

Germany and the Next War

By General Friedrich von Bernhardi

(1911)

Friedrich von Bernhardi (1849-1930), born of Estonian-German parents, was the outstanding military writer of his day. From 1898 to 1901 he was chief of the war historical section of the General Staff; in 1909 he became the commanding general of the Seventh Army Corps. *Germany and the Next War* was the second volume of *Vom heutigen Kriege* (*On War Today*). Bernhardi wrote under the direct influence of the Second Morocco crisis and can scarcely disguise his impatience and alarm over the government's lack of determination. Criticism of Germany's current leadership is implicit throughout the excerpts translated here.

Bernhardi's ideas did not correspond to the official views of the kaiser's government or even the general staff, but they were fully in keeping with those of the extreme nationalists in the Pan-German League. War was, according to men of these views, a right and a duty, a biological imperative sanctioned by the findings of Darwin. The choice was expansionism or certain death, "world power or decline." Invoking a higher morality, geopolitics, the logic of history, and citing Bismarck as the ultimate authority, Bernhardi advocated aggressive war, for which the nation had to be prepared materially and psychologically.

Negotiating conflicts of interest between the Great Powers could not be considered a serious option. It was rather a sign of weakness. He preached the necessity of war with an urgency bordering on panic. His book caused a sensation at home and abroad and was in its ninth edition by the outbreak of the world war.

Chapter 1: The Right to Make War

Since 1795, when Immanuel Kant published in his old age his treatise on "Perpetual Peace," many have considered it an established fact that war is the destruction of all good and the origin of all evil. In spite of all that history teaches, no conviction is felt that the struggle between nations is inevitable, and the growth of civilization is credited with a power to which war must yield. But, undisturbed by such human theories and the change of times, war has again and again marched from country to country with the clash of arms, and has proved its destructive as well as creative and purifying power. It has not succeeded in teaching mankind what its real nature is. Long periods of war, far from convincing men of the necessity of war, have, on the contrary, always revived the wish to exclude war, where possible, from the political intercourse of nations.

This wish and this hope are widely disseminated even today. The maintenance of peace is lauded as the only goal at which statesmanship should aim. This unqualified desire for peace has obtained in our days a quite peculiar power over men's spirits. This aspiration finds its public expression in peace leagues and peace congresses; the Press of every country and of every party opens its columns to it. The current in this direction is, indeed, so strong that the majority of Governments profess—outwardly, at any rate—that the necessity of maintaining peace is the real aim of their policy; while when a war

breaks out the aggressor is universally stigmatized, and all Governments exert themselves, partly in reality, partly in pretense, to extinguish the conflagration.

Pacific ideals, to be sure, are seldom the real motive of their action. They usually employ the need of peace as a cloak under which to promote their own political aims. This was the real position of affairs at the Hague Congresses,[1] and this is also the meaning of the action of the United States of America, who in recent times have earnestly tried to conclude treaties for the establishment of Arbitration Courts, first and foremost with England, but also with Japan, France, and Germany. No practical results, it must be said, have so far been achieved.

We can hardly assume that a real love of peace prompts these efforts. This is shown by the fact that precisely those Powers which, as the weaker, are exposed to aggression, and therefore were in the greatest need of international protection, have been completely passed over in the American proposals for Arbitration Courts. It must consequently be assumed that very matter-of-fact political motives led the Americans, with their commercial instincts, to take such steps, and induced "perfidious Albion" [2] to accede to the proposals. We may suppose that England intended to protect her rear in event of a war with Germany, but that America wished to have a free hand in order to follow her policy of sovereignty in Central America without hindrance, and to carry out her plans regarding the Panama Canal in the exclusive interests of America. Both countries certainly entertained the hope of gaining advantage over the other signatory of the treaty, and of winning the lion's share for themselves. Theorists and fanatics imagine that they see in the efforts of President Taft a great step forward on the path to perpetual peace, and enthusiastically agree with him. Even the Minister for Foreign Affairs in England, with well-affected idealism, termed the procedure of the United States an era in the history of mankind.

This desire for peace has rendered most civilized nations anemic, and marks a decay of spirit and political courage such as has often been shown by a race of Epigoni. "It has always been," H[einrich] von Treitschke tells us, "the weary, spiritless, and exhausted ages which have played with the dream of perpetual peace." [3]

Everyone will, within certain limits, admit that the endeavors to diminish the dangers of war and to mitigate the sufferings which war entails are justifiable. It is an incontestable fact that war temporarily disturbs industrial life, interrupts quiet economic development, brings widespread misery with it, and emphasizes the primitive brutality of man. It is therefore a most desirable consummation if wars for trivial reasons should be rendered impossible, and if efforts are made to restrict the evils which follow necessarily in the train of war, so far as is compatible with the essential nature of war. All that the Hague Peace Congress has accomplished in this limited sphere deserves, like every permissible humanization of war, universal acknowledgment. But it is quite another matter if the object is to abolish war entirely, and to deny its necessary place in historical development.

This aspiration is directly antagonistic to the great universal laws which rule all life. War is a biological necessity of the first importance, a regulative element in the life of mankind which cannot be dispensed with, since without it an unhealthy development will follow, which excludes every advancement of the race, and therefore all real civilization. "War is the father of all things." (Heraclitus) The sages of antiquity long before Darwin recognized this.

The struggle for existence is, in the life of Nature, the basis of all healthy development. All existing things show themselves to be the result of contesting forces. So in the life of man the struggle is not merely the destructive, but the life-giving principle. "To supplant or to be supplanted is the essence of life," says Goethe, and the strong life gains the upper hand. The law of the stronger holds good everywhere. Those forms survive which are able to procure themselves the most favorable conditions of life, and to assert themselves in the universal economy of Nature. The weaker succumb. This struggle is regulated and restrained by the unconscious sway of biological laws and by the interplay of opposite forces. In the plant world and the animal world this process is worked out in unconscious tragedy. In the human race it is consciously carried out, and regulated by social ordinances. The man of strong will and strong intellect tries by every means to assert himself, the ambitious strive to rise, and in this effort the individual is far from being guided merely by the consciousness of right. The life-work and the life-struggle of many men are determined, doubtless, by unselfish and ideal motives, but to a far greater extent the less noble passions—craving for possessions, enjoyment and honor, envy and the thirst for revenge—determine men's actions. Still more often, perhaps, it is the need to live which brings down even natures of a higher mold into the universal struggle for existence and enjoyment.

There can be no doubt on this point. The nation is made up of individuals, the state of communities. The motive which influences each member is prominent in the whole body. It is a persistent struggle for possessions, power, and sovereignty, which primarily governs the relations of one nation to another, and right is respected so far only as it is compatible with advantage. So long as there are men who have human feelings and aspirations, so long as there are nations who strive for an enlarged sphere of activity, so long will conflicting interests come into being and occasions for making war arise.

"The natural law, to which all laws of Nature can be reduced, is the law of struggle. All intrasocial property, all thoughts, inventions, and institutions, as, indeed, the social system itself, are a result of the intrasocial struggle, in which one survives and another is cast out. The extrasocial, the supersocial struggle which guides the external development of societies, nations, and races, is war. The internal development, the intrasocial struggle, is man's daily work—the struggle of thoughts, feelings, wishes, sciences, activities. The outward development, the supersocial struggle, is the sanguinary struggle of nations—war. In what does the creative power of this struggle consist? In growth and decay, in the victory of the one factor and in the defeat of the other! This struggle is a creator, since it eliminates." (Claus Wagner, "War as the Creative World Principle")

That social system in which the most efficient personalities possess the greatest influence will show the greatest vitality in the intrasocial struggle. In the extrasocial struggle, in war, the nation will conquer which can throw into the scale the greatest physical, mental, moral, material, and political power, and is therefore the best able to defend itself. War will furnish such a nation with favorable vital conditions, enlarged possibilities of expansion and widened influence, and thus promote the progress of mankind; for it is clear that those intellectual and moral factors which insure superiority in war are also those which render possible a general progressive development. They confer victory because the elements of progress are latent in them. Without war, inferior or decaying races would easily choke the growth of healthy budding elements, and a universal decadence would follow....

Struggle is, therefore, a universal law of Nature, and the instinct of self-preservation which leads to struggle is acknowledged to be a natural condition of existence. "Man is a fighter." Self-sacrifice is a renunciation of life, whether in the existence of the individual or in the life of states, which are agglomerations of individuals. The first and paramount law is the assertion of one's own independent existence. By self-assertion alone can the state maintain the conditions of life for its citizens, and insure them the legal protection which each man is entitled to claim from it. This duty of self-assertion is by no means satisfied by the mere repulse of hostile attacks; it includes the obligation to assure the possibility of life and development to the whole body of the nation embraced by the state.

Strong, healthy, and flourishing nations increase in numbers. From a given moment they require a continual expansion of their frontiers, they require new territory for the accommodation of their surplus population. Since almost every part of the globe is inhabited, new territory must, as a rule be obtained at the cost of its possessors—that is today, by conquest, which thus becomes a law of necessity.

The right of conquest is universally acknowledged

Chapter 5: World Power or Downfall

In discussing the duties which fall to the German nation from its history and its general as well as particular endowments, we attempted to prove that a consolidation and expansion of our position among the Great Powers of Europe, and an extension of our colonial possessions, must be the basis of our future development.

The political questions thus raised intimately concern all international relations, and should be thoroughly weighed. We must not aim at the impossible. A reckless policy would be foreign to our national character and our high aims and duties. But we must aspire to the possible, even at the risk of war. This policy we have seen to be both our right and our duty. The longer we look at things with folded hands, the harder it will be to make up the start which the other Powers have gained on us....

The sphere in which we can realize our ambition is circumscribed by the hostile intentions of the other World Powers, by the existing territorial conditions, and by the armed force which is at the back of both. Our policy must necessarily be determined by the consideration of these conditions. We must accurately, and without bias or timidity, examine the circumstances which turn the scale when the forces which concern us are weighed one against the other

We see the European Great Powers divided into two great camps.

On the one side Germany, Austria, and Italy have concluded a defensive alliance, whose sole object is to guard against hostile aggression. In this alliance the two first-named states form the solid, probably unbreakable, core, since by the nature of things they are intimately connected. The geographical conditions force this result. The two states combined form a compact series of territories from the Adriatic to the North Sea and the Baltic. Their close union is due also to historical national and political conditions. Austrians have fought shoulder to shoulder with Prussians and Germans of the Empire on a hundred battlefields; Germans are the backbone of the Austrian dominions, the bond of union that holds together the different nationalities of the Empire. Austria,

more than Germany, must guard against the inroads of Slavism, since numerous Slavonic races are comprised in her territories. There has been no conflict of interests between the two states since the struggle for the supremacy in Germany was decided. [4] The maritime and commercial interests of the one point to the south and the southeast, those of the other to the north. Any feebleness in the one must react detrimentally on the political relations of the other. A quarrel between Germany and Austria would leave both states at the mercy of overwhelmingly powerful enemies. The possibility of each maintaining its political position depends on their standing by each other. It may be assumed that the relations uniting the two states will be permanent so long as Germans and Magyars are the leading nationalities in the Danubian monarchy. It was one of the master-strokes of Bismarck's policy to have recognized the community of Austro-German interests even during the war of 1866, and boldly to have concluded a peace which rendered such an alliance possible.

The weakeners of the Austrian Empire lies in the strong admixture of Slavonic elements, which are hostile to the German population, and show many signs of Pan-Slavism. It is not at present, however, strong enough to influence the political position of the Empire.

Italy, also, is bound to the Triple Alliance by her true interests. The antagonism to Austria, which has run through Italian history, will diminish when the needs of expansion in other spheres, and of creating a natural channel for the increasing population, are fully recognized by Italy. Neither condition is impossible. Irredentism [5] will then lose its political significance, for the position, which belongs to Italy from her geographical situation and her past history, and will promote her true interests if attained, cannot be won in a war with Austria. It is the position of a leading political and commercial Mediterranean Power. That is the natural heritage which she can claim. Neither Germany nor Austria is a rival in this claim, but France, since she has taken up a permanent position on the coast of North Africa, and especially in Tunis, has appropriated a country which would have been the most natural colony for Italy, and has, in point of fact, been largely colonized by Italians. It would, in my opinion, have been politically right for us, even at the risk of a war with France, to protest against this annexation, and to preserve the territory of Carthage for Italy. We should have considerably strengthened Italy's position on the Mediterranean, and created a cause of contention between Italy and France that would have added to the security of the Triple Alliance.

The weakness of this alliance consists in its purely defensive character. It offers a certain security against hostile aggression, but does not consider the necessary development of events, and does not guarantee to any of its members help in the prosecution of its essential interests. It is based on a status quo, which was fully justified in its day, but has been left far behind by the march of political events. Prince Bismarck, in his "Thoughts and Reminiscences," pointed out that this alliance would not always correspond to the requirements of the future. Since Italy found the Triple Alliance did not aid her Mediterranean policy, she tried to effect a pacific agreement with England and France, and accordingly [in effect] retired from the Triple Alliance. The results of this policy are manifest today. Italy, under an undisguised arrangement with England and France, but in direct opposition to the interests of the Triple Alliance, attacked Turkey, in order to conquer Tripoli, the required colonial territory. This undertaking brought her to the brink of a war with Austria, which, as the supreme Power in the Balkan Peninsula, can never tolerate the encroachment of Italy into those regions.

The Triple Alliance, which in itself represents a natural league, has suffered a rude shock. The ultimate reason for this result is found in the fact that the parties concerned with a narrow, shortsighted policy look only to their immediate private interests, and pay no regard to the vital needs of the members of the league. The alliance will not regain its original strength until, under the protection of the allied armies, each of the three states can satisfy its political needs. We must therefore be solicitous to promote Austria's position in the Balkans, and Italy's interests on the Mediterranean. Only then can we calculate on finding in our allies assistance towards realizing our own political endeavors. Since, however, it is against all our interests to strengthen Italy at the cost of Turkey, which is, as we shall see, an essential member of the Triple Alliance, we must repair the errors of the past, and in the next great war win back Tunis for Italy. Only then will Bismarck's great conception of the Triple Alliance reveal its real meaning. But the Triple Alliance, so long as it only aims at negative results, and leaves it to the individual allies to pursue their vital interests exclusively by their own resources, will be smitten with sterility. On the surface, Italy's Mediterranean interests do not concern us closely. But their real importance for us is shown by the consideration that the withdrawal of Italy from the Triple Alliance, or, indeed, its secession to an Anglo-Franco-Russian entente, would probably be the signal for a great European war against us and Austria. Such a development would gravely prejudice the lasting interests of Italy, for she would forfeit her political independence by so doing, and incur the risk of sinking to a sort of vassal state of France. Such a contingency is not unthinkable, for, in judging the policy of Italy, we must not disregard her relations with England as well as with France.

England is clearly a hindrance in the way of Italy's justifiable efforts to win a prominent position in the Mediterranean. She possesses in Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, and Aden a chain of strong bases, which secure in the sea-route to India, and she has an unqualified interest commanding this great road through the Mediterranean. England's Mediterranean fleet is correspondingly strong and would—especially in combination with the French Mediterranean squadron—seriously menace the coasts of Italy, should that country be entangled in a war against England and France. Italy is therefore obviously concerned in avoiding such a war, as long as the balance of maritime power is unchanged. She is thus in an extremely difficult double position; herself a member of the Triple Alliance, she is in a situation which compels her to make overtures to the opponents of that alliance, so long as her own allies can afford no trustworthy assistance to her policy of development. It is our interest to reconcile Italy and Turkey so far as we can.

France and Russia have united in opposition to the Central European Triple Alliance. France's European policy is overshadowed by the idea of *revanche*. For that she makes the most painful sacrifices; for that she has forgotten the hundred years' enmity against England and the humiliation of Fashoda. [6] She wishes first to take vengeance for the defeats of 1870-71, which wounded her national pride to the quick; she wishes to raise her political prestige by a victory over Germany, and, if possible, to regain that former supremacy on the continent of Europe which she so long and brilliantly maintained; she wishes, if fortune smiles on her arms, to reconquer Alsace and Lorraine. But she feels too weak for an attack on Germany. Her whole foreign policy, in spite of all protestations of peace, follows the single aim of gaining allies for this attack. Her alliance with Russia, her entente with England, are inspired with this spirit; her present intimate relations with this latter nation are traceable to the fact that the French policy

hoped, and with good reason, for more active help from England's hostility to Germany than from Russia

Since France has succeeded in bringing her military strength to approximately the same level as Germany, since she has acquired in her North African Empire the possibility of considerably increasing that strength, since she has completely outstripped Germany in the sphere of colonial policy, and has not only kept up, but also revived, the French sympathies of Alsace and Lorraine, the conclusion is obvious: France will not abandon the paths of an anti-German policy, but will do her best to excite hostility against us, and to thwart German interests in every quarter of the globe. When she came to an understanding with the Italians that she should be given a free hand in Morocco if she allowed them to occupy Tripoli, a wedge was driven into the Triple Alliance which threatens to split it. It may be regarded as highly improbable that she will maintain honorably and with no [second thoughts] the obligations undertaken in the interests of German commerce in Morocco. The suppression of these interests was, in fact, a marked feature of the French Morocco policy, which was conspicuously anti-German. The French policy was so successful that we shall have to reckon more than ever on the hostility of France in the future. It must be regarded as quite unthinkable proposition that an agreement between France and Germany can be negotiated before the question between them has been once more decided by arms. Such an agreement is the less likely now that France sides with England, to whose interest it is to repress Germany but strengthen France. Another picture meets our eyes if we turn to the East, where the giant Russian Empire towers above all others.

The Empire of the Czar, in consequence of its defeat in Manchuria, and of the revolution which was precipitated by the disastrous war, is following apparently a policy of recuperation.[7] It has tried to come to an understanding with Japan in the Far East, and with England in Central Asia; in the Balkans its policy aims at the maintenance of the status quo. So far it does not seem to have entertained any idea of war with Germany ... the murder of Stolypin [8] with its accompanying events showed, as it were by a flash of lightning, a dreadful picture of internal disorder and revolutionary intrigue. It is improbable, therefore, that Russia would now be inclined to make armed intervention in favor of France. The Russo-French alliance is not, indeed, swept away, and there is no doubt that Russia would, if the necessity arose, meet her obligations; but the tension has been temporarily relaxed, and an improvement in the Russo-German relations has been effected, although this state of things was sufficiently well paid for by the concessions of Germany in North Persia.

It is quite obvious that this policy of marking time, which Russia is adopting for the moment, can only be transitory. The requirements of the mighty Empire irresistibly compel an expansion toward the sea, whether in the Far East, where it hopes to gain ice-free harbors, or in the direction of the Mediterranean, where the Crescent still glitters on the dome of St. Sophia [in Constantinople]. After a successful war, Russia would hardly hesitate to seize the mouth of the Vistula, at the possession of which she has long aimed, and thus to strengthen appreciably her position in the Baltic.

Supremacy in the Balkan Peninsula, free entrance into the Mediterranean, and a strong position on the Baltic, are the goals to which the European policy of Russia has naturally long been directed. She feels herself, also, the leading power of the Slavonic races, and has for many years been busy in encouraging and extending the spread of this element into Central Europe.

Pan-Slavism is still hard at work.

It is hard to foresee how soon Russia will come out from her retirement and again tread the natural paths of her international policy. Her present political attitude depends considerably on the person of the present Emperor, who believes in the need of leaning upon a strong monarchical state, such as Germany is, and also on the character of the internal development of the mighty Empire. The whole body of the nation is so tainted with revolutionary and moral infection, and the peasantry is plunged in such economic disorder, that it is difficult to see from what elements a vivifying force may spring up capable of restoring a healthy condition

Doubtless these conditions must exercise a decisive influence on the Franco-Russian Alliance. The interests of the two allies are not identical. While France aims solely at crushing Germany by an aggressive war, Russia from the first has more defensive schemes in view. She wishes to secure herself against any interference by the Powers of Central Europe in the execution of her political plans in the South and East, and at the same time, at the price of an alliance, to raise, on advantageous terms in France, the loans which were so much needed. Russia at present has no inducement to seek an aggressive war with Germany or to take part in one. Of course, every further increase of the German power militates against the Russian interests. We shall therefore always find her on the side of those who try to cross our political paths.

England has recently associated herself with the Franco-Russian Alliance. She has made an arrangement in Asia with Russia by which the spheres of influence of the two parties are delimited, while with France she has come to terms in the clear intention of suppressing Germany under all circumstances, if necessary by force of arms....

This policy of England is, on superficial examination, not very comprehensible. Of course, German industries and trade have lately made astounding progress, and the German navy is growing to a strength which commands respect. We are certainly a hindrance to the plans which England is prosecuting in Asiatic Turkey and Central Africa. This may well be distasteful to the English from economic as well as political and military aspects. but, on the other hand, the American competition in the domain of commercial politics is far keener than the German. The American navy is at the present moment stronger than the German, and will henceforth maintain this precedence. Even the French are on the point of building a formidable fleet, and their colonial Empire, so far as territory is concerned, is immensely superior to ours. Yet, in spite of all these considerations, the hostility of the English is primarily directed against us. It is necessary to adopt the English standpoint in order to understand the line of thought which guides the English politicians. I believe that the solution of the problem is to be found in the wide ramifications of English interests in every part of the world.

[Bernhardi spells out the growing commercial and naval rivalry posed by American developments.]

There is another danger which concerns England more closely and directly threatens her vitality. This is due to the nationalist movement in India and Egypt, to the growing power of Islam, to the agitation for independence in the great colonies, as well as to the supremacy of the Low-German [Dutch] element in South Africa.

Turkey is the only state which might seriously threaten the English position in Egypt by land. This contingency gives to the national movement in Egypt an importance which it would not otherwise possess; it clearly shows that England intensely fears every Pan-Islamic movement. She is trying with all the resources of political intrigue to undermine the growing power of Turkey,...

While so many dangers, in the future at least, threaten both at home and abroad, English imperialism has failed to link the vast Empire together, either for purposes of commerce or defense, more closely than hitherto....

All these circumstances constitute a grave menace to the stability of England's Empire, and these dangers largely influence England's attitude toward Germany.

England may have to tolerate the rivalry of North America in her imperial and commercial ambitions, but the competition of Germany must be stopped. If England is forced to fight America, the German fleet must not be in a position to help the Americans. Therefore, it must be destroyed.

A similar line of thought is suggested by the eventuality of a great English colonial war, which would engage England's fleets in far distant parts of the world. England knows the German needs and capabilities of expansion, and may well fear that a German Empire with a strong fleet might use such an opportunity for obtaining that increase of territory which England grudges. We may thus explain the apparent indifference of England to the French schemes of aggrandizement. France's capability of expansion is exhausted from insufficient increase of population. She can no longer be dangerous to England as a nation, and would soon fall a victim to English lust of Empire, if only Germany were conquered.

The wish to get rid of the dangers presumably threatening from the German quarter is all the more real since geographical conditions offer a prospect of crippling the German overseas commerce without any excessive efforts. The comparative weakness of the German fleet, contrasted with the vast superiority of the English navy, allows a correspondingly easy victory to be anticipated, especially if the French fleet cooperates. The possibility, therefore, of quickly and completely getting rid of one rival, in order to have a free hand for all other contingencies, looms very near, and undoubtedly presents a practicable means of placing the naval power of England on a firm footing for years to come, of annihilating German commerce, and of checking the importance of German interests in Africa and North Asia.

The hostility to Germany is also sufficiently evident in other matters. It has always been England's object to maintain a certain balance of power between the continental nations of Europe, and to prevent any one of them attaining a pronounced supremacy. While these states crippled and hindered each other from playing any active part on the world's stage, England acquired an opportunity of following out her own purposes undisturbed, and of founding that world Empire which she now holds. This policy she still continues, for so long as the Powers of Europe tie each other's hands, her own supremacy is uncontested. It follows directly from this that England's aim must be to repress Germany, but strengthen France; for Germany at the present moment is the only European state which threatens to win a commanding position; but France is her born rival, and cannot keep on level terms with her stronger neighbor on the East, unless she adds to her forces and is helped by her allies. Thus the hostility to Germany,

from this aspect also, is based on England's most important interests, and we must treat it as axiomatic and self-evident.

The argument is often adduced that England by a war with Germany would chiefly injure herself, since she would lose the German market, which is the best purchaser of her industrial products, and would be deprived of the very considerable German import trade. I fear that from the English point of view these conditions would be an additional incentive to war. England would hope to acquire, in place of the lost German market, a large part of those markets which had been supplied by Germany before the war, and the want of German imports would be a great stimulus, and to some extent a great benefit, to English industries.

English policy might, however, strike out a different line, and attempt to come to terms with Germany instead of fighting. This would be a most desirable course for us. A Triple Alliance—Germany, England, and America—has been suggested. But for such a union with Germany to be possible, England must have resolved to give a free course to German development side by side with her own, to allow the enlargement of our colonial power, and to offer no political hindrances to our commercial and industrial competition. She must, therefore, have renounced her traditional policy, and contemplate an entirely new grouping of the Great Powers in the world.

It cannot be assumed that English pride and self-interest will consent to that. The continuous agitation against Germany, under the tacit approval of the Government, which is kept up not only by the majority of the Press, but by a strong party in the country, the latest statements of English politicians, the military preparations in the North Sea, and the feverish acceleration of naval construction, are unmistakable indications that England intends to persist in her anti-German policy. The uncompromising hostility of England and her efforts to hinder every expansion of Germany's power were openly shown in the very recent Morocco question.[9] Those who think themselves capable of impressing on the world the stamp of their spirit, do not resign the headship without a struggle, when they think victory is in their grasp.

A pacific agreement with England is, after all, a will-o'-the-wisp which no serious German statesman would trouble to follow. We must always keep the possibility of war with England before our eyes, and arrange our political and military plans accordingly

If we look at these conditions as a whole, it appears that on the continent of Europe the power of the Central European Triple Alliance and that of the states united against it by alliance and agreement balance each other, provided that Italy belongs to the league. If we take into calculation the imponderabilia, whose weight can only be guessed at, the scale is inclined slightly in favor of the Triple Alliance. On the other hand, England indisputably rules the sea. In consequence of her crushing naval superiority when allied with France, and of the geographical conditions, she may cause the greatest damage to Germany by cutting off her maritime trade. There is also a not inconsiderable army available for a continental war. When all considerations are taken into account, our opponents have a political superiority not to be underestimated. If France succeeds in strengthening her army by large colonial levies and a strong English landing-force, this superiority would be asserted on land also. If Italy really withdraws from the Triple Alliance, very distinctly superior forces will be united against Germany and Austria.

Under these conditions the position of Germany is extraordinarily difficult. We not only require for the full material development of our nation, on a scale corresponding to its intellectual importance, an extended political basis, but, as explained in the previous chapter, we are compelled to obtain space for our increasing population and markets for our growing industries. But at every step which we take in this direction England will resolutely oppose us. English policy may not yet have made the definite decision to attack us; but it doubtless wishes, by all and every means, even the most extreme, to hinder every further expansion of German international influence and of German maritime power. The recognized political aims of England and the attitude of the English Government leave no doubt on this point. But if we were involved in a struggle with England, we can be quite sure that France would not neglect the opportunity of attacking our flank. Italy, with her extensive coast line, even if still a member of the Triple Alliance, will have to devote large forces to the defense of the coast to keep off the attacks of the Anglo-French Mediterranean Fleet, and would thus be only able to employ weaker forces against France. Austria would be paralyzed by Russia; against the latter we should have to leave forces in the East. We should thus have to fight out the struggle against France and England practically alone with a part of our army, perhaps with some support from Italy. It is in this double menace by sea and on the mainland of Europe that the grave danger to our political position lies, since all freedom of action is taken from us and all expansion barred.

Since the struggle is, as appears on a thorough investigation of the international question, necessary and inevitable, we must fight it out, cost what it may. Indeed, we are carrying it on at the present moment, though not with drawn swords, and only by peaceful means so far. On the one hand it is being waged by the competition in trade, industries and warlike preparations; on the other hand, by diplomatic methods with which the rival states are fighting each other in every region where their interests clash.

With these methods it has been possible to maintain peace hitherto, but not without considerable loss of power and prestige. This apparently peaceful state of things must not deceive us; we are facing a hidden, but none the less formidable, crisis—perhaps the most momentous crisis in the history of the German nation.

We have fought in the last great wars for our national union and our position among the Powers of Europe; we now must decide whether we wish to develop into an maintain a World Empire, and procure for German spirit and German ideas that fit recognition which has been hitherto withheld from them.

Have we the energy to aspire to that great goal? Are we prepared to make the sacrifices which such an effort will doubtless cost us? or are we willing to recoil before the hostile forces, and sink step by step lower in our economic, political, and national importance? That is what is involved in our decision.

"To be, or not to be," is the question which is put to us today, disguised, indeed, by the apparent equilibrium of the opposing interests and forces, by the deceitful shifts of diplomacy, and the official peace aspirations of all the states; but by the logic of history inexorably demanding an answer, if we look with clear gaze beyond the narrow horizon of the day and the mere surface of things into the region of realities.

There is no standing still in the world's history. All is growth and development. It is obviously impossible to keep things in the status quo, as diplomacy has so often

attempted. No true statesman will ever seriously count on such a possibility; he will only make the outward and temporary maintenance of existing conditions a duty when he wishes to gain time and deceive an opponent, or when he cannot see what is the trend of events. He will use such diplomatic means only as inferior tools; in reality he will only reckon with actual forces and with the powers of a continuous development.

We must make it quite clear to ourselves that there can be no standing still, no being satisfied for us, but only progress or retrogression, and that it is tantamount to retrogression when we are contented with our present place among the nations of Europe, while all our rivals are straining with desperate energy, even at the cost of our rights, to extend their power. The process of our decay would set in gradually and advance slowly so long as the struggle against us was waged with peaceful weapons; the living generation would, perhaps, be able to continue to exist in peace and comfort. But should a war be forced upon us by stronger enemies under conditions unfavorable to us, then, if our arms met with disaster, our political downfall would not be delayed, and we should rapidly sink down. The future of German nationality would be sacrificed, an independent German civilization would not long exist, and the blessings for which German blood has flowed in streams—spiritual and moral liberty, and the profound and lofty aspirations of German thought—would for long ages be lost to mankind.

If, as is right, we do not wish to assume the responsibility for such a catastrophe, we must have the courage to strive with every means to attain that increase of power which we are entitled to claim, even at the risk of a war with numerically superior foes.

[Bernhardi outlines a number of ways of increasing German power, ruling out a war for territorial gain in Europe but advocating a vigorous colonial expansion and concerted means of strengthening Germany's allies.]

Within these limits, it is in harmony with the national German character to allow personality to have a free course for the fullest development of all individual forces and capacities, of all spiritual, scientific, and artistic aims. "Every extension of the activities of the state is beneficial and wise, if it arouses, promotes, and purifies the independence of free and reasoning men; it is evil when it kills and stunts the independence of free men." [Treitschke] This independence of the individual, within the limits marked out by the interests of the state, forms the necessary complement of the wide expansion of the central power, and assures an ample scope to a liberal development of all our social conditions.

We must rouse in our people the unanimous wish for power in this sense, together with the determination to sacrifice on the altar of patriotism, not only life and property, but also private views and preferences in the interests of the common welfare. Then alone shall we discharge our great duties of the future, grow into a World Power, and stamp a great part of humanity with the impress of the German spirit. If, on the contrary, we persist in that dissipation of energy which now marks our political life, there is imminent fear that in the great contest of the nations, which we must inevitably face, we shall be dishonorably beaten; that days of disaster await us in the future, and that once again, as in the days of our former degradation, the poet's lament will be heard:

"O Germany, thy oaks still stand
But thou art fallen, glorious land!" [Koerner]

Chapter 9: The Crucial Question

I have examined the probable conditions of the next naval war in some detail, because I thought that our general political and military position can only be properly estimated by considering the various phases of the war by sea and by land, and by realizing the possibilities and dangers arising from the combined action of the hostile forces on our coasts and land frontiers. In this way only can the direction be decided in which our preparations for war ought to move.

The considerations, then, to which the discussion about the naval war with England and her probable allies gave rise have shown that we shall need to make very great exertions to protect ourselves successfully from a hostile attack by sea. They also proved that we cannot count on an ultimate victory at sea unless we are victorious on land. If an Anglo-French army invaded North Germany through Holland, and threatened our coast defenses in the rear, it would soon paralyze our defense by sea. The same argument applies to the eastern theater. If Russian armies advance victoriously along the Baltic and cooperate with a combined fleet of our opponents, any continuation of the naval war would be rendered futile by the operations of the enemy on land.

We know also that it is of primary importance to organize our forces on land so thoroughly that they guarantee the possibility, under all circumstances, of our victoriously maintaining our position on the Continent of Europe. This position must be made absolutely safe before we can successfully carry on a war by sea, and follow an imperial policy based on naval power. So long as Rome was threatened by Hannibal in Italy there could be no possible idea of empire. She did not begin her triumphal progress in history until she was thoroughly secure in her own country.

But our discussion shows also that success on land can be influenced by the naval war. If the enemy succeeds in destroying our fleet and landing with strong detachments on the North Sea coast, large forces of the land army would be required to repel them, a circumstance widely affecting the progress of the war on the land frontiers. It is therefore vitally necessary to prepare the defense of our own coasts so well that every attack, even by superior numbers, may be victoriously repelled.

At the same time the consideration of the political position presses the conviction home that in our preparations for war there must be no talk of gradual development of our forces by sea and land such as may lay the lightest possible burden on the national finances, and leave ample scope for activity in the sphere of culture. The crucial point is to put aside all other considerations, and to prepare ourselves with the utmost energy for a war which appears to be imminent, and will decide the whole future of our politics and our civilization. The consideration of the broad lines of the world policy and of the political aspirations of the individual states showed that the position of affairs everywhere is critical for us, that we live in an epoch which will decide our place as a World Power or our downfall. The internal disruption of the Triple Alliance, as shown clearly by the action of Italy towards Turkey, threatens to bring the crisis quickly to a head. The period which destiny has allotted us for concentrating our forces and preparing ourselves for the deadly struggle may soon be passed. We must use it, if we wish to be mindful of the warning of the Great Elector [Friedrich Wilhelm, 1640-88], that we are Germans. This is the point of view from which we must carry out our preparations for war by sea and land. Thus only can we be true to our national duty.

I do not mean that we should adopt precipitately measures calculated merely for the exigencies of the moment. All that we undertake in the cause of military efficiency must meet two requirements: it must answer the pressing questions of the present, and aid the development of the future. But we must find the danger of our position a stimulus to desperate exertions, so that we may regain at the eleventh hour something of what we have lost in the last years.

Since the crucial point is to safeguard our much-threatened position on the continent of Europe, we must first of all face the serious problem of the land war—by what means we can hope to overcome the great numerical superiority of our enemies. Such superiority will certainly exist if Italy ceases to be an active member of the Triple Alliance, whether nominally belonging to it, or politically going over to Irredentism. The preparations for the naval war are of secondary importance.

The first essential requirement, in case of a war by land, is to make the total fighting strength of the nation available for war, to educate the entire youth of the country in the use of arms, and to make universal service an existing fact.

The system of universal service, born in the hour of need, has by a splendid development of strength liberated us from a foreign yoke, has in long years of peace educated a powerful and well-armed people, and has brought us victory upon victory in the German wars of unification. Its importance for the social evolution of the nation has been discussed in a separate chapter. The German Empire would today have a mighty political importance if we had been loyal to the principle on which our greatness was founded.

France has at present day a population of some 40,000,000; Russia in Europe, with Poland and the Caucasus, has a population of 140,000,000. Contrasted with this, Germany has only 65,000,000 inhabitants. But since the Russian military forces are, to a great extent, hampered by very various causes and cannot be employed at any one time or place, and are also deficient in military value, a German army which corresponded to the population would be certainly in a position to defend itself successfully against its two enemies, if it operated resolutely on the inner line, even though England took part in the war.

Disastrously for ourselves, we have become disloyal to the idea of universal military service, and have apparently definitely discontinued to carry it out effectively. The country where universal service exists is now France. With us, indeed, it is still talked about, but it is only kept up in pretense, for in reality 50 per cent., perhaps, of the able-bodied are called up for training. In particular, very little use has been made of the larger towns as recruiting-grounds for the army.

In this direction some reorganization is required which will energetically combine the forces of the nation and create a real army, such as we have not at the present time. Unless we satisfy this demand, we shall not long be able to hold our own against the hostile Powers....

We must not, therefore, be content merely to strengthen our army; we must devise other means of gaining the upper hand of our enemies. These means can only be found in the spiritual domain.

History teaches us by countless examples that numbers in themselves have only been the decisive factor in war when the opponents have been equally matched otherwise, or when the superiority of the one party exceeds the proportion required by the numerical law [Bernhardi]. In most cases it was a special advantage possessed by the one party—better equipment, greater efficiency of troops, brilliant leadership, or more able strategy—which led to victory over the numerically superior. Rome conquered the world with inferior forces; Frederick the Great with inferior forces withstood the allied armies of Europe We cannot count on seeing a great commander at our head; a second Frederick the Great will hardly appear. Nor can we know beforehand whether our troops will prove superior to the hostile forces. But we can try to learn what will be the decisive factors in the future war which will turn the scale in favor of victory or defeat. If we know this, and prepare for war with a set purpose, and keep the essential points of view always before us, we might create a real source of superiority, and gain a start on our opponents which would be hard for them to make up in the course of the war. Should we then in the war itself follow one dominating principle of the policy which results from the special nature of present-day war, it must be possible to gain a positive advantage which may even equalize a considerable numerical superiority.

The essential point is not to match battalion with battalion, battery with battery, or to command a number of cannons, machine guns, airships, and other mechanical contrivances equal to that of the probable opponent; it is foolish initiative to strain every nerve to be abreast with the enemy in all material domains. This idea leads to a certain spiritual servility and inferiority.

Rather must an effort be made to win superiority in the factors on which the ultimate decision turns. The duty of our War Department is to prepare these decisive elements of strength while still at peace, and to apply them in war according to a clearly recognized principle of superiority. This must secure for us the spiritual and so the material advantage over our enemies. Otherwise we run the danger of being crushed by their weight of numbers.

We cannot reach this goal on the beaten roads of tradition and habit by uninspired rivalry in arming. We must trace out with clear insight the probable course of the future war, and must not be afraid to tread new paths, if needs be, which are not consecrated by experience and use. New goals can only be reached by new roads, and our military history teaches us by numerous instances how the source of superiority lies in progress, in conscious innovations based on convincing arguments. The spiritual capacity to know where, under altered conditions, the decision must be sought, and the spiritual courage to resolve on this new line of action, are the soil in which great successes ripen.

It would be too long a task in this place to examine more closely the nature of the future war, in order to develop systematically the ideas which will prove decisive in it....In this place I will only condense the results of my inquiry, in order to form a foundation for the further consideration of the essential questions of the future.

In a future European war "masses" will be employed to an extent unprecedented in any previous one. Weapons will be used whose deadliness will exceed all previous experience. More effective and varied means of communication will be available than were known in earlier wars. These three momentous factors will make the war of the future.

"Masses" signify in themselves an increase of strength, but they contain elements of weakness as well. The larger they are and the less they can be commanded by professional soldiers, the more their tactical efficiency diminishes. The less they are able to live on the country during war time, especially when concentrated, and the more they are therefore dependent on the daily renewal of food supplies, the slower and less mobile they become. Owing to the great space which they require for their deployment, it is extraordinarily difficult to bring them into effective action simultaneously. They are also far more accessible to morally depressing influences than compacted bodies of troops, and may prove dangerous to the strategy of their own leaders, if supplies run short, if discipline breaks down, and the commander loses his authority over the masses which he can only rule under regulated conditions.

The increased effectiveness of weapons does not merely imply a longer range, but a greater deadliness, and therefore makes more exacting claims on the morale of the soldier. The danger zone begins sooner than formerly; the space which must be crossed in an attack has become far wider; it must be passed by the attacking party creeping or running. The soldier must often use the spade in defensive operations, during which he is exposed to a far hotter fire than formerly; while under all circumstances he must shoot more than in bygone days. The quick firing which the troops encounter increases the losses at every incautious movement. All branches of arms have to suffer under these circumstances. Shelter and supplies will be more scanty than ever before. In short, while the troops on the average have diminished in value, the demands made on them have become considerably greater.

Improved means of communication, finally, facilitate the handling and feeding of large masses, but tie them down to railway systems and main roads, and must, if they fail or break down in the course of a campaign, aggravate the difficulties, because the troops were accustomed to their use, and the commanders counted upon them.

The direct conclusion to be drawn from these reflections is that a great superiority must rest with the troops whose fighting capabilities and tactical efficiency are greater than those of their antagonists.

The commander who can carry out all operations quicker than the enemy, and can concentrate and employ greater masses in a narrow space than they can, will always be in a position to collect a numerically superior force in the decisive direction; if he controls the more effective troops, he will gain decisive successes against one part of the hostile army, and will be able to exploit them against other divisions of it before the enemy can gain equivalent advantages in other parts of the field.

Since the tactical efficiency and the morale of the troops are chiefly shown in the offensive, and are then most needful, the necessary conclusion is that safety only lies in offensive warfare.

In an attack, the advantage, apart from the elements of moral strength which it brings into play, depends chiefly on rapidity of action. Inasmuch as the attacking party determines the direction of the attack to suit his own plans, he is able at the selected spot to collect a superior force against his surprised opponent. The initiative, which is the privilege of the attacking party, gives a start in time and place which is very profitable in operations and tactics. The attacked party can only equalize this advantage if he has early intimation of the intentions of the assailant, and has time to take

measures which hold out promise of success. The more rapidly, therefore, the attacking general strikes his blow and gains his success, and the more capable his troops, the greater is the superiority which the attack in its nature guarantees.

This superiority increases with the size of the masses. If the advancing armies are large and unwieldy, and the distances to be covered great, it will be a difficult and tedious task for the defending commander to take proper measures against a surprise attack. On the other hand, the prospects of success of the attacking general will be very favorable, especially if he is in the fortunate position of having better troops at his disposal.

Finally, the initiative secures to the numerically weaker a possibility of gaining the victory, even when other conditions are equal, and all the more so the greater the masses engaged. In most cases it is impossible to bring the entire mass of a modern army simultaneously and completely into action. A victory, therefore, in the decisive direction—the direction, that is, which directly cuts the arteries of the opponents—is usually conclusive for the whole course of the war, and its effect is felt in the most distant parts of the field of operations. If the assailant, therefore, can advance in this direction with superior numbers, and can win the day, because the enemy cannot utilize his numerical superiority, there is a possibility of an ultimate victory over the arithmetically stronger army. In conformity to this law, Frederick the Great, through superior tactical capability and striking strength, had always the upper hand of an enemy far more powerful in mere numbers....

We arrive, then, at the conclusion that, in order to secure the superiority in a war of the future under otherwise equal conditions, it is incumbent upon us: First, during the period of preparation to raise the tactical value and capabilities of the troops as much as possible, and especially to develop the means of concealing the attacking movements and damaging the enemy's tactical powers; secondly, in the war itself to act on the offensive and strike the first blow, and to exploit the maneuvering capacity of the troops as much as possible, in order to be superior in the decisive directions. Above all, a state which has objects to attain that cannot be relinquished, and is exposed to attacks by enemies more powerful than itself, is bound to act in this sense. It must, before all things, develop the attacking powers of its army, since a strategic defensive must often adopt offensive methods.

This principle holds good preeminently for Germany. The points which I have tried to emphasize must never be lost sight of, if we wish to face the future with confidence. All our measures must be calculated to raise the efficiency of the army, especially in attack; to this end all else must give way. We shall thus have a central point on which all our measures can be focused. We can make them all serve one purpose, and thus we shall be kept from going astray on the bypaths which we all too easily take if we regard matters separately, and not as forming parts of a collective whole. Much of our previous omissions and commissions would have borne a quite different complexion had we observed this unifying principle....

A mechanical notion of warfare and weak concessions to the pressure of public opinion, and often a defective grasp of the actual needs, have conduced to measures which inevitably result in an essential contradiction between the needs of the army and the actual end attained, and cannot be justified from the purely military point of view. It would be illogical and irrelevant to continue in these paths so soon as it is recognized that the desired superiority over the enemy cannot be reached on them.

The essential contradiction between what is necessary and what is attained appears in the enforcement of the law of universal military service. Opinion oscillates between the wish to enforce it more or less, and the disinclination to make the required outlay, and recourse is had to all sorts of subterfuges which may save appearances without giving a good trial to the system. One of these methods is the reserve army, which is once more being frequently proposed. But the situation is by no means helped by the very brief training which these units at best receive. This system only creates a military mob, which has no capacity for serious military operations. Such an institution would be a heavy strain on the existing teaching personnel in the army, and would be indirectly detrimental to it as well. Nor would any strengthening of the field army be possible under this scheme, since the cadres to contain the mass of these special reservists are not ready to hand. This mass would therefore only fill up the recruiting depots, and facilitate to some degree the task of making good the losses.

A similar contradiction is often shown in the employment of the troops. Every army at the present time is divided into regular troops, who are already organized in time of peace and are merely brought to full strength in war time, and new formations, which are only organized on mobilization. The tactical value of these latter varies much according to their composition and the age of the troops. The reserve formations, which were employed in the field in 1870-71, were an example of this, notwithstanding the excellent services which they rendered, and the new French formations in that campaign were totally ineffective. The sphere of activity of such troops is the second line. In an offensive war their duty is to secure the railroads and bases, to garrison the conquered territory, and partly also to besiege the enemies' fortresses. In fact, they must discharge all the duties which would otherwise weaken the field army. In a defensive war they will have to undertake the local and mainly passive defense, and the support of the national war. By acting at first in this limited sphere, such new formations will gradually become fitted for the duties of the war, and will acquire a degree of offensive strength which certainly cannot be reckoned upon at the outset of the war; and the less adequately such bodies of troops are supplied with columns, trains, and cavalry, the less their value will be.

Nevertheless, it appears to be assumed by us that, in event of war, [these] troops will be partly available in the first line, and that decisive operations may be entrusted to them. Reserves and regulars are treated as equivalent pieces on the board, and no one seems to suppose that some are less effective than others. A great danger lies in this mechanical conception

It follows directly from this argument that we must do our best to render the regular army strong and efficient, and that it would be a mistake to weaken them unnecessarily by excessive drafts upon their personnel with the object of making the reserves tactically equal to them. This aim may sometimes be realized; but the general level of efficiency throughout the troops would be lowered.

Our one object must therefore be to strengthen our regular army. An increase of the peace footing of the standing army is worth far more than a far greater number of badly trained special reservists. It is supremely important to increase the strength of the officers on the establishment. The stronger each unit is in peace, the more efficient will it become for war, hence the vital importance of aiming at quality, not quantity. Concentration, not dilution, will be our safeguard

The gradual enforcement of universal military service hand in hand with an increase of the regular army is the first practical requirement

I must first point out a factor which lies in a different sphere to the questions already discussed, but has great importance in every branch of military activity, especially in the offensive, which require prompt original action—I mean the importance of personality.

From the commander-in-chief, who puts into execution the conceptions of his own brain under the pressure of responsibility and shifting fortune, and the brigadier, who must act independently according to a given general scheme; to the dispatch rider, surrounded with dangers, and left to his own resources in the enemy's country, and the youngest private in the field fighting for his own land, and striving for victory in the face of death; everywhere in the wars of today, more than in any other ages, personality dominates all else. The effect of mass tactics has abolished all close formations of infantry, and the individual is left to himself. The direct influence of the superior has lessened. In the strategic duties of the cavalry, which represent the chief activity of that arm, the patrol riders and orderlies are separated more than before from their troop and are left to their own responsibility. Even in the artillery the importance of independent action will be more clearly emphasized than previously. The battlefields and area of operations have increased with the masses employed. The commander-in-chief is far less able than ever before to superintend operations in various parts of the field; he is forced to allow a greater latitude to his subordinates. These conditions are very prominent in attacking operations On the offensive, the conditions change from moment to moment, according to the counter-movements of the enemy, which cannot be anticipated, and the success or failure of the attacking troops. Even the individual soldier, as the fight fluctuates, must now push on, now wait patiently until the reinforcements have come up; he will often have to choose for himself the objects at which to fire, while never losing touch with the main body. The offensive makes very varied calls on the commander's qualities. Ruse and strategy, boldness and unsparing energy, deliberate judgment and rapid decision, are alternately demanded from him. He must be competent to perform the most opposite duties. All this puts a heavy strain on personality

It has often been said that one man is as good as another; that personality is nothing, the type is everything; but this assertion is erroneous. In time of peace, when sham reputations flourish and no real struggle winnows the chaff from the wheat, mediocrity in performance is enough. But in war, personality turns the scale. Responsibility and danger bring out personality, and show its real worth, as surely as a chemical test separates the pure metal from the dross.

That army is fortunate which has placed men of this kind in the important posts during peace-time and has kept them there. This is the only way to avoid the dangers which a one-sided routine produces, and to break down that red-tapism which is so prejudicial to progress and success. It redounds to the lasting credit of William I that for the highest and most responsible posts, at any rate, he had already in time of peace made his selection from among all the apparently great men around him; and that chose and upheld in the teeth of all opposition those who showed themselves heroes and men of action in the hour of need, and had the courage to keep to their own self-selected paths. This is no slight title to fame, for, as a rule, the unusual rouses envy and distrust, but the cheap, average wisdom, which never prompted action, appears as a refined superiority,

and it is only under the pressure of the stern reality of war that the truth of Goethe's lines is proved:

Folk and thrall and victor can
Witness bear in every zone:
Fortune's greatest gift to man
Is personality alone.

Notes

[1] The First (1899) and Second (1907) Hague International Peace conferences were summoned with the intention of reducing armaments. Although failing in this, a number of declarations and conventions regarding the laws of war were adopted. The first conference established a Permanent Court of Arbitration (the Hague Tribunal), but the proposal by the United States to found a world court at the second congress failed. A third conference scheduled for 1916 was cancelled because of the war.

[2] Albion is the ancient and literary name for Britain; the quoted phrase is attributed to Napoleon but well expresses the widespread Anglophobia in German society.

[3] Extreme nationalist, professor of history at the University of Berlin, and popular writer, Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-96) exerted great influence on contemporaries and subsequent generations. Once a liberal, he became a zealous convert to Bismarckian policy and a champion of Germany's national claims.

[4] Bernhardt is referring to the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 that resulted in the supplanting of Austrian by Prussian dominance in German affairs.

[5] Italia irredenta (unredeemed Italy) signified areas with Italian majorities but retained by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These included the Trentino, Istria, Trieste, Fiume, and parts of the Dalmatian coast. Irredentism led Italy to enter the war on the side of the Triple Entente in 1915, and the Treaty of Versailles realized most of the demands of Italian nationalists in 1919.

[6] At the village of Fashoda on the Upper Nile in the Sudan, French plans to create an overland route from the Red Sea to the Atlantic came into conflict with British plans to control territory from the Cape to Cairo. The military confrontation was defused when the French withdrew their claims, accepting part of the Sahara as compensation. Peaceful settlement of the "Fashoda Incident" led eventually to the Anglo-French entente.

[7] Imperial Japan defeated the Russian army at Mukden in Manchuria and the Russian navy in the Straits of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. The military disaster led directly to the Russian Revolution of 1905, the first step in the dismantlement of the autocracy.

[8] The 1911 assassination of Piotr Arkedevich Stolypin, premier and minister of the interior in the tsar's government, by a revolutionary terrorist/secret police agent was taken by the rest of Europe as a sign of revolutionary chaos in the Russian Empire.

[9] The resolution of the Second Morocco Crisis of 1911 entailed Germany's recognition of a French protectorate in exchange for a relatively worthless strip of French Equatorial Africa. While Britain strongly supported its French ally, Germany had had to back down when its allies showed clear unwillingness to go to war on behalf of its demands overseas. Nationalists at home regarded the outcome as a humiliation, further proof that the kaiser's government was incapable of directing the drive for world power.

Source: Friedrich von Bernhardi, *Germany and the Next War* (New York, 1914), pp. 16-20, 85-105, 114, 167-82. Translated by Allen H. Powles.