



REVISION – WILHELMINE GERMANY



Wilhelmine Germany (1888-1914)

MATERIAL: Morris = 95-121 / Wolfson = 35-60 / Traynor = 2-41

FACTS WILHELMINE GERMANY:

- **WILHELM II – PERSONALITY** (Personal ruler / Shadow Emperor)
- **FALL OF BISMARCK:** 1890's election / anti-Socialist laws / Reinsurance Treaty
- **THE NOBILITY AND THE ARMY**
- **POLITICAL PARTIES**
- **ECONOMY:** The period 1890-1914 saw a tremendous economical growth...
 - POPULATION: 1870 – 40.9 million / 1890 – 49.5 million / 1910 – 65 million
 - BASIC INDUSTRY
 - COMMUNICATIONS
 - NEW INDUSTRIES / Chemical Industries
 - NEW INDUSTRIES / Electronics
 - EVIDENCE OF ECONOMICAL PROGRESS
 - ECONOMIC PROBLEMS
- **CHANCELLORS AND GERMAN DOMESTIC POLITIC:** 1890-1917 four Chancellors
 - LEO VON CAPRIVI (1890-1894)**
 - CONCILIATION POLICY
 - BILATERAL TRADE TREATIES
 - ENLARGEMENT OF THE ARMY
 - CHLODWIG VON HOHENLOHE-SCHILLINGSFÜRST (1894-1900)**
 - ANTI-SOCIALISM – REPRESSION
 - POLICY OF CONCENTRATION
 - WILHELM II'S MEN: Bernhard von Bülow / Alfred von Tirpitz / Friedrich von Holstein
 - BERNHARD VON BÜLOW (1900-1909)**
 - CONCESSIONS
 - TARIFFS RESTORED
 - SAMLUNGSPOLITIK
 - NAVAL EXPANSION
 - ALLIANCE OF RYE AND STEEL
 - THEOBALD VON BETHMAN-HOLLWEG (1909-1917)**
 - DECLINE OF THE CHANCELLORS OFFICE
 - STRAIN FINANCES AND ARMY ENLARGEMENT
 - GROWTH OF SPD
 - ZABERN/SAVERNE AFFAIR

GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY 1890-1914:

CAPRIVI: Both new and traditional Bismarckian policy (*Pan-German League*)

- WELTPOLITIK
- THE ACQUISITION OF COLONIES
- NAVAL EXPANSION

A number of German "*mistakes*" (often with Kaiser Wilhelm II involved);

- *Kruger Telegram (1896)*
- *First British approach (1898) / Second British approach (1901)*
- *First Morocco Crisis (1905)*
- *The Daily Telegraph Affair (1908)*
- *Bosnian Crisis - Blank Cheque (1908-09)*
- *Second Morocco Crisis (1911)*

FACTS WILHELMINE GERMANY:

- **WILHELM II - PERSONALITY:** Gordon Craig - British historian writes: "*Wilhelm had as much intelligence as any European sovereign and more than most, but his lack of discipline, his self-indulgence, his overdeveloped sense of theater, and his fundamental misreading of history prevented him from putting it to effective use.*"

Wilhelm II believed in the divine rights of kings - a paternalistic "*medieval Emperor*". It was obvious that the new Emperor:

- did not want to base his reign on the interest of Junker landowners and/or Prussia alone. He wanted to be Emperor of all Germans...
- had views on everything - but he did not back his views with any "hard information". He openly boasted that he read neither the newspapers nor the German Constitution
- traveled a lot, usually the main part of the year. He was nicknamed "Der ReiseKaiser"...

A German historian - Hans-Ulrich Wehler criticizes the Emperor, but claim that he just was a **shadow-emperor**. Germany was according to him in the hands of powerful elite groups (agrarians, industrialists, militaries, etc...)

- **FALL OF BISMARCK:** 1890's election – the conservatives and the national liberals lost 85 of their 220 seats in the Reichstag... When Bismarck wanted to renew and make the anti-Socialist laws permanent the Kaiser refused! This was not the only question where Bismarck and Wilhelm II had different opinions... When Bismarck wanted to renew the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia the Kaiser refused! The disagreements lead to the Emperor ordering Bismarck to "*ask permission to resign*" - Bismarck refused! Then Bismarck was ordered out of office. The 18 of March 1890 was the day Bismarck resigned.
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- **THE NOBILITY AND THE ARMY:** The nobility and the army dominated politics and society in Wilhelmine Germany. Germany was also very influenced by Prussia. The Emperor was King of Prussia and the majority population was Prussian. Prussia therefore had more seats in the Bundesrat and Reichstag than any of the other states. The Prussian Constitution of 1850 established a three-class voting system that assured the nobility of a majority (In the 1908 elections to the Prussian Landtag, 600 000 votes elected 6 Social Democrats while 418 000 votes secured 212 Conservative seats). The officer class of the army was very influential. The troops (about half a million men in 1890) took an oath of loyalty personally to the Kaiser rather than the State, and money for the army was voted by the Reichstag only every seven years. This enabled the officer corps to avoid civilian control.
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- **POLITICAL PARTIES:** There were two main right-wing groups in Germany. *The Conservatives* represented the views of the landowning classes and of Prussia. They generally supported authority military discipline and a nationalist foreign policy. *The independent, or Free, Conservatives* had similar views. They also favored protectionism. They were less oriented towards Prussia and farming, more into the wealthy commercial and professional people. There were two main liberal parties and a third smaller one - *the German People's Party*. They were not liberal by modern standards. They were generally nationalist and they opposed to the rise of the Social Democratic Party. *The National Liberals* had been the leading party in the 1870's and had supported Bismarck's policy of Kulturkampf (aimed at

reducing the power and influence of the Church). By 1890, both they and *the Liberal Progressives* were losing votes, and were forced to ally with the more conservative parties in the Reichstag to maintain a majority for the Right.

German politics were complicated by the existence of *the Centre Party (Zentrum, or Z)*. The party especially represented the interests of the Catholic Church and its members. It was opposed to the domination of Prussia and, especially, to Bismarck (Kulturkampf). It was also concerned by the rise of the parties of the Left. Since it was one of the largest parties (from 1874 it always had between 90 and 110 seats) it had a key position balancing left and right in the Reichstag.

In 1869 Karl Liebknecht and August Bebel founded *the Social Democratic Party (SPD - Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)*. It was restricted by the anti-Socialist laws during the period 1870s and the 1880s. Still some moderate members won seats in the Reichstag. In 1891 the party voted to adopt the Erfurt program, which was Marxist. In theory therefore SPD came to reject reformism, (the idea of overthrowing the capitalist system by joining "bourgeois" parliaments and governments rather than by total revolution) but in practice they accepted seats in the Reichstag and in provincial diets. The SPD won more and more votes and seats, especially after the anti-Socialist legislation was relaxed after 1890. By 1912 it was the largest single party in the Reichstag!

The rest of the votes in the Reichstag were given to several smaller parties representing different majorities like Poles, Danes, Hanoverians, Alsatians...

- **ECONOMY:** The period 1890-1914 saw a tremendous economical growth...
POPULATION: In 1870 Germany consisted of 40.9 million people, 20 years later in 1890 Germany had 49.5 million people and in 1910 65 million people lived in the country!
BASIC INDUSTRY: The production of crucial basic materials is usually one measure of industrial advance:

Coal Production (Coal in million tons)		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>
1871	37.9	(118)
1880	59.1	(149)
1890	89.1	(184)
1900	149.8	(228)
1910	192.3	(268)
1913	279	(292)

Pig Iron Production (Pig Iron in million tons)		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>
1870	1.391	(6.06)
1880	2.729	(7.875)
1890	4.037	(8.033)
1900	7.549	(9.003)
1910	14.793	(10.380)

Steel Production (Steel in million tons)		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>
1870	0.169	(0.286)
1880	0.660	(1.320)
1890	2.161	(3.637)
1900	6.645	(5.130)
1910	13.698	(6.374)

It was the remarkable increases in these primary industries that provided the basis for Germany's rapid economic expansion before World War One!

COMMUNICATIONS: Germany had already under Bismarck developed a common useful railroad system - during the Wilhelmine period the growth continued:

Railroad in km	
Year	
1870	19 480
1890	41 820
1910	59 016

The German merchant marine saw an even larger growth:

Total tonnage of steamships registered		
Year	In Hamburg	In Bremen
1880	99 000	59 000
1900	746 000	375 000

In 1914 Germany's total merchant marine amounted to 3 million tons - three times that of the USA, but only a quarter of the British total.

NEW INDUSTRIES / Chemical Industries: By 1914 Germany produced 75% of the world output of chemical dyes. She also played an important role in the development of

- agricultural fertilizers
- pharmaceutical products
- industrial uses of sulphuric acid, sodium, chlorine...

NEW INDUSTRIES / Electronics: Werner von Siemens developed the electric dynamo (1867). He also experimented with electric traction. By the 1880's Siemens/Halske and the German Edison Company (later AEG - Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft) was installing lighting systems. By 1913 half of the world's electro-technical trade was in German hands. J. Clapham: *"the creation of this industry was the greatest single achievement of modern Germany."*

EVIDENCE OF ECONOMICAL PROGRESS: The total wealth of the German Reich increased a lot during the peaceful years of the Wilhelmine era. Two good evidences of that are the high birth rate (see population) and the decreasing rate of emigration (1880-1890 = 134 200 people emigrated from Germany; 1900-1910 = 28 000 people emigrated from Germany)...

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS: The high tariffs and the harder competition within agriculture was one problem for Germany, especially the farmers. The American grain was much cheaper than the grain produced in Europe. Enormous production, cheap labor and a revolution within the transport industry (large ocean-going steamers) created this situation. Germany therefore kept and increased the tariffs which made the bread more and more expensive.

Another group who faced problems was the growing working class in the cities. They could see the wealth they created but at the same time there was hardly any improvement at all of their working and living conditions. In 1893 the world's first slum clearance took place in Hamburg. The poor situation for the workers stimulated the development of the trade unions and SPD. Some of the ministries tried to offer some concessions (Caprivi, Billow) in an attempt to stop this development. Another method to "calm the population" was a more active foreign policy. Fritz Fischer: *"German foreign policy after 1897 must be understood as a response to the internal threat of Socialism and democracy."*

- **CHANCELLORS AND GERMAN DOMESTIC POLITIC:** Between the year 1890 and 1917 Germany had four different Chancellors.

LEO VON CAPRIVI (1890-1894): Leo von Caprivi was an officer of high military rank (General), but he had very little political experience.

- **CONCILIATION POLICY:** Both Caprivi and the Kaiser tried more conciliation and less confrontation towards different political groups including the socialists. A series of laws were approved to this end;
 - A ban on Sunday working
 - Limitation of working hours for women and children
 - The establishment of courts for industrial arbitration (arbitrate wage claims)
 - The system of factory inspection was tightened up and workers were permitted to elect committees to negotiate with employers on working conditions...

Why did the Kaiser and Chancellor do this? They both thought that these measures might prevent socialism from growing - that they might gain moderates away from these extremist policies... Instead the SPD gained voters; 1890 - 35 Reichstag seats; 1893 - 44 Reichstag seats...

- **BILATERAL TRADE TREATIES:** Chancellor von Caprivi also made a series of bilateral trade treaties with: Austria-Hungary (1892), Italy (1892), Belgium (1893), Switzerland (1893), Romania (1893), and Russia (1894). These treaties stimulated the industrial progress of Germany (more export of German goods) but in return Germany had to lower the agricultural tariffs. This lowered the price of food but upset the Junkers and the farmers (and it also increased the import of cheap American corn). The Junkers and the farmers protested and organized themselves into the Agrarian League (Bund der Landwirte). This group soon had over 250 000 members and they became an important political factor...
- **ENLARGEMENT OF THE ARMY:** Caprivi was also responsible for the enlargement of the army. In 1891 Count Alfred von Schlieffen was appointed Chief of Staff. He started to work on a plan - a solution of a two-front war against both France and Russia simultaneously (It was completed in 1897). According to the plan Germany would attack France first. Germany would relatively quickly defeat France and then be able to completely focus on defeating the more slowly-mobilizing Russia... The Schlieffen Plan demanded an increase of 84 000 men in the army. When the Reichstag rejected the Plan the Kaiser dissolved it. The new Reichstag passed the army bill but only under the condition that the period of military service would be reduced and that the Reichstag would be able to debate the army's financial grant every five years instead of every seventh year.

The trade treaties and the conditions tied to the new army bill angered the Right. Caprivi lost support and in 1894 he resigned.

CHLODWIG VON HOHENLOHE-SCHILLINGSFÜRST (1894-1900): Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst was a catholic Bavarian aristocrat. He was a conservative that had served as prime-minister of Bavaria and Governor-General of Alsace-Lorraine. He was 75 years old when he entered the office as Chancellor.

- **ANTI-SOCIALISM - REPRESSION:** The change of Chancellor also marks a change in politics - Caprivi and Wilhelm II had supported, to some extent, the weaker groups of the society. Now Kaiser Wilhelm II withdrew that support. He instructed the Lutheran pastors to be less concerned with social questions. Together with the new Chancellor and the Conservative Parties several anti-socialist and anti-union legislation was proposed - mostly without success...

- A bill against subversion (1894) - it was rejected by the Reichstag
- A bill which penalized workers who forced their fellow workers to join a union or go on strike...
- The plan was to win back the support of the middle class, which they didn't succeed to do. Rather the opposite...
- **POLICY OF CONCENTRATION:** Chancellor Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst lacked a coherent program which fitted in well with Kaiser Wilhelm II's ambitions of personal government. The policy of Concentration during this period (and the coming ones...) emphasized the importance of military expansion and colonial achievements. The new policies were not implemented on the initiative of the Chancellor. They were produced by a new group of ministers;
- **WILHELM II'S MEN:** Most important of these new ministers were Bernhard von Bülow, Alfred von Tirpitz and Friedrich von Holstein.
 - **Bernhard von Bülow** became the German Foreign Minister 1897 and succeeded Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst as Chancellor 1900. He was one of the designers of "**Samlungspolitik**" and "**Weltpolitik**".
 - **Alfred von Tirpitz** was the German Secretary to the navy 1897-1916. He was a good organizer and an able/convincing speaker. He managed to win over both the German Reichstag and the German public to the cause of **naval expansion**. Tirpitz got involved early with the "**NAVY LEAGUE**", an interest group for the enlargement of the German navy. He used this group to gain support from the general public, and it worked very well...
 - **Friedrich von Holstein** was a senior adviser in the Foreign Office as early as 1878 - under Bismarck. He lost some of the support since he did not agree with the alliance with Russia (Reinsurance Treaty 1887). After Bismarck's resignation 1890 he became Kaiser Wilhelm II's chief adviser on foreign affairs. He became the Head of the Foreign Office in 1900 when Bernhard von Bülow became Chancellor. After the First Moroccan crisis 1906 he lost office.

During the period of Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst the conservative representation in the Reichstag dropped drastically. This was a result of the Reichstag's refusal to support the policy of repression. In 1900 he resigned tired of serving an unpredictable master who persistently failed to consult him on important policy matters.

BERNHARD VON BÜLOW (1900-1909): Bernhard von Bülow was one of Wilhelm II's men - an aristocratic landowner with experience in the diplomatic service and foreign office. He became the German Foreign Minister 1897 and entered the office as Chancellor in 1900 only 51 years old.

- **CONCESSIONS:** During the reign of Bernhard von Bülow some of Caprivi's policy of making concessions to the workers was revived;
 - Accident insurance extended to more occupations (1900)
 - Increased pensions for the elderly and disabled (1900)
 - Industrial courts (for the settlement of disputes - compulsory for all towns with more than 2000 inhabitants) (1901)
 - Longer period for workers to receive sickness benefits - 26 weeks instead of 13 weeks (1903)
 - More restrictions against the employment of children (1908)
- **TARIFFS RESTORED:** When the bilateral trade treaties expired in 1902 they were not renewed. Responding to the pressures of the Agrarian League the agricultural tariffs were restored. Once again price of food went up...
- **SAMLUNGSPOLITIK:** This politic had been defined when Bernhard von Bülow became the Foreign Minister 1897. It sought to "gather together" all the major

propertied and conservative interests behind a common policy. The vision of von Bülow was the Junkers and the industrialists working together against the Social Democrats...

- **NAVAL EXPANSION:** The naval expansion started under the rule of Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, but it was the policy of Alfred von Tirpitz and Bernhard von Bülow - Kaiser Wilhelm II's men;
 - **The First Navy Law (1897/1898):** This law proposed the building of seven battleships and nine cruisers before 1904 (at the time Germany had six battleships and four cruisers. Great Britain had 33 battleships and 130 cruisers...)
 - **The Second Navy Law (1900):** This law proposed the building three battleships each year over a 20-year period.
 - **The Third Navy Law (1906):** This law proposed an increased tonnage and armament of the battleships (Great Britain built a new ship - Dreadnought in 1905-06 with 10 12-inch guns instead of the usual 4. It was also faster and bigger than earlier ships and therefore it made all German ships obsolete). This proposal also added six cruisers to the annual program and a widening of the Kiel Canal so it could take Dreadnought type ships.
 - **Amendment to the Navy Law (1908):** This amendment increased the amount of Dreadnoughts - four per year should be built instead of three (up to 1911).
 - **Increases in ships and men (1912):** Germany, with nine Dreadnoughts instead of the predicted 21, announces increases in the number of ships and men and the creation of a third fleet in commission.
- **ALLIANCE OF RYE AND STEEL:** The tariffs and the naval expansion was an attempt to satisfy the conservative economic interests of the Junkers and the Industrialists. Tariffs satisfied the Junkers and the massive naval construction program was a response to the discontent of the heavy industry who had suffered with the cancellation of the bilateral trade treaties. This was a practical example of "Sammlungspolitik"...

Many hold Bernhard von Bülow responsible for Germany's irresponsible diplomatic policy during this period. An interview given by Kaiser Wilhelm II to the British newspaper Daily Telegraph was the start of his downfall. The Kaiser made some offensive and irresponsible comments about other countries which passed through the Chancellors office without being edited. As Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow was responsible for this incident. He put the responsibility on the Kaisers personal government. When Kaiser Wilhelm II came to his senses (he was "depressed" for several months after receiving criticism for the interview) he was determined to see von Bülow removed. After the Chancellor failed to pass a bill for a tax on inherited wealth he resigned.

THEOBALD VON BETHMAN-HOLLWEG (1909-1917): Theobald von Bethman-Hollweg started his political career a civil servant in Brandenburg and he later served as the Prussian minister of interior. In 1907 he became the Secretary of State in the Imperial Office of Internal Affairs. He was a very competent administrator with great knowledge of domestic affairs, but he lacked any knowledge and experience of foreign and military affairs. He thereby left Kaiser Wilhelm II with greater freedom of action...

- **DECLINE OF THE CHANCELLORS OFFICE:** The decline of the Chancellors office started before von Bethman-Hollweg. Already in the years of the 1890's was a definite decline of the overall power of the Chancellor. According to Morris this was due to an "invasion from above, to the Kaisers consistent desire for personal rule. At the same time it eroded from below - by the loss of control over various, previously subordinate ministries" (ex. Tirpitz and the Naval Ministry...). It was especially the military who became a power within the State of Germany...

- **STRAIN FINANCES AND ARMY ENLARGEMENT:** Finance was a great problem under the Chancellorship of von Bethman-Hollweg. The naval expansion meant enormous expenses. In 1913 a new army bill was proposed - it meant an addition of 19 000 officers and 117 000 men (about an added cost of one billion marks). The Socialists were in general against another enlargement of the military forces, especially if it would lead to an increase of indirect taxation. The Conservatives supported the idea of a large military force but they opposed any increase in property taxes. Since the Chancellor he had the ideological support from the Conservatives about an army enlargement he proposed a new special national defense tax on property (the Wehrstener). Being a tax on wealth it was supported by the Socialists even though they opposed the army it was to pay for...
- **GROWTH OF SPD:** By 1912 the SPD was the largest single party of the Reichstag. This created a "stalemate of the party system". The SPD had 110 seats (out of 391). If they had cooperated with the newly united Progressive People's Party and the Centre they would have command 243 of the seats, but the lack of cooperation made it possible for the Conservative government to pass its own legislation...

The "revisionist" approach of SPD led to the development of an active left wing within the party. Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were the two most prominent leaders of this left wing who wanted to maintain an orthodox Marxist line - with revolution on its agenda...

- **ZABERN/SAVERNE AFFAIR:** A series of disturbances broke out in the garrison town of Zabern/Saverne in Alsace. They had been triggered by the arrogant behavior of garrison troops - the troops had treated the townspeople very roughly. Among the incidents was the beating and injury of a lame cobbler. The disturbances led to the declaration of a state of siege by the military authorities. Several public and official protests came to the Governor-General. He appealed several times to the Kaiser to settle the matter. It was not until he threatened to resign that the Kaiser dealt with the situation. Kaiser Wilhelm II did not punish the soldiers concerned; he ordered them to be sent away on maneuvers. In the Reichstag all parties except the Conservatives protested, but they achieved nothing. This incident underlined the superiority of the military, and the inability of the civilian authorities to influence them.

In 1917, during World War One, Chancellor Theobald von Bethman-Hollweg came under intense pressure from the Supreme Command led by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. This made him resign which Kaiser Wilhelm II reluctantly accepted. During the rest of the war Germany was lead by the military...

GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY 1890-1914:

CAPRIVI: During the period of Caprivi (1890-1894) the Chancellor tried to keep some of Bismarck's traditional foreign policies while other parts were changed. The following parts were changed;

- Caprivi didn't renew the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia (March 1890). This was not so much Caprivi being anti-Russian, but he was influenced by personalities in the foreign office who were clearly anti-Russian; such as Friedrich von Holstein. This new policy confirmed Bismarck's nightmare when a diplomatic understanding between Russia and France was reached.
- The renewal of the Triple Alliance with Austria and Italy in 1891 contributed to a more tense and hostile situation in Europe which undermined the balance of power between the major states of Europe.

In the following ways Caprivi remained Bismarckian;

- Caprivi resisted the pressure within Germany for a "world policy" - Weltpolitik. He tried to consolidate and improve Germany's position in Central Europe. Evidence of this effort is the renewal of the Triple Alliance and several economical agreements with Germany's neighbors.
- Caprivi reached an agreement with Great Britain (the Anglo-German treaty of July 1890) where the African island Zanzibar and some adjacent mainland was traded for the strategic North Sea island of Heligoland.
- During Caprivi's period some people wanted to pursue a more energetic, prestigious and cosmopolitan foreign policy. They created a special interest group for this purpose - the Pan-German League (*Alldeutscher Verband*)

Pan-German League. This group took form between 1891-1894. One of the ideas was to unite all those of German racial origin in a single German state.

Caprivi's attempt to get a closer diplomatic relation with Britain did not succeed. He lost the earlier relation with Russia and France was not isolated anymore. Instead he strengthens the relation with Austria and Italy. Caprivi also represent the last attempt to limit Germany to European commitments instead of carrying out a "world policy"...

- **WELTPOLITIK:** In the years that followed the fall of Caprivi Germany departed from the essentially European concerns of Bismarck and instead there was a demand for a world role for Germany. Morris claims (and several other historians) that the Weltpolitik must be seen as an external reflection of internal German developments.
 - Firstly the Weltpolitik very much reflected the mentality and personality of the Kaiser; a headstrong and incoherent insistence that Germany should have a say in all major issues. The Kaiser did influence the foreign policy in different ways. One was the appointment of Alfred von Tirpitz to the naval ministry and Bernhard von Bülow to the head of the foreign ministry.
 - Domestic economical development. The expansion of Germany industry renewed and increased the national sense of power. Some of the influential men (von Bülow and others) claimed that Germany was faced with the choice of colonial experience or stagnation as a major power.
 - The Weltpolitik was essential in the solution of internal political problems. It provided a means of uniting national opinion and neutralizing disruptive opposition, especially from SPD. Imanuel Geiss (German historian) concludes that "*Weltpolitik came into existence as a red herring of the ruling classes to distract the middle and working classes from social and political problems at home.*" Seeing the patriotic stance of the Social Democrats in 1914 one can say that Weltpolitik succeeded...
 - One explanation of the Weltpolitik is "*A term used to describe Germany's aggressive and expansive foreign policy through the acquisition of colonies and the building of a navy from 1884 to 1918, in order to placate the demands from heavy industry for a greater navy and to generate national pride amongst dissatisfied working classes.*"
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- **THE ACQUISITION OF COLONIES:** Germany's part of the "*Scramble of Africa*": During the 1870s and 1880s a number of German entrepreneurs established interests in Africa and the Far East. To protect the interests of these companies and to protect others from the worst extremes of the companies colonial armies and government representatives were sent out. In 1883 *South West Africa* became a German possession (Franz Luderitz, a German merchant raised the German flag here). Areas in *East Africa* claimed by Karl Peters came under the German East Africa Company in 1885. Some other parts of East Africa were disputed with Britain. In 1890 Germany surrendered that claim to Britain in exchange for *Heligoland*. In 1884 Gustav Nachtigal proclaimed a protectorate over the coastal part of *Togo land* and in 1885 a protectorate was established over the *Cameron's*. Thus Germany's African colonies were established before 1890.

- **Asia:** During the 1880s the *north-east of New Guinea*, the islands of the "*Bismarck Archipelago*" and the *Solomon and Marshall islands* were claimed by Germany. This achievement was reached before Bismarck retired.
- **Gains during the Weltpolitik period:** During the period of Weltpolitik fewer achievements were made... The first foreign gain came in China. After the war between Japan and China 1894-95 many countries were alarmed by the Japanese gains. Germany together with Russia and France forced Japan to modify its gains and thereby ensure that China remained open to Europeans. Germany was granted a 99-year lease of *the port of Kiaochow* as a trading and naval base. In 1898 the small groups of Pacific Islands *the Carolines* and *the Marianas* were purchased from Spain. In 1899, Germany declared that the joint control with Britain and the USA over the *islands of Samoa* was dissolved. Germany then assumed the eastern portion of the islands (*Savaii* and *Upolu*).
- **Berlin-Baghdad Railroad:** In 1888 the Turkish government gave its approval to the first stage of the Berlin-Baghdad Railroad (from Scutari to Ankara). Officially it was the Deutsche Bank that agreed to finance the railroad. Bismarck did not want to reveal any German political interest in an area that was very sensitive to both Russian and British interests. The first part was completed in 1892. In 1893 the German syndicate that built the first section won the concession to build a line from Ankara to Caesarea (which was never built) and another line through the southern areas, from Eskişehir to Konya. This was completed by 1896, and Baghdad seemed to be the next part. In 1898 Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Constantinople and the Holy Land to promote the German claim to build this part. In a speech he referred to himself as "*the protector of 300 million Muslims*" and openly referred to "*my railroad*"... The French had at first agreed to cooperate with Germany but eventually backed out and together with Britain they refused to support Germany's claim. The railroad became an international issue, especially between Germany and Britain. The next big issue between these countries was the naval construction.

- **NAVAL EXPANSION:** The naval expansion started under the rule of Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, but it was the policy of Alfred von Tirpitz and Bernhard von Billow - Kaiser Wilhelm II's men. The development served several purposes; it was an assertion of the nation's new status (Tirpitz), it was aimed against Britain (Tirpitz), it provided a huge new outlet for German heavy industry (the great industrialist Alfred Krupp was a leading member of the Naval League) and for the middle classes the fleet represented a national weapon relatively free from the influence of the Prussian Junkers. The naval construction was carried out in several steps;
 - **The First Navy Law (1897/1898):** This law proposed the building of seven battleships and nine cruisers before 1904 (at the time Germany had six battleships and four cruisers. Great Britain had 33 battleships and 130 cruisers...)
 - **The Second Navy Law (1900):** This law proposed the building three battleships each year over a 20-year period.
 - **The Third Navy Law (1906):** This law proposed an increased tonnage and armament of the battleships (Great Britain built a new ship - Dreadnought in 1905-06 with 10 12-inch guns instead of the usual 4. It was also faster and bigger than earlier ships and therefore it made all German ships obsolete). This proposal also added six cruisers to the annual program and a widening of the Kiel Canal so it could take Dreadnought type ships.
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