first Kurland and later Lithuania. As Wilsdorf explained to the Saxon ministry of state in the spring of 1916, these claims would be best served if Saxon troops alone occupied the desired territories. If necessary, a third active army corps could be formed for this purpose. The military convention with Prussia provided justification for this occupation and, in time, the Saxons might even be able to transform this agreement into something similar to the Bavarian federal treaties. Wilsdorf's civilian colleagues agreed. Conflicts between the civilian and military authorities could only jeopardize the kingdom's war aims and both the occupation troops and the region's military governor would therefore have to be drawn from the Saxon contingent.⁸⁴

At the same time that the Saxons were considering whether an expansion in the size of their peacetime contingent might strengthen their claims to Lithuania, the Bavarians were informed that their military strength would not be able to secure their monarch's war aims. In the view of the Prussian ministry of war, even if a portion of the *Reichsland* was allotted to Bavaria after the war, the kingdom's population would be unable to sustain the fourth active

⁸⁴ "Beschluss des Ministeriums der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten vom 11. Mai 1917," with the report of the Saxon envoy in Berlin, Hermann von Nostitz-Wallwitz, from May 10, 1917, SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 73. The king of Saxony likewise demanded a revision of the military convention with Prussia and the creation of a Saxon army inspectorate in Lithuania. "Beschluss des Ministeriums der auswärtigen Angelegenheiten vom 4. Mai 1918," SHStA Dresden, Bestand 11250, file 73. See also Reiner Pommerin, *"Polen gegen uns eingenommen und stark jüdisch durchsetzt." König Friedrich August III. und die Kriegsziele Sachsens im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Potsdam: Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 2009), especially 21-6, 45-8.

army corps needed for its occupation.⁸⁵ Like the Saxons, the Bavarians thought less about the possible elimination of their military independence than about the consolidation and expansion of their privileges in the postwar period. This was especially evident in Bavarian attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire. Since the 1880s, the German officers who had been transferred to Turkey had been exclusively drawn from the Prussian contingent. In 1909, the Bavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin had therefore approached the Prussian ministry of war with a request from his superiors in Munich that Bavarian officers be considered for transfer to Turkey in the future. The Prussians brushed this request aside. It was only after the Turkish ambassador in Berlin contacted the Bavarian ministry of war directly in December 1910 that the Prussians relented. In the last years before the war, a small though increasing number of Bavarians joined the German military mission in Turkey.⁸⁶

Following the outbreak of war and the entrance of Turkey on the side of the Central Powers, greater scrutiny was applied to applications to serve in the Middle East. Despite this, the Bavarian ministry of war continued to pressure Berlin on behalf of Bavarian officers. When rumours circulated in Munich in early 1916 that the Turkish government intended to undertake a comprehensive reform after the war, the Bavarian minister of war ordered his representative in General Headquarters to inform the Kaiser's military cabinet that Bavaria expected to

⁸⁵ Graevenitz to Marchtaler, April 10, 1917, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 86. According to the Württemberg military plenipotentiary, who had spoken with Colonel Ernst von Wrisberg of the Prussian ministry of war, the creation of a Bavarian occupation force would require seven additional infantry regiments.

⁸⁶ Michael Unger, *Die bayerischen Militärbeziehungen zur Türkei vor und im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 23-59; Jehuda L. Wallach, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe. Die preußisch-deutschen Militärmissionen in der Türkei 1835-1919* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1976), 93, 108-19, 126-35. In 1913, the Turkish military attaché in Berlin even approached the Bavarian military plenipotentiary with a request for teaching materials from the Bavarian war academy. Turkish military attaché to Wenninger, May 19, 1913, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 224.

participate. Not only were Bavarian officers also to be transferred to Turkey, but the Bavarian contingent would have to be represented in proportion to its strength in the German army.⁸⁷

The Bavarians' determination to uphold their position within the empire became even more apparent near the end of the war. In January 1918, the government in Berlin was shocked to learn that King Ludwig III had appointed a Bavarian representative to the peace conference at Brest-Litovsk. According to an unpublished supplement to the federal treaty, Bavaria was entitled to send a special envoy to negotiations at the end of hostilities. Not only did the exercise of this *Sonderrecht*, or special right, produce widespread resentment in the Saxon and Württemberg press, but the Bavarian military plenipotentiary reported that the attitude of Prussian officers in the Supreme Command to Bavaria had been deeply affected by the digging up of "this old treaty which no one knew anything about anymore."⁸⁸

Of course, in the minds of many, Bavaria's influence depended largely on the preservation of a separate Bavarian contingent. As a result, when it came to a reform of the military administration, the attitude of the government in Munich was uncompromising. Shortly before the armistice, an officer in the Bavarian ministry of war prepared detailed instructions for the military plenipotentiary. In many ways, these instructions mirrored the arguments of the Saxon ministry of war the previous winter. However, the Bavarians were even more adamant that the creation of a centralized military administration would create more

⁸⁷ Circular of the Bavarian minister-president, Georg von Hertling, December 16, 1916; the Bavarian minister of war, Kress von Kressenstein, to King Ludwig III of Bavaria, March 2, 1916, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 224.

⁸⁸ General Bernhard von Hartz, Bavarian military plenipotentiary, to the Bavarian ministry of war, February 22, 1918, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1832/1. For the dispatch of the Bavarian special envoy, Klemens von Podewils-Dürnitz, to the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk and the reaction in the German press, see Ingeborg Koch, "Die Bundesfürsten und die Reichspolitik in der Zeit Wilhelms II." (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität zu München, 1961), 143-5; März, *Das Haus Wittelsbach im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 434-6.

problems than it would solve. The establishment of parliamentary control over the army and the appointment of a civilian secretary for military affairs, it was argued, would represent a “novelty in the imperial constitution” since even the authority of the imperial secretary of the treasury office was strictly separated from that of the state-based ministries of finance. Even more so, the agreements and treaties between Prussia and the smaller kingdoms made the army a much more complicated institution. Whereas the Saxon and Württemberg ministries of war might be subordinated to an imperial military administration, the federal treaty ruled out a similar relationship for Bavaria. Even alterations to the imperial constitution could not change the fact that the Bavarian minister of war was responsible solely to the Bavarian parliament in all matters relating to the kingdom’s contingent.⁸⁹

There were some in the empire who did propose fundamental changes in the structure of the army. Over the course of the war, complaints from the government in Karlsruhe concerning the treatment of Badenese soldiers by the Prussians had become more and more frequent. In February 1918, these complaints were the subject of a fierce debate in the Badenese parliament. Rudolf Seubert, a deputy for the Catholic Centre Party, created a stir when he alleged that the Prussian ministry of war had frequently violated the military convention by assigning Badenese recruits to Prussian regiments and that their “abduction” had destroyed the morale of many soldiers from the grand duchy. Seubert claimed to have come into possession of extensive evidence in support of these accusations. In the opinion of Eisendecker, the Prussian envoy in Karlsruhe, such claims carried even more weight at the time because of the discontent created by the high cost of living and the shortage of goods

⁸⁹ “Notiz für den Herrn Militärbevollmächtigten,” composed by the director of the Army Department of the Bavarian ministry of war, November 2, 1918, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 29.

during the war. Under such conditions, a Badener was even less inclined to tolerate his more strictly disciplined and soldierly Prussian comrades.⁹⁰ More worrying for the Prussian envoy than the spread of particularism in southwestern Germany was the widespread support in parliament for a change in the military convention with Baden. Not only did the People's Party criticize the government in much the same manner as Seubert, but even the leader of the National Liberals condemned the alleged prohibition introduced by some Prussian commanders against Badenese soldiers writing directly to their parliamentary deputies. Worse still, the minister-president, Heinrich von und zu Bodman, only half-heartedly fought off these attacks in the chamber. He even admitted that some of the complaints made by Seubert were justified and that, throughout the war, he himself had worked to prevent the breakup of self-contained Badenese formations within the Prussian contingent. Bodman made it clear that the grand duchy's ties to Prussia would have to change. After the war, the military convention with Baden would have to correspond to Prussia's agreements with the three German kingdoms.⁹¹

At the end of the First World War, there was little agreement concerning the future structure of the German army. Reflecting their greater integration with the Prussian contingent, the Württembergers were largely interested in preserving the status quo and ensuring that the wartime coordination of the economy would not lead to military centralization after the conclusion of hostilities. The Bavarians and Saxons – the former because of their more privileged position within the army and the latter in a change from their prewar cautious

⁹⁰ Eisendecker to Hertling, February 8, 1918, PA AA Berlin, R 2699; Moy de Sons to the Bavarian foreign ministry, February 9, 1918, BayHStA Munich, II. Abteilung, MA 3073.

⁹¹ Eisendecker to Hertling, January 31, 1918, PA AA Berlin, R 2509. The Prussian envoy, who had served through past conflicts over the appointment of arch-Grand Duke Friedrich as commander of the XIV Army Corps and Manteuffel's dismissal as deputy commanding general in Karlsruhe, admitted that "from time to time" the Prussian interpretation of the military convention had "probably lacked the desirable consideration" for the grand duke.

approach in military affairs – categorically rejected the creation of an imperial war ministry. Both kingdoms instead sought to prepare the ground for greater military independence in the postwar period. Baden, as the empire's largest state without its own military institutions, also demanded changes to the German army's structure. These changes would not have meant greater centralization, but rather the creation of a fourth state-based contingent alongside those from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg. The war produced greater pressures for the creation of a centralized German army. However, even in the summer and autumn of 1918, few were willing to dismantle a military structure that had served the interests of Prussia and the non-Prussian kingdoms. It could not prevent defeat in late 1918, but the framework for military relations created between 1867 and 1870 had proven remarkably durable.

Conclusion

In the spring of 1918, thousands of leaflets were dropped from Allied aircraft over Bavarian positions in the Champagne region. These leaflets called on the South Germans to abandon their Prussian comrades and, in doing so, hasten an end to the war.⁹² Most Bavarians did not follow this advice: when the fighting ended in November 1918, Prussians and non-Prussians stood side-by-side in the trenches, not only on the Western Front, but in Eastern Europe, Italy, the Balkans, and the Middle East. Of course, the war had created tensions between soldiers of the state-based contingents. Bavarians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers had marched off to the battlefield in the summer of 1914 in their own self-contained units and under the

⁹² Report of the Bavarian military plenipotentiary, May 14, 1918, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1832/1.

command of their own officers. In the first two years of the war, the peacetime organization of the army underwent far-reaching changes. Not only were recruits assigned to regiments and divisions from outside the borders of their kingdoms, but entire units were transferred from one contingent to another. The “mixing” of Prussian and non-Prussian soldiers might have been a wartime necessity, but it also created friction between the Supreme Command and the war ministries and monarchs in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart. The performance of mixed units at the same time raised fears among Prussian officers concerning the morale of the soldiers in the trenches. In the autumn of 1916, the Supreme Command’s deputy chief, General Erich Ludendorff, agreed to respect the army’s contingent-based structure. Over the following months, he oversaw a sweeping reorganization of the units at the front.

Ludendorff’s change of course took place at one of the most tumultuous periods of the entire war. It also did not prevent Bavarians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers from serving in the same battalions or regiments. As crises at the front intensified and as trained replacements became scarce in the last two years of the war, the Supreme Command at times chose to ignore the boundaries between the state-based contingents. Ludendorff’s willingness to accommodate the concerns of the *Kontingentsherren* and their ministers nevertheless revealed that compromise remained at the centre of the empire’s military affairs, even though the *Bundesfeldherr* had assumed command of the entire army in August 1914. That the First World War strengthened rather than weakened the army’s contingent-based structure was evident from the debates over postwar military reorganization that took place in the final months of the war. While some Prussian officers certainly hoped that wartime centralization of command and economic planning would result in the creation of a unitary army after the

conclusion of peace, few outside Prussia were willing to consider the abolition of a military structure that continued to serve the interests of the empire's kingdoms. As a result, postwar expectations for the army were shaped by demands for the protection of the military autonomy of the non-Prussian kingdoms and, in the grand duchy of Baden, by the hope that this military autonomy would be extended following the war. Military centralization would therefore have to wait until after defeat and revolution had swept Germany's monarchs from their thrones.

Conclusion

In March 1918, General Erich Ludendorff, the deputy chief of staff in the German Supreme Command, orchestrated a series of offensives against the British and French armies on the Western Front. Over the preceding months, thousands of German soldiers had been transferred to Belgium and France from Eastern Europe, munitions and supplies had been stockpiled in the rear areas, and units had been trained in new tactics designed to break the deadlock of trench warfare. At the same time, the Supreme Command sought to ensure the reliability of the soldiers in the trenches. Responding to demands from the Reichstag for a peace without annexations, official propaganda had been intensified from the summer of 1917 onwards. Mass-produced brochures and regular lectures carried the message that the current hardships were temporary and that unity would guarantee a *Siegfrieden*, or peace of victory.¹

The opening weeks of the spring offensives witnessed spectacular advances, with the German armies capturing more ground in the West than at any point since the first months of the war. Yet neither Britain nor France was forced to sue for peace, and, when the spring offensives lost their momentum, the Allies, bolstered by the arrival of fresh American troops, counterattacked. These far from decisive German successes had been purchased at a heavy cost: between the end of March and mid-July 1918, the German armies on the Western Front suffered around one million casualties. Under these circumstances, many soldiers simply

¹ "Leitsätze für die Aufklärungstätigkeit unter den Truppen," July 29, 1917, in *Militär und Innenpolitik im Weltkrieg 1914-1918*, ed. Wilhelm Deist (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1970), 2:841-6. For the preparations for the spring offensives, see Herwig, *The First World War*, 392-402; Hughes and DiNardo, *Imperial Germany and War*, 407-25. In his memoirs, Ludendorff admitted that already in the autumn of 1917 large numbers of men left the trenches during periods of fighting only to reappear after their units had been withdrawn to the rear areas. Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen*, 434.

stopped fighting. In the final months of the war, “shirking” became a mass movement and a huge number of men – perhaps as many as 750,000 to one million – lingered in hospitals or supply depots behind the lines, separated themselves from their replacement units, or simply wandered about the rear areas. Others surrendered.² By August, even the Supreme Command was forced to admit that its “last throw of the dice” had broken the army’s morale. Advancing soldiers were greeted with shouts of “strikebreakers” and “warmongers” from their retreating comrades on what Ludendorff referred to as “the black day of the German army.”³

Enormous casualties and battlefield defeats strained relations between the German army’s state-based contingents to the breaking point. In a report written in April 1919, Colonel Max Holland, the last of Württemberg’s military plenipotentiaries at General Headquarters, recalled that claims of strikebreaking and warmongering had been mixed with expressions of hostility towards South Germans in the summer of 1918. Prussians had called out to advancing Württembergers: “here come the damned Swabians, who always want to hold the line. Turn around and come with us!”⁴ Shortly before the armistice, Bavaria’s military plenipotentiary, General Paul von Köberle, made similar observations. The divisions between Prussians and Bavarians had become so deep over the preceding four years that wounded soldiers from the two contingents had to be treated in separate wards of a military hospital. In Köberle’s view, the sudden realization that Germany could no longer win the war had also encouraged North

² Wilhelm Deist, “Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreichs. Zur Realität der ‘Dolchstoßlegende’,” in *Das Unrechtsregime. Internationale Forschung über den Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Ursula Büttner (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1986), 1:101-29. Alexander Watson disputes Deist’s claim of a “covert military strike” and instead argues that, from mid-1918 onwards, German soldiers often took part in “ordered surrenders” in which demoralized junior officers arranged for their passage into Allied captivity. Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 184-231.

³ Erich Ludendorff, *Meine Kriegserinnerungen 1914-1918* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1920), 547-551.

⁴ Holland’s postwar report, April 6, 1919, HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 1/2, file 245.

and South Germans to blame one another for the failures at the front. Mutual recriminations had become “the order of the day.” Even Köberle could not resist the temptation to shift blame to his German comrades-in-arms. Of course, he wrote, morale had collapsed in a number of Bavarian regiments since the spring offensives, though certainly “not to a greater extent than among the Prussians.” If Bavarians had surrendered to the advancing Allied troops, this was likely because the flanking soldiers, who were often Prussians, had failed – or been unwilling – to hold their positions.⁵ According to Köberle, it was not only the Prussians who were at fault. An entire Saxon reserve division, he noted in a separate report to the Bavarian war ministry, had surrendered to the enemy after only token resistance. The resulting military situation had made it impossible for even “the greatest optimists to hide their distress.”⁶

In early November 1918, there were few optimists left, either in the trenches or behind the lines. This was especially true at the courts in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart. During the war, the non-Prussian kings had formulated grandiose schemes for territorial expansion that would have seen their monarchical power extend over the *Reichsland*, Poland, and the Baltic states. By the autumn of 1918, these magisterial expectations had evaporated. Even before Chancellor Max von Baden announced Kaiser Wilhelm II’s abdication on November 9, the disintegration of public order in the cities and the restlessness among soldiers in barracks and training grounds convinced Germany’s three *Kontingentsherren* to cut their losses and run. On the evening of November 7, two days before the Kaiser quietly slipped across the border into the Netherlands, King Ludwig III of Bavaria fled Munich. In the next few days, both King

⁵ The report of the Bavarian military plenipotentiary, General Paul von Köberle, to the Bavarian ministry of war, September 16, 1918, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1832/1.

⁶ General Paul von Köberle, Bavarian military plenipotentiary in General Headquarters, to the Bavarian ministry of war, September 9, 1918, BayHStA Munich, IV. Abteilung Kriegsarchiv, MKr 1832/1.

Friedrich August III of Saxony and King Wilhelm II of Württemberg followed the Bavarian ruler's example. One by one, Germany's grand dukes, dukes, and princes retreated to their countryside palaces. Others went into foreign exile. Although several weeks passed before some of the empire's monarchs, such as the King of Württemberg, formally abdicated their thrones, all eventually released their soldiers and civil servants from their oaths of allegiance during the winter of 1918-19. The monarchical foundations and the patchwork of dual loyalties upon which Bismarck had forged German unity between 1866 and 1871 had crumbled.⁷

By dismantling monarchical power, Germany's "de-crowning" in the autumn of 1918 also removed the justification for the army's contingent-based structure. This structure had been created during the Wars of Unification as a means of integrating soldiers from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg into the Prussian-dominated army. General Helmuth von Moltke the Elder's victory over the Austrians at the Battle of Königgrätz in July 1866 had dramatically changed the military and political realities confronting the monarchs of the Third Germany: Prussia, not Austria, would be the likely leader of German unification. Seeking to ensure their continued existence, the rulers of the smallest German states responded by establishing closer relations with Prussia, while King Johann of Saxony, whose lands were occupied by Prussian soldiers, had little choice but to enter the new North German Confederation. King Ludwig II of Bavaria and King Karl of Württemberg found themselves with more room to manoeuvre. Even though they signed defensive alliances with Prussia in the summer of 1866, the South

⁷ For the "de-crowning" of the German empire in the autumn of 1918, see Michael Horn, "Das Ende der Herrschaft der Bundesfürsten des Deutschen Reichs im November 1918," in *Thronverzicht. Die Abdankung in Monarchien vom Mittelalter bis in die Neuzeit*, ed. Susan Richter and Dirk Dirbach (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2010), 267-90; Lothar Machten, *Die Abdankung. Wie Deutschlands gekrönte Häupter aus der Geschichte fielen* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2008), 237-350; Helmut Neuhaus, "Das Ende der Monarchien in Deutschland 1918," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 111 (1991), 102-36.

German kings retained, at least formally, their independence. Wishing to preserve as much of this independence as possible, but with the knowledge that some form of political unification with North Germany was unavoidable in the long-term, these rulers and their ministers worked to enhance their standing as Prussia's allies. In doing so, armies played an important role. Beginning in 1867, the governments of Bavaria and Württemberg carried out sweeping military reforms that introduced Prussian equipment, organization, and training into their armies. These reforms eventually paid dividends. Following the Prusso-German victory over Napoleon III at the Battle of Sedan in September 1870, representatives of Bavaria and Württemberg signed a series of agreements with Bismarck that paved the way for Germany's unification and, at the same time, established the framework for a contingent-based army.

These agreements, together with Saxony's military convention from February 1867, placed the entire German army under the command of the Kaiser and the Prussian General Staff in wartime. Having relinquished this important sovereign power, the three royal commanders of contingents, or *Kontingentsherren*, were reluctant to yield any more ground over the subsequent decades. The introduction of Prussian equipment and uniforms among their soldiers provoked little opposition, in large part because the kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg had agreed to a degree of military standardization during the Wars of Unification. Centralization was another matter entirely. As a result, Prussian attempts to subordinate South German soldiers to imperial army inspectorates or a common supreme military court and to allocate command of non-Prussian formations to Prussian generals heightened resentment in Munich and Stuttgart. This resentment periodically led to bitter disputes between the *Bundesfeldherr* and *Kontingentsherren*. However, because the power of

command, or *Kommandogewalt*, represented one of the most important components of monarchical rule, both sides were often willing to seek common ground based on the existing division of military authority. This inclination towards compromise was also present whenever one of the empire's rulers proposed his brother, nephew, or son for a senior command position. Unable or unwilling to assume active military roles, monarchs increasingly tasked their male heirs or family members with preserving the martial image of their dynasties in the second half of the nineteenth century. The prospect of Bavarian, Württemberg, and even Badenese princes in command of their soldier-subjects was nevertheless viewed as a double-edged sword in Berlin. Their appointments could strengthen the monarchical principle and bolster the legitimacy of the power of command. Still, warrior princes were a risk. If led by members of their own ruling houses, the Kaiser and his advisors argued, soldiers from non-Prussian Germany would soon forget that they had sworn oaths of allegiance to the *Bundesfeldherr*.

Precisely because the Kaiser's authority was limited, religious and small-state loyalties were also viewed with suspicion in Berlin. With little influence over the composition of the Bavarian and Saxon officer corps, the Kaiser's military cabinet, the Prussian war ministry, and even the imperial chancellor feared that Catholics, Jews, and Hanoverians would undermine the "German-patriotic" sentiments among their comrades-in-arms. The threat of dual loyalties was even present in the Prussian contingent. Following the Austro-Prussian War, Germany's smaller states had signed military conventions with Prussia that guaranteed their rulers certain, though largely ceremonial, military rights. Because their armies became Prussian regiments, divisions, and army corps, the Kaiser and his advisors possessed far more authority over the soldiers from North and West Germany than those from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg.

Still, the empire's grand dukes, dukes, and princes retained a voice in military affairs that convinced the Prussian authorities to not only closely monitor the perceived "enemies of the empire" in Bavaria and Saxony, but also the Badenese, Hessians, Oldenburgers, and others within their own contingent's ranks. While dual loyalties were widely considered a threat to discipline and morale in Berlin, the army's contingent-based structure could at the same time strengthen military cohesion. Festive culture in the German army was an amalgamation of state-focused and national events. While large sections of the middle class celebrated the Prusso-German victory over France each year on September 2 – Sedan Day – soldiers from Prussia and non-Prussian Germany commemorated battles from the Wars of Unification in which their own contingents had distinguished themselves. By contrast, the Kaiser's birthday festivities gave Bavarians, Saxons, and Württembergers opportunities to celebrate their ties to the German empire and the *Bundesfeldherr*, while the widespread practice of appointing members of ruling houses as ceremonial colonels created additional links between the army's contingents. These events ensured that allegiances to the Kaiser and to the *Kontingentsherren* existed side-by-side in barracks rooms and on parade grounds after 1871.

In the summer of 1914, the German army therefore marched off to the battlefield as a collection of state-based contingents. Bavarians, Prussians, Saxons, and Württembergers were mobilized in self-contained units and placed under the command of their own officers. The army's peacetime organization was subjected to considerable strain during the First World War. In the first two years of the war, the need to replace massive casualties and respond to rapidly developing situations on geographically distant fronts convinced the Prussian-dominated Supreme Command to transfer individual soldiers and entire regiments from one

contingent to another. Even though this “mixing” of the contingents was borne of wartime necessity, the *Kontingentsherren* were just as unwilling to accept limitations on their military authority as they had been in peacetime. Pressure from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg and fears that its personnel policies would damage the morale of soldiers at the front eventually convinced the Supreme Command to change its course. In October 1916, Ludendorff promised to respect the army’s contingent-based structure and, over the following months, oversaw a sweeping reorganization of units at the front. Ludendorff’s change of course calmed fears in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart that the war would lead to the abolition of the empire’s non-Prussian military institutions. It also helped the Supreme Command navigate one of the most tumultuous periods of the war. Even in the summer and autumn of 1918, and as German units collapsed under the weight of superior Allied manpower and equipment, few government officials and military officers were willing to dismantle a military structure that had served the interests of both Prussia and the non-Prussian kingdoms. Military centralization would have to wait until after defeat and revolution had swept Germany’s monarchs from their thrones.

Between the foundation of the German empire in 1871 and its collapse in the autumn of 1918, the German army remained a federal institution. Success on the battlefields of the Wars of Unification ensured that Prussia’s military institutions exercised enormous influence over the entire German army. While the Kaiser’s military cabinet controlled most personnel appointments, transfers, and dismissals, in the process determining who and who would not hold senior command positions, the Prussian war ministry assembled the military budget for the empire, purchased weapons and equipment, and established the army’s organizational and training standards. Meanwhile, the “demi-gods” of the Prussian General Staff formulated

operational plans that shaped the way in which German soldiers would fight a future war. In order to complete the process of unification, Bismarck had nevertheless felt compelled to make concessions to the smaller kingdoms of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg. The series of military conventions and treaties that were signed with Prussia between 1867 and 1870 gave the monarchs of these three kingdoms a voice in the appointment of some of the empire's highest-ranking officers, the composition and deployment of their own contingents, and the appearance of their soldiers. As a result, independent war ministries, general staffs, and cadet schools continued to exist in Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart following unification. In the subsequent decades, the powers of the non-Prussian kings and the responsibilities of their military institutions became major obstacles to the centralization of command and control under the army's commander-in-chief, the Kaiser. These obstacles could also not easily be overcome by imperial decrees and, until the collapse of the empire in the autumn of 1918, the German army's internal cohesion and military effectiveness hinged on the *Bundesfeldherr's* ability to find common ground with Germany's three *Kontingentsherren*.

The German army was therefore not a unitary institution, but rather a collection of state-based contingents that stood under the orders of the Kaiser only in wartime. Like the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies, it was also burdened by dual loyalties. Soldiers from Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg swore oaths of allegiance to the Kaiser and their own monarchs. Because, in theory, a non-Prussian soldier might be forced to choose between following the orders of the Kaiser, as *Bundesfeldherr*, and his own king, as *Kontingentsherr*, and because the Bavarian contingent remained a "self-contained component of the federal army ... under the orders of His Majesty the King of Bavaria" in peacetime, dual loyalties

remained a serious concern for Prussia's leaders after 1871. Despite this concern, the Kaiser and his advisors were more often than not willing to compromise. Believing that Bismarck's concessions to the non-Prussian kings could not simply be abandoned without jeopardizing the empire's monarchical foundations, they pushed for centralization of command and control under the *Bundesfeldherr*, but not so much as to alienate their counterparts in Munich, Dresden, and Stuttgart. This preference for caution was shared by the empire's kings and their ministers. The military conventions and treaties were, they argued, the most important guarantees for the continued existence of their ruling houses within a unified Germany. The safety of limited concessions was far more appealing than the dangers of open conflict with Berlin. During the First World War, the German army's contingent-based structure proved remarkably durable in large part because the empire's monarchs were willing to share their soldiers' loyalties. That durability, of course, did not suffice to avoid the army's total defeat in November 1918.

At the centre of the German army's contingent-based structure were Germany's monarchs. One of the most jealously guarded prerogatives of a sovereign was his ability to wield military power and, long before Frederick the Great personally led his soldier-subjects into the Austrian province of Silesia in December 1740, monarchs considered it self-evident that they would participate in and, in many cases, personally direct military campaigns. By the mid-nineteenth century, the presence of a ruling monarch on the battlefield was nevertheless considered more a liability than an asset. Under increasing pressure within their own states from reformers and revolutionaries alike, Germany's rulers preferred to leave military affairs to the men who passed through the cadet schools and staff colleges that emerged after the Napoleonic Wars: not only were these professional soldiers more effective commanders, but

monarchs could more easily distance themselves from military defeats if they remained on the sidelines. Still, the distance between sovereigns and the greatest source of their power, their armies, could not be allowed to become too great. The military conventions and treaties that established the German army's decentralized organization between 1867 and 1870 therefore played a crucial role in the public relations efforts of Germany's ruling houses. Having transferred much of their sovereignty to the King of Prussia during unification, the kings of Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg retained varying degrees of influence over the empire's military affairs. Over the subsequent decades, these rulers stubbornly clung to these military rights, defending them against perceived encroachments from Berlin and proudly displaying them at parades, on festive occasions, and during military exercises and manoeuvres. This division of military authority caused Prussia's leaders more than a few headaches, but it also strengthened the monarchical foundations on which Bismarck's empire had been built and protected the interests of the House of Hohenzollern and their fellow German dynasties. The army's contingent-based structure, burdened by dual loyalties and overlapping spheres of control, was able to survive until Germany's defeat, revolution, and the "de-crowning" in the autumn of 1918 precisely because contemporaries viewed it as a necessary evil.

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Appendices¹

Appendix 1 – Monarchs of the German empire

King of Prussia and (from 1871) German Kaiser

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1861 – 1888 | Wilhelm I (1797 – 1888) |
| 1888 | Friedrich III (1831 – 1888) |
| 1888 – 1918 | Wilhelm II (1859 – 1941) |

King of Bavaria

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1864 – 1886 | Ludwig II (1845 – 1886) |
| 1886 – 1913 | Otto (1848 – 1916) |
| 1886 – 1912 | Prince Regent Luitpold (1821 – 1912) |
| 1912 – 1913 | Prince Regent Ludwig (1845 – 1921) |
| 1913 – 1918 | Ludwig III (1845 – 1921) |

King of Saxony

| | |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 1854 – 1873 | Johann (1801 – 1873) |
| 1873 – 1902 | Albert (1828 – 1902) |
| 1902 – 1904 | Georg (1832 – 1904) |
| 1904 – 1918 | Friedrich August III (1865 – 1932) |

King of Württemberg

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1864 – 1891 | Karl (1823 – 1891) |
| 1891 – 1918 | Wilhelm II (1848 – 1921) |

Grand duke of Baden

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1856 – 1907 | Friedrich I (1826 – 1907) |
|-------------|---------------------------|

¹ When not otherwise noted, these appendices have been compiled from Tobias C. Bringmann, *Handbuch der Diplomatie 1815-1963. Auswärtige Missionschefs in Deutschland und deutsche Missionschefs im Ausland von Metternich bis Adenauer* (Munich: K.G. Sauer Verlag, 2001).

1907 – 1918 Friedrich II (1857 – 1928)

Appendix 2 – Germany’s government leaders

Minister-president of Prussia and (from 1871) German chancellor

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1862 – 1890 | Otto Prince von Bismarck (1815 – 1898) |
| 1890 – 1894 | Leo Graf von Caprivi de Caprara de Montecuculi (1831 – 1899) |
| 1894 – 1900 | Chlodwig Prince zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, Prince of Ratibor and Corvey (1819 – 1901) |
| 1900 – 1909 | Bernhard Prince von Bülow (1849 – 1929) |
| 1909 – 1917 | Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg (1856 – 1921) |
| 1917 | Georg Michaelis (1857 – 1936) |
| 1917 – 1918 | Georg Graf von Hertling (1843 – 1919) |
| 1918 | Prince Max von Baden (1867 – 1929) |

Minister-president of Bavaria

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1864 – 1866 | Ludwig Freiherr von der Pfordten (1811 – 1880) |
| 1866 – 1870 | Chlodwig Prince zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, Prince of Ratibor and Corvey (1819 – 1901) |
| 1870 – 1871 | Otto Camillus Graf von Bray-Steinburg (1807 – 1899) |
| 1871 – 1872 | Friedrich Freiherr von Hegnenberg-Dux (1810 – 1872) |
| 1872 – 1880 | Adolf Freiherr von Pfretzschner (1820 – 1901) |
| 1880 – 1890 | Johann Freiherr von Lutz (1826 – 1890) |
| 1890 – 1903 | Krafft Freiherr von Crailsheim (1841 – 1926) |
| 1903 – 1912 | Klemens Graf von Podewils-Dürnitz (1850 – 1922) |
| 1912 – 1917 | Georg Graf von Hertling (1843 – 1919) |
| 1917 – 1918 | Otto Ritter von Dandl (1868 – 1942) |

Minister-president of Saxony

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1858 – 1866 | Friedrich Ferdinand Graf von Beust (1809 – 1886) |
| 1866 – 1871 | Johann Paul Freiherr von Falkenstein (1801 – 1822) |
| 1871 – 1876 | Richard Freiherr von Friesen (1808 – 1884) |
| 1876 – 1891 | Alfred Graf von Fabrice (1818 – 1891) |
| 1891 | Karl von Gerber (1823 – 1891) |
| 1891 – 1895 | Julius Hans von Thümmel (1824 – 1895) |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1895 – 1901 | Heinrich Rudolf Schurig (1835 – 1901) |
| 1901 – 1906 | Karl Georg Levin von Metzsch-Reichenbach (1836 – 1927) |
| 1906 – 1910 | Konrad Wilhelm von Rüger (1837 – 1916) |
| 1910 – 1912 | Viktor Alexander von Otto (1852 – 1912) |
| 1912 – 1914 | Max Freiherr von Hausen (1846 – 1922) |
| 1914 – 1918 | Heinrich Beck (1857 – 1933) |

Minister-president of Württemberg

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1864 – 1870 | Karl Friedrich Gottlob Freiherr Varnbüler von und zu Hemmingen (1809 – 1889) |
| 1871 – 1876 | Johann August Freiherr von Wächter-Lautenbach (1807-1879) |
| 1876 – 1900 | Hermann Freiherr von Mittnacht (1825 – 1909) |
| 1900 – 1901 | Max Freiherr Schott von Schottenstein (1836 – 1917) |
| 1901 – 1906 | Wilhelm August von Breitling (1835 – 1914) |
| 1906 – 1918 | Carl Freiherr von Weizsäcker (1853 – 1926) |
| 1918 | Theodor Liesching (1865 – 1922) |

Minister-president of Baden

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1866 – 1868 | Carl Mathy (1807 – 1868) |
| 1868 – 1876 | Julius Jolly (1823 – 1891) |
| 1876 – 1893 | Ludwig Turban (1821 – 1898) |
| 1893 – 1901 | Wilhelm Nokk (1832 – 1903) |
| 1901 – 1905 | Arthur von Brauer (1845 – 1926) |
| 1905 – 1917 | Alexander Freiherr von Dusch (1851 – 1923) |
| 1917 – 1918 | Heinrich Freiherr von und zu Bodman (1851 – 1929) |

Appendix 3 – Germany's military authorities²

Chief of the Prussian General Staff

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1857 – 1888 | Helmuth Graf von Moltke (1800 – 1891) |
| 1888 – 1891 | Alfred Graf von Waldersee (1832 – 1903) |
| 1891 – 1906 | Alfred Graf von Schlieffen (1833 – 1913) |
| 1906 – 1914 | Helmuth von Moltke (1848 – 1916) |

² Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der deutschen Heere*, 1:1ff.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1914 – 1916 | Erich von Falkenhayn (1861 – 1922) |
| 1916 – 1919 | Paul von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg (1847 – 1934) |

Chief of the King of Prussia's and (from 1871) the Kaiser's military cabinet

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1865 – 1871 | Hermann Hans Henning von Tresckow (1818 – 1900) |
| 1871 – 1888 | Emil Heinrich Ludwig von Albedyll (1824 – 1897) |
| 1888 – 1901 | Wilhelm von Hahnke (1832 – 1912) |
| 1901 – 1908 | Dietrich Graf von Hülsen-Haeseler (1849 – 1908) |
| 1908 – 1918 | Moritz Freiherr von Lyncker (1853 – 1932) |
| 1918 | Ulrich Freiherr von Marschall, called Greiff (1863 – 1923) |

Prussian war minister

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1859 – 1873 | Albrecht Graf von Roon (1803 – 1879) |
| 1873 – 1883 | Georg von Kameke (1817 – 1893) |
| 1883 – 1889 | Paul Bronsart von Schellendorff (1832 – 1891) |
| 1889 – 1890 | Julius von Verdy du Vernois (1832 – 1910) |
| 1890 – 1893 | Hans Karl von Kaltenborn-Stachau (1836 – 1898) |
| 1893 – 1896 | Walther Bronsart von Schellendorff (1833 – 1914) |
| 1896 – 1903 | Heinrich von Goßler (1841 – 1927) |
| 1903 – 1909 | Karl von Einem, called von Rothmaler (1853 – 1934) |
| 1909 – 1913 | Josias von Heeringen (1850 – 1926) |
| 1913 – 1915 | Erich von Falkenhayn (1861 – 1922) |
| 1915 – 1916 | Adolf Wild von Hohenborn (1860 – 1925) |
| 1916 – 1918 | Hermann von Stein (1854 – 1927) |
| 1918 – 1919 | Heinrich Scheuch (1864 – 1946) |

Bavarian war minister

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1866 – 1875 | Sigmund Freiherr von Pranckh (1821 – 1888) |
| 1875 – 1885 | Joseph Ritter von Maillinger (1820 – 1901) |
| 1885 – 1890 | Adolph von Heinleth (1823 – 1895) |
| 1890 – 1893 | Benignus Ritter von Safferling (1825 – 1899) |
| 1893 – 1905 | Adolph Freiherr von Asch zu Asch auf Oberndorf (1839 – 1906) |
| 1905 – 1912 | Carl Graf von Horn (1847 – 1923) |
| 1912 – 1916 | Otto Freiherr Kreß von Kressenstein (1850 – 1929) |
| 1916 – 1918 | Philipp von Hellingrath (1862 – 1939) |

Saxon war minister

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1849 – 1866 | Bernhard von Rabenhorst (1801 – 1873) |
| 1866 – 1891 | Alfred Georg Friedrich Graf von Fabrice (1818 – 1891) |
| 1891 – 1902 | Paul Edler von der Planitz (1837 – 1902) |
| 1902 – 1914 | Max Freiherr von Hausen (1846 – 1922) |
| 1914 | Adolf von Carlowitz (1858 – 1928) |
| 1914 – 1918 | Karl Viktor von Wilsdorf (1857 – 1920) |

Württemberg war minister

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1866 – 1867 | Oskar von Hardegg (1815 – 1877) |
| 1867 – 1870 | Rudolf Freiherr von Wagner-Frommenhausen (1822 – 1891) |
| 1870 – 1874 | Albert von Suckow (1828 – 1893) |
| 1874 – 1883 | Theodor Wundegger von Wundt (1825 – 1882) |
| 1883 – 1892 | Gustav von Steinheil (1832 – 1908) |
| 1892 – 1901 | Maximilian Freiherr Schott von Schottenstein (1836 – 1917) |
| 1901 – 1906 | Albert von Schnürlen (1843 – 1926) |
| 1906 – 1918 | Otto von Marchthaler (1854 – 1920) |

Badenese war minister

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1854 – 1868 | Damian Ludwig (1804 – 1871) |
| 1868 – 1871 | Gustav Friedrich von Beyer (1812 – 1889) |

Appendix 4 – Military plenipotentiaries in the German empireBavarian military plenipotentiary in Berlin and (from 1914) in General Headquarters³

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1869 – 1871 | Carl Freiherr von Freyberg-Eisenberg (1828 – 1889) |
| 1871 – 1878 | Theodor von Fries (1823 – 1909) |
| 1878 – 1884 | Robert Ritter von Xylander (1830 – 1905) |
| 1884 – 1890 | Emil Ritter von Xylander (1835 – 1911) |
| 1890 – 1895 | Hermann Ritter von Haag (1843 – 1935) |
| 1895 – 1901 | Theophil Freiherr Reichlin von Meldegg (1846 – 1910) |

³ Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der deutschen Heere*, 1:717.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1901 – 1904 | Karl Ritter von Endres (1847 – 1907) |
| 1904 – 1911 | Ludwig Freiherr von Gebtsattel (1857 – 1930) |
| 1911 – 1914 | Karl Ritter von Wenninger (1861 – 1917) |
| 1914 – 1915 | Philipp von Hellingrath (1862 – 1939) |
| 1915 – 1916 | Karl Freiherr von Nagel zu Aichberg (1866 – 1919) |
| 1916 – 1917 | Carl Ritter von Koeppel (1854 – 1927) |
| 1917 – 1918 | Bernhard von Hartz (1862 – 1944) |
| 1918 – 1919 | Paul Ritter von Köberle (1866 – 1948) |

Saxon military plenipotentiary in Berlin and (from 1914) in General Headquarters⁴

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1867 – 1870 | Carl August von Brandenstein |
| 1870 – 1873 | Bernhard Freiherr von Holleben, called Normann (1824 – 1897) |
| 1873 – 1883 | Carl Paul Edler von der Planitz (1837 – 1902) |
| 1883 – 1893 | Georg Aurel Eugen von Schlieben (1843 – 1906) |
| 1893 – 1899 | Paul Graf Vitzthum von Eckstädt (1850 – 1911) |
| 1899 – 1904 | Hans Heinrich Krug von Nidda (1857 – 1922) |
| 1904 – 1911 | Hermann Freiherr von Salza und Lichtenau (1858 – 1911) |
| 1911 – 1918 | Louis Friedrich Traugott Leuckart von Weißdorf (1857 – 1933) |
| 1918 | Hans Alfred von Eulitz (1866 – 1945) |

Württemberg military plenipotentiary in Berlin and (from 1914) in General Headquarters⁵

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1867 – 1885 | Wilhelm von Faber du Faur (1819 – 1895) |
| 1885 – 1886 | Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin (1838 – 1917) |
| 1886 – 1888 | Alfred von Sick (1845 – 1906) |
| 1888 – 1892 | Adolf von Neidhardt (1850 – 1930) |
| 1892 – 1900 | Hermann Freiherr von Watter (1848 – 1911) |
| 1900 – 1903 | Otto von Marchthaler (1854 – 1920) |
| 1903 – 1911 | Eugen von Dorrer (1857 – 1916) |
| 1911 – 1918 | Friedrich von Graevenitz (1861 – 1922) |
| 1918 – 1919 | Max Holland (1869 – 1957) |

⁴ Hoffmann, “Die sächsische Armee im Deutschen Reich,” 366.

⁵ “Zur Geschichte der Württembergischen Militärbevollmächtigten,” HStA Stuttgart, Bestand M 10, Findbuch.

Appendix 5 – Prussian envoys in the German empire

Prussian envoy in Munich

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1864 – 1867 | Heinrich VII Prince zu Reuß, younger line (1825 – 1906) |
| 1867 – 1888 | Georg Graf von Werthern (1816 – 1895) |
| 1888 – 1891 | Kuno Graf zu Rantzau (1843 – 1917) |
| 1891 – 1894 | Philipp Prince zu Eulenburg und Hertefeld (1847 – 1921) |
| 1894 – 1895 | Guido Freiherr von Thielmann (1846 – 1929) |
| 1895 – 1902 | Alexander Graf von Monts de Mazin (1852 – 1930) |
| 1902 – 1907 | Friedrich Graf von Pourtalès (1853 – 1928) |
| 1907 – 1910 | Karl Eberhard Friedrich von Schlözer (1854 – 1916) |
| 1911 – 1919 | Carl-Georg von Treutler (1858 – 1933) |

Prussian envoy in Dresden

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1865 – 1867 | Gustav von der Schulenburg-Priemern (1814 – 1890) |
| 1867 – 1873 | Friedrich Christian von Eichmann (1826 – 1912) |
| 1873 – 1878 | Eberhard Graf zu Solms-Sonnenwalde (1825 – 1912) |
| 1879 – 1906 | Carl Graf von Dönhoff (1833 – 1906) |
| 1906 – 1911 | Hans Prince zu Hohenlohe-Oehringen (1858 – 1945) |
| 1912 – 1914 | Alfred von Bülow (1851 – 1916) |
| 1914 – 1918 | Ulrich Graf von Schwerin (1864 – 1930) |

Prussian envoy in Stuttgart

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1865 – 1867 | Julius Freiherr von Canitz und Dallwitz (1815 – 1894) |
| 1867 – 1872 | Adalbert Freiherr von Rosenberg (1819 – 1880) |
| 1872 – 1878 | Anton Iwan Freiherr von Magnus (1821 -1882) |
| 1879 – 1881 | Tassilo von Heydebrand und der Lasa (1818 – 1899) |
| 1881 – 1882 | Otto von Bülow (1827 – 1901) |
| 1882 – 1890 | Ludwig Graf von Wesdehlen (1833 – 1904) |
| 1890 – 1891 | Philipp Prince zu Eulenburg und Hertefeld (1847 – 1921) |
| 1891 – 1893 | Johann Anton Freiherr Saurma von der Jeltsch (1836 – 1900) |
| 1893 – 1897 | Theodor von Holleben (1840 -1913) |
| 1897 – 1902 | Karl Eduard von Derenthall (1835 – 1919) |
| 1902 – 1907 | Ludwig Graf von Plessen-Cronstern (1848 – 1929) |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1907 – 1914 | Karl Gustav von Below-Rantzau (1855 – 1940) |
| 1914 – 1915 | Wilhelm Graf von Mirbach-Harff (1871 – 1918) |
| 1915 – 1918 | Edwin Freiherr von Seckendorff (1854 – 1933) |

Prussian envoy in Karlsruhe

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1859 – 1884 | Albert Graf von Flemming (1813 – 1884) |
| 1884 – 1914 | Karl von Eisendecker (1841 – 1934) |

Appendix 6 – Bavarian envoys in the German empire

Bavarian envoy in Berlin

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1860 – 1867 | Ludwig de Garnerin Graf von Montgelas (1814 – 1892) |
| 1868 – 1877 | Maximilian Freiherr von Pergler von Perglas (1817 – 1893) |
| 1877 – 1880 | Gideon Ritter von Rudhart (1833 – 1898) |
| 1880 – 1919 | Hugo Graf von und zu Lerchenfeld auf Koefering (1843 – 1925) |

Bavarian envoy in Dresden

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1847 – 1868 | Maximilian Freiherr von Gise (1817 – 1890) |
| 1868 – 1869 | August Lothar Graf von Reigersberg (1815 – 1888) |
| 1870 – 1874 | Ludwig Graf von Paumgarten-Frauenstein (1821 – 1883) |
| 1874 – 1883 | Rudolf Freiherr von Gasser (1829 – 1904) |
| 1883 – 1887 | Gideon Ritter von Rudhart (1833 – 1898) |
| 1887 – 1903 | Friedrich Freiherr von Niethammer (1831 – 1911) |
| 1903 – 1916 | Eduard de Garnerin Graf von Montgelas (1854 – 1916) |
| 1916 – 1919 | Ernst Freiherr von Grunelius (1864 – 1943) |

Bavarian envoy in Stuttgart (also accredited to Karlsruhe, 1887 – 1918)

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1859 – 1868 | August Lothar Graf von Reigersberg (1815 – 1888) |
| 1868 – 1874 | Rudolf Freiherr von Gasser (1829 – 1904) |
| 1874 – 1895 | Karl Graf von Tauffkirchen-Guttenberg (1826 – 1895) |
| 1895 – 1907 | Kurt Freiherr von der Pfordten (1847 – 1907) |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1907 – 1909 | Otto Freiherr von Ritter zu Groenesteyn (1864 – 1940) |
| 1909 – 1920 | Karl Graf von Moy de Sons (1863 – 1932) |

Bavarian envoy in Karlsruhe

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1854 – 1867 | Konrad Adolf Freiherr von Malsen (1792 – 1867) |
| 1867 – 1871 | Eduard Riederer Freiherr von Paar zu Schönau (1823 – 1892) |

Appendix 7 – Saxon envoys in the German empire

Saxon envoy in Berlin

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1866 – 1873 | Hans Freiherr von Könneritz (1820 – 1911) |
| 1873 – 1885 | Oswald von Nostitz-Wallwitz (1830 – 1885) |
| 1885 – 1906 | Wilhelm Graf von Hohenthal und Bergen (1853 – 1909) |
| 1906 – 1909 | Christoph Graf Vitzthum von Eckstädt (1863 – 1944) |
| 1909 – 1916 | Ernst Freiherr von Salza und Lichtenau (1860 – 1926) |
| 1916 – 1918 | Hans von Nostitz-Drzewicki (1863 – 1958) |

Saxon envoy in Munich (also accredited to Stuttgart, 1852 – 1918, and Karlsruhe, 1877 – 1918)

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1864 – 1866 | Hans Freiherr von Könneritz (1820 – 1911) |
| 1867 – 1874 | Richard Leo Graf von Könneritz (1828 – 1883) |
| 1874 – 1898 | Oswald Freiherr von Fabrice (1820 – 1898) |
| 1898 – 1914 | Heinrich August Luitbert Freiherr von Friesen (1847 – 1931) |
| 1914 – 1918 | Robert von Stieglitz (1865 – 1933) |

Appendix 8 – Württemberg envoys in the German empire

Württemberg envoy in Berlin (also accredited to Dresden, 1852 – 1881, 1894 – 1918)

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1866 – 1880 | Carl Freiherr von Spitzemberg (1826 – 1880) |
|-------------|---|

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1881 – 1886 | Fidel von Baur-Breitenfeld (1834 – 1886) |
| 1887 – 1890 | Ferdinand Graf von Zeppelin (1838 – 1918) |
| 1890 – 1894 | Friedrich Rudolf Karl von Moser (1840 – 1909) |
| 1894 – 1918 | Axel Freiherr Varnbüler von und zu Hemmingen (1851 – 1937) |

Württemberg envoy in Munich

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1844 – 1868 | Ferdinand Christoph Graf von Degenfeld-Schonburg (1802 – 1876) |
| 1868 – 1906 | Oskar Freiherr von Soden (1831 – 1906) |
| 1906 – 1909 | Rudolf Moser von Filsek (1840 – 1909) |
| 1909 – 1933 | Karl Moser von Filsek (1869 – 1949) |

Württemberg envoy in Karlsruhe

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1866 – 1868 | Oskar Freiherr von Soden (1831 – 1906) |
| 1869 – 1872 | Fidel von Baur-Breitenfeld (1834 – 1886) |