

War would have been lost for Germany from the beginning. The audience had to be terminated when Hitler went into a rage (p. 460). Vierhaus reaches the conclusion that it was unrealistic to expect greater political insight, higher political-moral sensitivity, and more *Zivilcourage* from scholars and scientists than from the average educated citizen. One of the worst consequences of the regime was the destruction, corruption, and discrediting of elites (p. 477).

FRANK EYCK
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875–1914. By Rolf Hobson.
Boston: Brill Academic Publishers. 2002. Pp. x + 358. \$90.00. ISBN 0–391–04105–3.

Hobson analyzes the rise of Imperial German naval power within the context of the changes in international relations, industrial development, and naval strategy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This thoroughly researched, well-organized volume adds much to the existing literature on Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz and Germany's quest for sea power.

In the first part of his work Hobson addresses the broader international context of the rise of German naval power, emphasizing the significance of the "war in sight" crisis of 1875, during which Britain and Russia warned Germany that, in the interest of the European balance of power, they could not countenance another German victory over France. During the last quarter of the century, Britain's maritime domination on the world stage elicited much the same reaction as Germany's military position in continental Europe, with other leading states seeking in each case to place limits on the hegemonic power. Hobson observes, however, that both France and Russia were willing to accept a further expansion of British maritime might to help counter any German attempt to expand beyond its 1871 frontiers.

Hobson's section on "Naval Strategy in an Industrializing World," encompassing four chapters, accounts for roughly half of his work. His systematic treatment begins with an analysis of Britain's "Blue Water" school and France's *Jeune école*, continuing with the "Prussian School of Naval Thought" and the place of the navy in German grand strategy after 1871. He then turns to the works of the influential American naval officer and writer, Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose views on the role of sea power in history became so influential in the late nineteenth century. Hobson weaves these threads together in his chapter on the years 1891–1895, arguably the most original and important part of the book, treating the reception of Mahan's ideas in Germany and the genesis of Tirpitz's strategic and operational doctrines. Reading the military and naval history of

the preceding century, both Mahan and the “Prussian School” had seized upon the Napoleonic–Nelsonian faith in the offensive and quest for the decisive battle as the transformational concepts in modern warfare. Whereas Holger Herwig and others have emphasized the influence of Mahan on Tirpitz’s *Dienstschrift IX* of June 1894, Hobson concludes that this important memorandum owes a great deal to the earlier ideas of the Prussian School and would have looked much the same even if Tirpitz had not read Mahan before composing it. Nevertheless, because the Prussian School was rooted in the continental military thought of Karl von Clausewitz, Tirpitz needed the underpinning of Mahan to concoct a world-political vision in which the German fleet would play a central role.

In his last three chapters Hobson examines the origins and assumptions of the Tirpitz Plan, focusing in particular on the evolution of the admiral’s thinking between *Dienstschrift IX* and his subsequent “risk theory,” first disclosed publicly in December 1899. The Second Navy Law (1900), roughly doubling the size of the program approved in the First Navy Law (1898), set Germany on a course of naval expansion grounded in Tirpitz’s argument that a German battle fleet just two-thirds the size of the British would pay enough in strategic dividends to justify the considerable expense of its construction. Hobson believes the modern but second-rate battle fleet funded by the First Navy Law would have sufficed to deter Britain from pursuing a maritime-commercial preventive war against Germany. Indeed, the “risk fleet” authorized by the Second Navy Law did nothing to further deter Britain; to the contrary, it likely made matters worse by alienating other second-rate naval powers of the time, in particular the United States, with fateful long-term consequences. Despite its deeply held convictions about freedom of the seas, the United States in the early 1900s drifted toward a pro-British position and, after the start of the First World War, as a neutral power did nothing to challenge the British blockade of Germany. Conceding that the Anglo-German naval race did much to increase tensions between Britain and Germany prior to the First World War, Hobson nevertheless concludes that the arms races on land in the immediate (1910–1914) prewar years, combined with the offensive plans of army general staffs, contributed much more to the outbreak of the war. Ultimately, in August 1914, “it was the specter of a German hegemony on the continent raised by the attack on France that caused Britain to declare war on Germany, not the latter’s naval challenge” (p. 327).

In his treatment of the politics of Wilhelmian navalism, Hobson analyzes at length the alleged link between Wilhelmian *Sammlungspolitik* and Tirpitz’s fleet program, providing a thorough discussion of the seventy years of historiography from Eckart Kehr to the present. He concludes that in its “salient aspects,” German naval expansion was “by no means unique,” citing parallel developments in the same era in Russia and Austria-Hungary (p. 324). Hobson rejects

the notion that the Tirpitz Plan was designed as the foundation of “a social imperialist policy of domestic stabilization.” Instead, “bureaucratic self-interest” and “an expansionist understanding of world politics” were far stronger motives (p. 324). He argues persuasively that the vital interests of the groups normally associated with the *Sammlung* were fundamentally at odds with the premises of German naval expansion, which reflected the sentiments of liberal nationalist *Flottenprofessoren*, not conservative preindustrial elites. In addressing the role of “bureaucratic self-interest,” however, Hobson does not go as far as Patrick Kelly or the reviewer in emphasizing the importance of Tirpitz’s personal quest for power within the navy and, in a broader sense, within the Second Reich.

Hobson has produced a welcome addition to the literature on the Imperial German navy. While specialists will find this work especially appealing, the even-handed discussion of the historiography makes it accessible to a broader audience of scholars and students seeking an introduction to the field.

LAWRENCE SONDHAUS
UNIVERSITY OF INDIANAPOLIS

Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning, 1871–1914. By Terence Zuber. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2002. Pp. vii + 340. \$72.00. ISBN 0–19–925016–2.

The Schlieffen Plan — the plan that would trigger World War I and nearly annihilate France, Belgium, and the BEF — was woefully poorly guarded. According to Terence Zuber, when the great field marshal resigned his command of the German General Staff in 1906, he casually left many of the voluminous papers and *Denkschriften* that collectively formed the plan in his study at home. When Schlieffen died in 1913, his daughters, Maria and Elisabeth, inherited the Schlieffen Plan, and wedged it into a shelf between their photo albums and scrapbooks. Knowledge of this security lapse, unthinkable in our own security-obsessed age, would doubtless make hard-working spies like Colonel Redl sit up in their graves.

And yet it is the argument of Terence Zuber in *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning, 1871–1914* that had a spy like Redl snatched the Schlieffen Plan — from Frau Schlieffen’s parlor or the vaults of the *Grosser Generalstab* — it would have made absolutely no difference to the conduct or outcome of World War I. Why? Because there was no Schlieffen Plan. That plan of legend, that crutch of the modern war college (which views Schlieffen as the wrecking ball of harmonious civil-military relations), that catch-all explanation