<u>WAR PLANNING AND EFFECTIVE MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS</u>

by

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DEDICATION

To Brianna, Corinne, Elise, and Nora for your unrelenting patience and love.

To my teammates past, present, and future. Guns Attack. Fortuna Fortis Paratus.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

British Expeditionary Force ....BEF
Committee on Imperial Defence ....CID
Chief of the Imperial General Staff..CIGS
Superior War Council ....CSG
Superior National Defense Council .... CSDN
Department of Defense .... DOD
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense .... DASD
Democratic People's Republic of Korea .... DPRK
Director of Military Operations ....DMO
Foreign Service Officer ....FSO
General Headquarters .... GHQ
Joint Publication...JP
North Atlantic Treaty Organization ....NATO
Office of the Secretary of Defense ....OSD
Single Integrated Operational Plan .... SIOP
Standard Operating Procedures ....SOP

ABSTRACT

WAR PLANNING AND EFFECTIVE MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS

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Military organizations devote substantial attention to pre-war planning. This is not surprising given the uncertainties associated with preparing for the next war, as well as the enduring influence of President Eisenhower's dictum on the importance of planning. But just because planning is occurring does not mean that it is producing anything useful. Does pre-war planning really make a difference in terms of wartime military effectiveness? In this dissertation, I find that it does, but not always in positive ways. I argue that military planning organizations that adopt five pre-war planning practices are most likely to produce war planning outcomes that contribute to higher levels of military effectiveness: specificity, resource-sensitivity, moderate civilian oversight, external collaboration, and strategic education. I put the argument to an empirical test by examining the implications of German, French, and British war planning from 1905-1914, to these states' experiences during the July-August 1914 crisis and initial operational phase of the First World War.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Plans are worthless but planning is indispensable."

- Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th U.S. President

Military organizations devote substantial attention to war planning. This is not surprising given the uncertainties inherent to the military profession. Military organizations cannot know with any certainty the kinds of war that their state will ask them to undertake in the future. Yet, they also know that when the time of need arrives, they will not have bandwidth to prepare an acceptable war plan from scratch. Furthermore, many critical peacetime decisions, such as the procurement of advanced weapon systems or modifications to overseas basing posture, have long lead times and thus require military organizations to make projections regarding what the character of warfare will be years or even decades in the future.

Thus, military organizations tend to invest substantial time and energy into the contemplation of how to optimally prepare for future warfare, despite uncertainty. War planning has become an increasingly important mechanism to do so. U.S. military organizations today systematically plan for a range of future war scenarios spanning global geography and functional problem sets. The war plans should in theory provide concepts of employment that the fighting forces can use to train, modernize, prepare, and

ultimately, to decisively act in a time of actual need. Fueled by President Eisenhower's

declaration that "plans are useless but planning is indispensable,"[1] a dominant

conventional view has emerged in which war planning is an inherently valuable activity.

This conventional wisdom prevails today – strategic and military planning is a booming

business particularly within the large military bureaucracies that serve the United States.[2]

But should we really just leave it there? Should we accept the Eisenhower maxim

on its merit? I argue that we should not. Strategic and military planning is undertaken by

complex, peculiar, firmly rooted political organizations that are endowed with more

resources than they know what to do with. In the United States, these military

organizations are among the most respected national institutions so – despite their

importance – they are rarely scrutinized in ways that other institutions are scrutinized.[3]

Yet, established theories of organizations give us very strong reasons to believe that these

organizations require scrutiny. It is probable that these organizations are not responding

optimally to the officials that oversee them. Military organizations have instrumental

objectives of their own that at times are not compatible with national objectives and

operate according to standard procedures that by design are not agile. Intended or not, it

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[1] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks at the National Defense Executive Reserve Conference," The American Presidency Project website, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-national-defense-executive-reserve-conference.

[2] For more on the potential value of war planning see: Colin Gray, "The Strategist as Hero," *Joint Force Quarterly : JFQ*, no. 62 (2011): 37–45; Carl von Clausewitz, *On War, Indexed Edition*, trans. Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), Book 8 (War Plans).

[3] For more on the dearth of scrutiny of U.S. military organizations, see Thomas Crosbie, "Six Scenarios for Military Intervention After January 20," *Defense One*, August 18, 2020, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/08/six-scenarios-military-intervention-after-january-20/167777/.

is entirely possible that the strategic and military planning that these organizations carry out are not productive or are even producing counter-productive or nefarious results.[4]

In summary, we know that most military organizations undertake a significant amount of war planning activities. We do not know whether these activities, in their various formats, are producing an outcome that has a positive or negative impact on wartime military effectiveness. The relative dearth of scrutiny on the performance of modern military organizations further obscures the puzzle. This is unfortunate because war planning potentially offers great theoretical benefits and is conversely highly susceptible to the influence of organizational pathologies. Either way, the impacts of war planning are significant to national and international security and it is therefore imperative that we better understand these impacts.

My research objective is to analyze two questions. Does war planning make a difference in terms of military effectiveness? And are there better or worse ways to do war planning? I address these questions in two steps. First (in chapter 2), I explain why five war planning practices should – in theory – produce outcomes that exhibit qualities that are necessary to enhance military effectiveness at the operational and strategic levels.

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[4] For more on the potential pathologies of war planning, see: Paul Kennedy, ed., *The War Plans of the Great Powers* (London: Routledge, 2014); Carl Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). For more on the tendency for large, complex organizations to defy the intentions of their creators, see Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations," *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): 699–732 and Morton Halperin, P Clapp, and Arnold Kanter, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

These optimal war planning practices include specificity; resource-constrained discipline; moderate civilian oversight; external collaboration; and strategic education.

Second, I test the theory through qualitative analysis (analytical methodology is explained in chapter 3) and comparison of three case studies (chapters 4, 5, and 6) – the pre-war planning experiences of Germany, France, and Britain prior to the First World War. By analyzing these three states' pre-war planning practices, together with the extent to which the outcome of the pre-war planning practices (the war plans) influenced military effectiveness during crisis decision making and outbreak of the First World War, I can subject our theoretical expectations to an empirical test. The results of the empirical test will either lend some further validity to the theory, or alternatively, lead us in another direction.

The British, German, and French pre-war planning experiences are useful and important for at least three reasons. First, the military planning organizations across the three cases bear useful resemblance to each other and therefore the cases provide useful controls for our analytic purposes. Second, these cases happen to offer the opportunity to examine the implications of the planning during an international crisis and war. Third, as I will argue in Chapter 3, the cases represent planning experiences that are highly relevant to the experiences of contemporary military organizations.[5] Thus, close study of these cases offers strong potential to reach findings that are generalizable to some extent.

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[5] Michael A. Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn: Wartime Lessons from the Western Front* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021), Introduction.

The purpose of doing all of this is to gather some needed insight on the relationship, for better or worse, between war planning and military effectiveness. This is important because the dominant contemporary perspective presumes the relationship is inherently positive, and as a result war planning continues to occur in its current formats as a predominant function within modern military organizations. But the dominant contemporary perspective lacks foundational or empirically-tested validity. The principal goal of this dissertation is to subject the dominant contemporary perspective to an empirical test.

In the sections that follow through the end of Chapter 1, I define and analyze war planning and military effectiveness and in the process review what we know, what the key debates are, and what the flaws and contradictions in the literature are.

War planning

What is war planning and why is it done? War planning is *the contemplation of military options that would support a state's political objectives in a specified future conflict scenario.*[6] Military organizations and the states they serve do war planning to survive in an anarchic international system. As long as war remains a possibility, states

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[6] DOD currently defines joint planning as "Planning activities associated with military operations by combatant commanders and their subordinate commanders." (U.S. Department of Defense, "Joint Publication 5-0 Joint Planning," 1 December 2020, p. GL-10.) This definition is unsuitable for my purposes because it focuses too narrowly on the military instrument of power, and applies to broader categories of planning, including 'steady state' operations below the threshold of war, as well as crisis action planning focused on imminent crises. These broader categories of planning are worthy of evaluation, but will have to be evaluated elsewhere.

that desire to survive must possess the means to protect themselves.[7] But raw military

capability is insufficient. Military power is not a simple reflection of defense budget size

or generic capability sets. Military power also inherently reflects a logic derived from

specific sets of tailored capabilities, equipment, and force posture that a state selects from

a range of alternative choices. Two states facing the same strategic situation, with access

to the same level of military resources, but with different war planning[8], will possess

different levels of military effectiveness. War planning thus promises a possibility of

providing states with a military edge (or conversely – a hindrance) in times of need. Just

as states that desire to survive require the means to protect themselves in an anarchic

international system, they require concepts to employ those means in specific ways

against potential adversaries.[9]

It is important to stress before going further that pre-war planning is a very

difficult task, and even more difficult task to do well. The literature reflects a lot of

criticism of war planning cases[10], and very few praises of war planning cases.[11] In "Is

Strategy an Illusion?" Richard Betts explains that human cognitive limits, uncertainty,

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[7] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2010).
[8] I focus on the activity and process of war planning, rather than a war plan document. I will explain in Chapter 3 (methodology) that written war plans are not very interesting. War planning produces outcomes that are not captured by the written war plans. Hamilton and Herwig follow a similar approach, noting that the notion of a single, authoritative war plan document is "seriously misleading…it is best to think in terms of a process, that is, of a continuous, ever-changing planning effort." Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, eds., *War Planning 1914* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 3.
[9] Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley, eds., *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007).
[10] See, for example, Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (New York: Praeger, 1958); Eliot A. Cohen and Gooch, John, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 2006); James Fallows, "Blind Into Baghdad," *The Atlantic Monthly* 293, no. 1 (2004): 52–74.
[11] The most notable exception is: Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2007).

and bureaucratic coordination challenges make strategy making almost impossible.

Clausewitz similarly observes that "[n]o other human activity [than war] is so

continuously or universally bound up with chance. And through the element of chance,

guesswork and luck come into play a great part in war." Because of this uncertainty and

chance, the content of a given war plan is far from pre-ordained. Military planners and

the national leaders that they serve must commit to a specific war plan from a set of very

different options in the face of profound uncertainty. If we presume that planners design

war plan to optimally address a state's external threats and opportunities, then we see that

this is inherently subjective given the uncertainties associated with the nature of these

threats and opportunities. If we further consider the influence of organizational factors

(organizational factorization of problems, entrenched procedures that have outlived their

usefulness, bureaucratic politics, parochial interests acted upon at all organizational

echelons) on how we conceive of the most likely character of the next war, then the level

of uncertainty is indeed even higher.[12]

Evolution of War Planning

      Throughout recorded history, states and political entities have undertaken various

forms of war planning. In perhaps the earliest known theory of war, Sun Tzu titled his

introductory chapter "Estimates." His opening sentence is "war is the most important

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[12] Richard K. Betts, "Is Strategy an Illusion?," *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000): 5–50 (quote is on page 8); Clausewitz, *On War*, 85.

subject to the state…[and thus] the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied." Sun Tzu then proceeds to prescribe various factors, such as command and doctrine, that require systematic attention in the "laying [of] plans." The prominence that Sun Tzu gives the subject illustrates that war planning, and the significance of war planning, is not new. Militaries have always faced the inherent tasks of forming objectives during peacetime to determine how military organizations are optimally manned, equipped, and sustained – despite the impossibility of predicting the future. An understanding of war planning practices today, therefore, should be rooted in timeless strategic principles articulated by classical theorists such as Sun Tzu.[13]

At the same time, while war planning is not new, it has evolved over time as technological, political, and economic factors made the methods of warfare more complex, and thus necessitated increasingly sophisticated concepts of employment and synchronization. Alongside this maturation of warfare, war planning also evolved from an informal way of thinking into a systematic, professional, and prescriptive organizational process. Stand-alone war planning organizations are fixtures within most of today's military bureaucracies. Thus, as the methods and focus of war planning have evolved, matured, and proliferated, we would expect that bureaucratic, cultural, and organizational dynamics have become increasingly important explanatory factors regarding the implications of war planning. We will return to this expectation in later chapters, with an ultimate goal of subjecting the expectation to an empirical test. For

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[13] Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 63, 65.

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now, we will return to our analysis of those factors of war planning that have evolved, and those that have not.

In the 5th Century BC, two rivals – Athens and Sparta – each maintained implicit pre-war plans addressing their most likely wartime scenarios, which in turn established the framework for their readiness postures necessary to deter aggression and achieve national objectives in the absence of war. The Athenian and Spartan war plans were not systematically designed, documented, and coordinated like war plans are in today's military bureaucracies. But the concepts were conceived in ways that served the same purpose that written war plans do today.

Athens' war plan in the decades leading up to the Peloponnesian War was defensive in nature. The plan was conceived of in view of Athens' perception of relative vulnerability to ground combat and relative advantages in economic and naval power. It called for physical barriers to protect Athens proper from land invasion, discipline to restrain from accepting or seeking decisive land battles, a colonial empire that secured a constant flow of economic resources, and the establishment of dominant naval power that could make Sparta think twice about confronting Athens or Athenian colonies militarily. Athens' theory of victory was to prevail in a protracted conflict that Sparta could not sustain given Sparta's relative economic weakness. Athens' approach was not pre-ordained. It was a deeply controversial approach that was adopted from a range of

alternative choices – as Thucydides' accounts of the debates and speeches in the Athenian Assembly makes clear.[14]

Simultaneously, Sparta conceived of a war plan that would preserve Spartan hegemony and way of life if threatened by Athens. The basis of Sparta's way of life was the enslavement and extraction of resources from certain Greek populations – the helots. With resource supply assured, Sparta was free to administer its internal educational system that produced the soldiers that in turn underpinned Spartan military power capable of deterring helot revolts and responding to external threats. Furthermore, Sparta needed to preserve its leadership and influence over a Peloponnesian League of like-minded allies that could combine to counter the most significant threats. The continuity of Sparta's regional hegemony was thus a critical security requirement. In these circumstances, Sparta understandably felt threatened by growing Athenian economic and naval power. A rising Athens could embolden the helot slaves or drive a wedge between Sparta and its junior partner allies. Sparta considered both of these potential outcomes as existential threats. Sparta knew that it held an advantage over Athens in land warfare, and that any conflict with Athens would need to be short enough to ensure Sparta's ability to respond to an opportunistic helot uprising. The war plan called for drawing Athens into a decisive land battle, by destroying fields and homes outside the Athenian walls, thus provoking Athenians to accept a land fight. While simpler than Athens' plan,

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[14] Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, ed. Robert B. Strassler, trans. Richard Crawley, (New York: Free Press, 1998); Donald Kagan, "Athenian Strategy in the Peloponnesian War," in Williamson Murray, Alvin Bernstein, and MacGregor Knox, eds., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 24-55.

it was a clearly conceived approach to putting logic behind raw military power and drove

Spartan investments and readiness generation.[15]

Throughout the eras that followed the Peloponnesian War, states and political

entities similarly designed and tailored approaches to prepare for future war. War

planning practices evolved over time, often suddenly in response to episodic societal,

technological, and political revolutions.[16] The early-nineteenth century Prussian Army

provides us with perhaps the most notable example. After being routed by the French

Army led by Napoleon Bonaparte at Jena and Austerlitz, a change window emerged that

had been previously suppressed by tradition and conservatism.[17] The Prussian Army

sought to address self-perceived military effectiveness deficiencies by systematically

redesigning their approach to war planning. The ensuing reforms centered on a General

Staff to which the most talented officers (as opposed to the preceding practice of

privileging Prussian officers from certain family lineages) would be assigned, and only

after undertaking rigorous screening and testing. The General staff emphasized the study

of history and topography, and the production of war plans and staff estimates. The

Prussians refined their system in the first half of the nineteenth century, and then

demonstrated it on the world stage during three successive victorious military campaigns

in Denmark, Austria, and France. Eventually, all major European powers (and many

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[15] Paul Cartledge, "Spartan Institutions in Thucydides," in Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides*, 589-596.

[16] Andrew F. Krepinevich, "Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions," *The National Interest*, no. 37 (1994): 30–42; J. D. Hittle, *The Military Staff: Its History and Development* (Harrisburg, Pa: The Military Service Publishing Co, 1949); Eugene O. Porter, "The Evolution of the General Staff," *Historian* 8, no. 1 (1945): 26–45.

[17] Trevor N. Dupuy, *A Genius for War: The German Army and General Staff, 1807-1945*, (McLean, VA: NOVA Publications, 1994), 17-20.

others outside Europe) emulated the Prussian war planning model. Systematic preparation of pre-war plans became normal, if not compulsory.[18]

Alongside the development and emulation of the Prussian General Staff, political and technological factors simultaneously evolved to the point that we may now fairly characterize the mid-nineteenth century as the formative period of modern war planning.[19] The rate of technological and political change quickened to the point where military organizations had to constantly evolve. Stable, status quo, tradition-based approaches to generating military power could no longer suffice. States had to establish systematic approaches to harnessing technological change into military strategy and applying more thought to employing vastly larger armies that are a lot more mobile. The improvements in firepower and increasing scale of military power threatened entire societies. Frederick the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte (whose times had come before these developments) had had the luxury of serving as their country's Supreme Commander as well as their own principal war planner. By the mid- to late-19th Century, state leaders had to delegate the war planning responsibilities. Paul Kennedy characterizes this formative period as the point in time when states became compelled to systematically undertake pre-war planning – most of them for the first time.[20]

War planning has continued to mature globally ever since. Today, war planning by the United States military in particular is very mature and complex. As a global superpower and by far the world's leading military power, the United States prudently

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[18] ibid, 300-307.
[19] Talbot C. Imlay and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *The Fog of Peace and War Planning: Military and Strategic Planning under Uncertainty* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 94.
[20] Kennedy, *The War Plans of the Great Powers*, 1-3.

undertakes war planning that addresses potential scenarios spanning global geography and functional problem sets. The vast scale of the undertaking becomes apparent by considering the aggregate effort: over six hundred military professionals engage in full-time deliberate war planning, and several thousand more are integral but part-time contributors.[21] The full-time war planners are predominantly field grade officers in the key developmental stage of their professional careers. Beyond aggregate scale, practitioners represent a diversity of organizations with competing objectives, including geographic and functional combatant commands, service component commands, sub-unified commands, and the military services.

Examples of war plans include War Plan Orange, a series of early 20th Century U.S. war plans focusing on potential conflict with Japan. Plan 1002/1003V was the U.S. war plan addressing the defense of Kuwait after the First Gulf War and then evolving into the war plan for the Invasion of Iraq in 2003. More recent U.S. war plans focus on defending allies and partners from aggression by adversaries such as Iran and Russia.

The Promise and Peril of War Planning

The preceding discussion established the argument that war planning has been inherent to acting strategically in international politics throughout recorded history. However, war planning has also evolved over time, especially in response to those technological and political evolutions that imposed changes on the character of warfare.

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[21] Jim Cahill, "Producing Strategic Value through Deliberate War Planning," *Military Review* 97, no. 1 (2017): 27.

As the tools of military force became increasingly sophisticated, the employment of those tools required increasingly sophisticated levels of thought and synchronization. Furthermore, as the societal consequences of war increased in scale, so too did the relative importance and priority of carefully calibrating the use of force.

But how closely have war planning practices actually kept pace with the evolutions in the warfare? Is war planning truly indispensable? If so in what ways? Are there any side effects or disadvantages to war planning? These debates are ongoing.

The Promise of War Planning

The dominant contemporary perspective emphasizes the inherent value of war planning as an indispensable activity for military organizations to undertake. This current sub-section explores this point of view in more detail. The sub-section that follows will consider the opposing view.

If war planning is indispensable, then what qualities should the outcome of war planning (the war plan) possess? In other words, what utility should military organizations derive from finished war plans? A useful way to think about this is to contemplate the benefits that military organizations can derive during peacetime, and during wartime. Both are analyzed sequentially below.

During peacetime, war planning should produce coherent plans that support readiness generation. For what future wartime requirements should a military organization prepare in the midst of intense security competition, uncertainty, and limited

resources? War plans should articulate a coherent image of anticipated future wartime

requirements, along with a range of options to satisfy those wartime requirements. This

image of future war supports military organizations' peacetime decision making and

implementation strategies. The concepts of employment reflected in the plans provide

the fighting forces with a way to wade through uncertainty and make discretionary

choices related to training, equipment modernization, concept development, and leader

development.

If military organizations were to do no war planning, then they would have to rely

upon other, less strategic sources of information to develop that image of future wartime

requirements. In the absence of war planning, for example, military organizations'

parochial interests or civilian leaders' domestic political preferences might become

dominant factors in the selection of a national military strategy. These are un-optimal

rationales because military organizations tend to possess strong cultures and standard

operating procedures (SOPs),[22] and civilian and military officials tend to demonstrate

contrasting perspectives on the utility of military force.[23] Relatively objective and

strategically-rooted war planning processes should in theory help counteract these

tendencies and allow military organizations to become more responsive to evolutions in

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[22] Jack S Levy, "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War," *International Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1986): 193–222.
[23] For analysis of the contrast between civilian and military officials' perspective on the use of force, see Janine Davidson, "The Contemporary Presidency: Civil-Military Friction and Presidential Decision Making: Explaining the Broken Dialogue," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (March 2013): 129–45; Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 58-68

the actual strategic environment, rather than instinctively protecting their parochial interests and expanding their autonomy.

Another peacetime benefit that military organizations and the states they serve can derive is added logic and credibility to a state's latent military power. The process of setting conditions to ensure readiness to implement war plans has a signaling effect on adversaries and allies. A plan might, for example, require forward-basing of military forces, overt military exercises, or the acquisition of a particular weapon system. Properly calibrated, this effect strengthens states' ability to deter and coerce potential adversaries and assure allies and partners.

When international crises arise, the plans should support effective civil-military decision-making. The plans should provide responsible civilian leaders that possess consistent and rank-ordered goals, with a range of discreet and acceptable military options. Each option should contain a description of the associated costs, risks, and anticipated outcomes. At the completion of this decision-making process, the civilian leader should have some confidence that he or she was able to select an optimum choice, along with awareness of the risks.

During the transition to war, the plan should provide military commanders and staffs with a useful product from which to construct a military campaign. We cannot expect pre-war planning to provide militaries with perfect, executable solutions to wartime realities that are unknowable in advance. There always has and always will be an inherent gap between the wars that militaries prepare for and the actual wars they are

asked to undertake.[24] But we should expect pre-war planning to produce a useful framework (theory of victory) through which large, complex military organizations can transition to war, initiate a process of adaptation to meet wartime realities, and ultimately, navigate the subsequent wartime transitions culminating in a new strategic normal in accordance with the desired (evolving) political objective.

Regardless of whether pre-war planning activities produce these desirable peacetime and/or wartime outcomes, war planning participants should glean a learning benefit by participating in war planning activities. This learning benefit is the basis of President Eisenhower's argument that "plans are useless but planning is indispensable."[25] In other words, even if we were to conclude that plans are worthless because future war situations are unknowable and thus it is impossible to develop a suitable plan ahead of time - the activity of planning is still indispensable because it generates individual and organizational learning that allow for rapid generation of plans in times of need. Planning experiences, according to Eisenhower's point of view, pay off by deepening the participants' appreciation for their strategic and bureaucratic environment. Thus, planners that progress into subsequent command and staff assignments of higher responsibility have a greater aptitude to quickly design plans in real time that conform to wartime realities. War planning is thus a developmental activity – like exercise for the brain, and analogous to leader development and professional military education.

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[24] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, 3-4.
[25] Eisenhower, "Remarks at the National Defense Executive Reserve Conference"

The Peril

Before we can accept the premises of the dominant contemporary point of view (i.e., that war planning is indispensable), we must consider the opposing view.[26] Paul Kennedy, whose observations cited above help explain why the U.S., Britain, and other states were eventually compelled to undertake war planning to keep pace with political and technological change, continues his analysis by explaining how pre-war planning systems that states established during this timeframe also generated new risks and dangers.[27] A goal of this dissertation is to increase awareness and understanding of the risk-benefit tradeoff that is inherent to a systematic war planning system, and of the kinds of war planning practices (see chapter 2 for more on practices) that tend to amplify the risks versus the benefits. We will explore three specific risks below.

The first risk factor is potential *reduction in the flexibility of political decision making*. When this risk factor materializes, then war planning actually harms the civil-military decision-making processes that it is supposed to support. There is an unfortunate

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[26] Although the dominant view within the U.S. Department of Defense is advocating for the indispensable nature of war planning, this was not always the case. A much more pessimistic perspective dominated U.S. and British military thinking prior to the turn of the twentieth century. British liberal politician Campbell-Bannerman expressed the point of view in the 1890's well by declaring an uneasiness with "a body of officers…who sit apart and cogitate about war. If such a body could not find an adequate field in the circumstances of this country, there might be a temptation to create a field for itself." (McDermott, "The Revolution in British Military Thinking from the Boer War to the Moroccan Crisis" in Kennedy, Ed. *The War Plans of the Great Powers,* 100). Similarly, Gordon Craig's assessment of the German General Staff was that the United States too deliberately avoided instituting a general staff system until 1903, principally out of fear that such a system would inculcate the U.S. Government with tyrannical instincts and/or trigger direct U.S. involvement in European wars. On pre-1900 U.S. reticence toward systematic planning, see Ray S. Cline, *United States Army in World War 2, War Department, Washington Command Post, the Operations Division* (Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, D. C., 1951), 16.
[27] Kennedy, *The War Plans of the Great Powers*, 3-5.

natural progression in civil-military dialogue that makes this risk factor particularly

potent. The logic is as follows. Military organizations design plans that seek to gain an

edge over an adversary, including by committing early to military force. Operationally,

this makes a lot of sense. The side that seizes the initiative early is able to conduct

operations at the time and place of its own choosing. The side that delays is at an initial

operational disadvantage because it must react to the first mover. Strategically, however,

the logic is opposite. Military force is just one tool at political decision makers' disposal,

and most often the tool that political decision makers prefer to treat as a last resort.

Political decision makers are thus incentivized to maximize decision space and preserve

the flexibility to employ non-military tools before committing to military force. The

operational perspective, however, can overwhelm the strategic because in many cases, the

only plan that is available in a crisis is a war plan. States rarely maintain diplomatic or

economic plans. If the war plan is the only plan, then it may prejudice time-constrained

and stressful crisis decision making.[28] For example, many respected historians of the

outbreak of the First World War have concluded that war plans of most First World War

combatants helped cause and then accelerate the outbreak of the war and furthermore

transformed a localized conflict into a war that engulfed the entire continent and

eventually, most of the world.[29]

The second risk factor is that an effective war planning system may inadvertently

increase the power of national military establishments relative to other non-military

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[28] Levy, "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War," 210-211.
[29] Kennedy, *The War Plans of the Great Powers*, 3-5; Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (New York: Praeger, 1958); Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58–107.

centers of power (which in turn may then lead civilian elites to undermine the war planning systems they oversee).[30] States that want highly functional war planning must also accept influential standing military establishments. There are clear reasons why a state would be willing to do so. Effective military establishments have more expertise and resources to apply military force than ineffective/marginalized military establishments. There are also clear reasons that states might not accept powerful military establishments. Effective military establishments are expensive, may threaten the authority of other parts of a government, might lead to the establishment of a corrosive military-industrial complex, and – especially when carried out without consultation with other instruments of national power – may generate militarization of foreign policies (look no further than Wilhelmine Germany[31]). State leaders thus have an inherent responsibility to manage the risk-benefit trade-off associated with pre-war planning. We will see contrast between the German, French, and British state leaders' approaches to discharging this responsibility, and the risk-benefit tradeoff explained above helps explain the contrasts.

Third, *pre-war planning activities could become an outlet through which military organizations pursue instinctive parochial agendas that are not in the national interest*. Contemporary military organizations, as we have seen, are large, complex, endowed with tremendous resources, and have agendas of their own.[32] And in the United States, they are not scrutinized nearly as much as other government institutions. Parochial behavior

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[30] McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," 112.
[31] Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, Ch 6-7.
[32] Levy, "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War," 211-212; Halperin, et al. *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Ch 3.

by military organizations is understandable – it allows them to protect their organizational autonomy and ensure the flow of budgetary resources – stabilizing outcomes that are particularly beneficial in a polarized political climate. But these peacetime organizational gains can bleed over when armed conflict actually occurs – including by biasing the selection of courses of action that are not optimal in given situations. For example, Russell Weigley finds in *The American Way of War* that the U.S. has shown clear preferences for strategies of annihilation that focus on directly overthrowing and destroying an adversary's military forces regardless of the political context. This approach produced some positive results, but has become untenable because according to Weigley, the costs of war are much higher in the nuclear era.[33] Andrew Krepinevich similarly argues that the U.S. Army in the Cold War was biased toward the approach designed for a conflict with Russia in Europe, and that this approach was applied reflexively yet inappropriately in Vietnam.[34] Carl Builder takes it a step further, claiming that military organizations instrumentally utilize strategic planning as a way to advance their own organizational interests, even when their organizational interests are at odds with national interest.[35] War planning, like doctrine writing, is an organizational activity that militaries can credibly claim jurisdiction over – and is therefore particularly susceptible to the pathologies of military organizational behavior. So there has to be recognition on the part of both military and civilian leaders of these tendencies and to counter-act them.

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[33] Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

[34] Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 5.

[35] Builder, *The Masks of War*, Chapters 1, 17.

Summary: The Promise and Peril of War Planning

The preceding discussion explores some ways that pre-war planning may, in theory, influence military effectiveness for better or for worse. The dominant conventional view in many professional military settings emphasizes the 'promise' of pre-war planning and does not adequately consider the risk factors. One of the objectives of this dissertation is to convince relevant stakeholders to adopt a more balanced view. This is particularly important because, as we shall see, pre-war planning is usually carried out in disorderly environments where strategic uncertainty, psychological factors[36], organizational complexity[37], and incomplete information prevail. So the implications and outcomes associated with pre-war planning are difficult to grasp. This dissertation is designed to improve our ability to do so.

Gaps and Problems in the debate

We know that war planning has become increasingly sophisticated and systematic over time, in line with political and technological changes that have changed the character of warfare. We also know that there is an ongoing debate regarding the benefits and risks associated with war planning, albeit a debate that is heavily weighted in favor of

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[36] Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992); Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky, eds., *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
[37] Levy, "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War," 207.

the presumed benefits. There are at least two things that we do not know. What is the

actual relationship between pre-war planning and military effectiveness (for better or

worse)? And are there particular types of pre-war planning that are more likely to

positively impact military effectiveness than other types of pre-war planning? Despite an

increasingly insatiable appetite for more pre-war planning – most vividly illustrated by

the increasing size of military staffs[38] – we surprisingly lack much empirically-based

research explaining the outcomes of pre-war planning activities.

By contrast, academia has devoted substantial attention to the influence of

strategic planning in private industry. For example, Cyert and March's *Behavioral*

Theory of the Firm analyzes how goal formation, environmental perception, and

decision-making processes impact business firms' behavior.[39] In another example,

George et al test whether strategic planning improves public and private organizations'

performance.[40] One reason for the lack of similar attention on war planning is it is

analytically elusive. Betts points out that we can judge any strategy as effective because

the future is unknowable – and therefore there is no empirical evidence about the future

to contradict one strategy or another. Betts further points out that we are equally

handicapped in evaluating past strategies (with the benefits of hindsight), due to the

impossibility of controlling for the prospect that an outcome was determined by factors

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[38] Gregory C. McCarthy, "Are There Too Many General Officers for Today's Military?," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 87 (2017): 76–81; Greg Jaffe, "Gates Vows to Shrink Pentagon Bureaucracy," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 2010.
[39] Richard M. Cyert and James G. March, *Behavioral Theory of the Firm* (Cambridge, Mass., USA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992).
[40] Bert George, Richard M. Walker, and Joost Monster, "Does Strategic Planning Improve Organizational Performance? A Meta-Analysis," *Public Administration Review* 79, no. 6 (2019): 810–819.

other than the strategy, such as superior material resources or an inept opponent.[41]

Despite these analytical obstacles, we must at least try to improve our understanding of what the implications of current and future pre-war planning initiatives are. If nothing else, some research will help illuminate part of the story, so that we are not operating with a false sense of security or control.

We also lack understanding of what explains variability across military organizations in the type, quantity, and quality of pre-war planning and strategy that military organizations produce. It would be useful to find out why. Most practically, a better understanding of the relationship between various types of pre-war planning and military effectiveness will thus offer immediate applicability to support strategic choices by military leaders regarding the quantity and types of planning to undertake. The Eisenhower principal ("plans are useless but planning is indispensable") provides no help because it is framed as a binary choice (to plan or not to plan).   If Eisenhower's maxim is going to continue to influence military organizational practices – and all indications are that it will – then we should give it some logic in terms of the kinds of planning that are most productive or that are potentially counterproductive.

Military Effectiveness

To repeat our purpose, we are interested in understanding the pre-war planning practices that are most likely to generate outcomes that influence military effectiveness

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[41] Betts, "Is Strategy an Illusion?," 16-22.

for better or worse. We have already considered (in the preceding section) some positive

and negative outcomes that pre-war planning activities could conceivably generate. We

will consider (in chapter 2) the war planning practices that should – in theory – be the

most likely to generate more positive influence on military effectiveness than others.

Before doing so, it is necessary to define what we mean by military effectiveness, and

what we know about it from the literature. Two main issues are examined: What is

military effectiveness? What are some ways that military effectiveness is generated? A

third issue – How do we know military effectiveness when we see it? – is an empirical

question taken up at the end of Chapter 2.

What is military effectiveness?

In *Creating Military Power*, Risa Brooks defines military effectiveness as "the

capacity to create military power from a state's basic resources in wealth, technology,

population size, and human capital."[42] Brooks' definition suits our analytic purposes.

Specifically, we are interested in unpacking the term *capacity*. If basic resources are held

constant, some military organizations demonstrate a greater capacity to create military

power than others. A key expectation that this dissertation investigates has to do with the

role that pre-war planning has in increasing or constraining this potential military power.

Rather obviously, any measurement or evaluation of a state's capacity to create

military power requires us to explain what we mean by military power. For this

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[42] Brooks, *Creating Military Power*, 9.

requirement, I draw on Millet et al's persuasive argument that military effectiveness is going to look different depending on whether we approach it from a strategic or operational perspective.[43] Operational effectiveness is necessary particularly to accomplish short term military objectives such as the destruction of an opposing military force. However, these military objectives are not accomplished in isolation. The achievement of a short-term military objective may be useful militarily but contradict or preclude longer-term broader strategic objectives.[44] Operational effectiveness is in most cases offset from or even inversely related to strategic effectiveness. So for analytical purposes, it would be most convenient to focus on one or the other. However, that approach would severely undercut any utility of the project because effective military organizations and states must find a way to demonstrate operational and strategic effectiveness.

For the purpose of this study, the way we will deal with the strategic versus operational contradictions associated with military power and effectiveness is to focus on them both. If operational and strategic effectiveness are distinct, then the most effective military organizations are those that tend to find a balance between or even integrate the two approaches. This leads us to a conclusion that military effectiveness is a function of the tightness of fit between the political and military elements of a state's national

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[43] Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," *International Security* Vol 11, No. 1 (Summer 1986): 37–71.
[44] On this point, see also Gray, Colin S. *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 6-7.

security strategy. States with closer political-military integration are better at calibrating

the character of military force to a given political objective.

How Military Effectiveness is Generated: The Sources of Military Effectiveness

The second part of the puzzle is what are the sources of military effectiveness?

Some argue that military effectiveness is primarily a function of a state's access to

material resources, including financial resources, human capital, technology, and

equipment.[45] Some argue that state-level characteristics such as national culture,

cognitive beliefs, political institutions, and social structure explain how well a state

harnesses available material resources into military power.[46] Others focus on how

specific military organizational attributes, politics, processes, and cultures impact or

constrain innovation.[47] Still others focus on organizational characteristics that impact the

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[45] Biddle describes this as the 'numerical preponderance' argument in Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), Chapter 2. Neoclassical realist theories of international politics explain state behavior (including decisions to resort to war) principally on the basis of balance of power, where power is a function of a state's material resources. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; William C. Wohlforth, "Realism," in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 136-138. Robert Art goes even further, arguing that raw military power provides great power states with 'gravitational' advantages in non-military policy realms, including international trade and economics. Robert J. Art, "American Foreign Policy and the Fungibility of Force," *Security Studies* 5, no. 4 (June 1, 1996): 7–42.

[46] Brooks and Stanley, eds., *Creating Military Power*, Chapter 1; Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel.* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Security Studies, 2010); Edward Rhodes, "Sea Change: Interest-Based vs. Cultural-Cognitive Accounts of Strategic Choice in the 1890's," *Security Studies* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 73–124; Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, "Understanding Victory: Why Political Institutions Matter," *International Security* 28, no. 1 (2003): 168–179.

[47] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*; Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Harvey M. Sapolsky, *The Polaris System Development* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972).

speed and efficiency by which military organizations adapt to meet wartime challenges that are unknowable beforehand.[48] At least one scholar prescribes specific doctrine that will allow military organizations to outperform others that are unwilling or unable to do so themselves.[49] None of these arguments by itself fully explains the military effectiveness puzzle. Rather, the diversity of explanations offers scholars and practitioners utility through a range of ways to diagnose contingent situations.[50] Furthermore, military effectiveness is a function of many of the factors that have received scholarly attention – so the collective literature gives us greater understanding of the role of each factor.

Gaps and problems in the Military Effectiveness literature

A notable gap that has received little attention is the influence that war planning has on military effectiveness. This is a strange omission, since military organizations put a lot of time and effort into developing war plans during inter-war years. Our specific interest is to examine the extent to which war planning in various formats contributes or detracts from military effectiveness.

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[48] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*; John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005); Janine Davidson, *Lifting the Fog of Peace How Americans Learned to Fight Modern War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

[49] Biddle, *Military Power*.

[50] George and Bennett make a similar point by describing "middle range theories" which make no attempt at universal explanation, and instead seek focused, policy-relevant models that are applicable to a contingent sub-set of situations. Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2005), 265.

A second problem in the literature is that most analysts use battlefield performance as their basis for evaluation of military effectiveness. For example, in *Military Power*, Stephen Biddle evaluates how quickly and effectively military organizations inflict costs in terms of casualties and territory seized or defended.[51] In *Dying to Learn*, Michael Hunzeker focuses on how quickly military organizations adapt under fire from inherently inaccurate pre-war expectations to actual wartime conditions.[52] In "Understanding Victory," Reiter and Stam focus on whether actual military operations result in victory or defeat.[53] In these examples and more, militaries that perform well on the battlefield, based on analytical standards that vary widely across the literature, are considered relatively effective.

This predominant focus on battlefield performance is problematic because war is rare. Most militaries convert resources into military effectiveness during peacetime, so we do not have the opportunity to observe battlefield performance. For our purposes, we are interested in pre-war plans. U.S. military organizations, for example, devoted significant attention during the Cold War to planning for war with the USSR. We are profoundly interested in understanding the value derived (or the lack thereof) from these Cold War-era plans, however, we obviously lack the battlefield performance data to carry out this kind of evaluation.

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[51] Biddle, *Military Power*, p. 6.
[52] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*.
[53] Reiter and Stam, "Understanding Victory," 168–179.

There are two potential ways out of this conundrum. The first is to design an *ex ante* concept of military effectiveness that is applicable and observable before or in the absence of a battlefield litmus test. However, this approach is highly subjective and not as analytically tractable as battlefield performance. The second way is to analyze historical cases of war planning that happened to precede actual military conflict. The findings would still have some generalizable applicability provided that the examined war planning experiences resemble the war planning experiences that lack their own data related to battlefield performance. As I will argue in detail in Chapter 3, the plans and outcomes of the First World War provide an excellent opportunity to do so.

Conclusion and Roadmap of the Dissertation

In chapter 2, I build upon Chapter 1's analysis of the literature by specifying a theory on what types of war planning practices are more likely than others to contribute to military effectiveness.

In chapter 3, I establish a methodological approach to subject the theory that I specified in chapter 2 to an empirical test, including optimal case study selection, approach to data collection, and empirical indicators associated with observation and measurement. Chapter 3 also identifies and assesses limitations associated with the methodological approach.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are the case studies themselves: German, British, and French war planning from 1904-1914. These chapters start with a descriptive introduction of

contextual factors that influenced war planning practices. Then, I assess the states'

effectiveness at the strategic and operational level during the July-August crisis and

initial operational phase of the war. Third, I evaluate the extent to which the Germans,

British, and French adopted the five hypothesized best practices during pre-war planning

prior to July 1914. Finally, I analyze the relationship between the three states' pre-war

planning practices and their military effectiveness after July 1914.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion which lists the findings and contemplates policy

implications and areas that merit additional academic attention.

CHAPTER TWO: EXPLAINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WAR PLANNING AND MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction

In chapter 1, I established three main points that form the foundation for why this dissertation is needed. First, there is a dominant contemporary perspective that treats war planning as an inherently indispensable activity, despite a lack of scrutiny of the military organizations responsible for war planning and a lack of evidence that war planning actually produces or contributes to military effectiveness. Second, I analyzed the potential benefits and risks associated with systematic war planning, concluding that there is a clear cost-benefit tradeoff. In other words, the potential opportunities that are pursue-able through war planning, such enhancing a state's readiness for future wars, may be partially or completely offset by certain risks, such as biasing decision making toward the employment of military force when another approach may be more optimal. Third, I concluded that we urgently require a framework that provides us with some insight on which war planning practices are most likely to generate war planning outcomes that impact a given military organization's effectiveness for better or worse. Such a framework would equip us to understand the actual impact of war planning – for better or worse, and more practically, to promote those war planning practices that are more likely than other war planning practices to enhance military effectiveness.

Chapter 2 builds upon chapter 1 by establishing a hypothesis that specifies five war planning practices that are, at least in theory, more likely to lead to war planning

outcomes that contribute to military effectiveness than other war planning practices. The chapter is organized in two sections. The first section explains the ways that war planning can influence wartime military effectiveness for better or worse. The second section addresses the five war planning practices that should, in theory, positively influence wartime military effectiveness: moderate civilian oversight; external collaboration; focusing war planning within a tight scope specificity; resource-informed planning; and strategic education. In later chapters, I will establish and carry out a methodology that subjects this hypothesis to an empirical test.

The Dependent Variable: Military Effectiveness

In chapter 1, I explained that pre-war planning can influence military effectiveness in a variety of ways, some good and some bad (see Chapter 1 section titled "The Promise and Peril of Pre-War Planning). I argue here that there are two outcomes of pre-war planning that are particularly impactful, and that will focus my analysis for the remainder of this dissertation. At the strategic level, militarily effective war planning provides national decision makers with a range of suitable options during crisis decision making. At the operational level, it provides wartime military commanders with a framework that is useful to their inherent responsibility of adapting to wartime situations that are unknowable ahead of time.

My hypothesis is that the pre-war planning practices described in this chapter increase the likelihood of achieving the desired strategic and operational outcomes. Military planning organizations that do not adopt these practices are more likely to

generate the three sorts of hypothesized negative consequences of military planning that were identified in Chapter 1: reduction in political decision-making flexibility; generation of overly powerful military establishments; and/or military behavior skewed in favor of parochial priorities rather than in favor of addressing national needs.

The explanatory variables – war planning practices

This section explains why the five war planning practices are in theory more likely to enhance military effectiveness than other war planning practices. For each of the five war planning practices, I explain why the practice is important, variations of the war planning practices, and expectations of what we should find in the data (e.g., do we expect to find the practices frequently or rarely?).

War Planning Practice 1: Specificity

Military organizations whose war plans have more specificity should generate relatively high levels of military effectiveness. More specific war plans focus on designated adversaries, geographic spaces, and scenarios. For example, a contingency plan for NATO to respond to a Russian military intervention in the Baltic states is specific. Less specific war plans address functional capabilities and problems many times without a named adversary. During the Cold War, for example, the United States maintained the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) to govern nuclear weapons employment. More recently, U.S. military organizations have undertaken functional war

planning to establish global approaches for force projection, countering terrorism, and countering weapons of mass destruction.

Why Specificity is Important

Specificity allows war planning participants to gain deeper understanding of future operating environments. Tightly defined contingency situations illuminate wartime challenges and friction points much more clearly than generic scenarios. For example, participants become more familiar with responding to an animate enemy, framing decision making under conditions of uncertainty and limited resources, defining what kind of war a state and its military organizations should fight under various circumstances, and achieving control over echeloned military forces operating across distributed and contested environments. The advantage of specificity is not to eliminate uncertainty because the precise nature of the next war is unknowable. Rather, specificity in planning enables individual and organizational learning to occur and as an extension, should speed up the necessary learning associated with wartime doctrinal optimization. It is like exercise for the brain.[54]

To avoid specificity is to succumb to what Michael Fitzsimmons characterizes as "overreaching for strategic flexibility" and that Hew Strachan characterizes as robbing strategy of any meaningful utility.[55] Military organizations may be tempted to water down their plans for the purpose of maintaining flexibility, but this approach also

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[54] In Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, Ch 2, Hunzeker argues that trench warfare was a contingent outcome, that would not have occurred had German French, and British Armies collided in another geographic area. War planning specificity allows war planners to explore these kinds of contingent outcomes.
[55] Michael Fitzsimmons, "The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning," *Survival* 48, no. 4 (2006): 131-132, 144; Hew Strachan, "The Lost Meaning of Strategy," *Survival* 47, no. 3 (2005): 34.

eliminates the need to make choices or comply with difficult constraints. Non-specific planning devolves into a formulaic process that at best has no relationship with military effectiveness, and at worst is counterproductive.

To gain the benefits of specificity in pre-war planning, military organizations should optimally also possess an effective mechanism to adapt their pre-war plans to wartime realities. The planning of a specific war plan, in other words, is an activity that offers rewards. But there should not be a perception from wartime commanders that the plan can or should be executed to the letter or rigidly. There has to be a process of adaptation[56] and the war plan should be useful to this purpose.

Types of Specificity

Pre-war plans stand the best chance of enhancing wartime military effectiveness if they contain specificity on four subjects: adversary, operational approach, flexibility mechanisms, and a theory of victory. Militarily effective plans must contain specificity on all four dimensions. If just one is missing, then the plans are incomplete and will most likely impair wartime military effectiveness because they will not support a strategically desired outcome, nor support wartime commanders' inherent responsibility to adapt to wartime realities.

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[56] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, p. 4

<u>Adversary</u>

War planning is best carried out when focused on a named adversary state or non-state actor, rather than a capability or functional problem. War planning should furthermore specify assumptions relating to an anticipated course of action that the adversary will take.

<u>Operational Approach</u>

Pre-war planning that produces a specific operational approach should also enhance a war plan's strategic value, as long as the operational approach accommodates flexibility for wartime commanders to adapt to wartime realities that are unknowable in advance. The design of a specific operational approach provides wartime commanders with a starting point in terms of broadly-held common perspective on how to think about the kind of war they are embarking upon, and to begin to synchronize the activities of their complex organizations.

<u>Flexibility Mechanism</u>

To prevent blind/instinctive and rigid implementation of a specific war plan in an actual crisis situation (where the strategic situation will be almost assuredly different than the situation that was envisioned during war planning – and therefore the strategic assumptions utilized for planning purpose require revisiting immediately) – war plans should have some mechanism to allow for rapid adaptation of the plan. One way to do

this is to specify clearly what the assumptions are during planning, so that these assumptions can be reconsidered during a crisis.

Another flexibility mechanism is the design of a range of limited/nuanced options during crisis decision making to de-escalate crises before crossing a threshold where the nature of the crisis transforms from something that can be resolved through diplomacy and shows of force and into a campaign to militarily prevail in accordance with the plan.[57]

Theory of Victory

A theory of victory is an explanation of how the operational approach is expected to contribute to the achievement of a sustainable strategic outcome. War planning that is not based on a realistic theory of victory will likely focus narrowly on military objectives as ends in themselves. This risk is in line with Clausewitz's argument that "[War's] grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not its logic…war cannot be divorced from political life; and whenever this occurs in our thinking about war, the many links that connect the two elements are destroyed and we are left with something pointless and devoid of sense."[58]

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[57] Levy, "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War," p. 199-200.
[58] Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 605.

Expectations of what we will find in the data

We should expect to find less-specific approaches in most cases, due to the uncertainty that military organizations confront regarding the timing and nature of the next war.[59] Uncertainty incentivizes the avoidance of specificity, thereby mitigating the risk of finding oneself to be exactly wrong. Alternative, less specific approaches promise to develop leaders and doctrines that are adaptable to any wartime environment.[60] This temptation is understandable particularly for great power states whose military organizations must remain ready to support a wide variety of missions worldwide. It is also understandable for military organizations that are endowed with enormous budgets, on the grounds that they do not have to make sharp strategic choices or tradeoffs.

War Planning Practice 2: Resource Sensitivity

Military organizations whose war plans articulate military objectives that are reasonably constrained by actual force and capability availability are more likely to generate relatively high levels of military effectiveness than military organizations whose war plan objectives are unconstrained.

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[59] Micah Zenko, "100% Right 0% of the Time," *Foreign Policy* (blog, October 16, 2012), https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/16/100-right-0-of-the-time/.
[60] Paul Davis and Lou Finch, *Defense Planning for the Post-Cold War Era: Giving Meaning to Flexibility, Adeptness, and Robustness of Capability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1993); JP Clark, "The Challenges of Uncertainty: Forging an Adaptable Army for an Unpredictable World," *Strategos*, Publication Date Unknown.

Why Resource Awareness is Important

Resource-informed war plans are optimal because they reflect alignment between military objectives, resources (such as military forces, capabilities, and necessary wartime support by the private sector and other government agencies), and the prescribed military operations.[61] Germany's pre-First World War plan for the defeat of France and Russia was not resource-informed because the prescribed military operations required at least eight Army corps that did not exist, and it would have taken too long to mobilize eight corps in time to employ them according to the war plan.[62] Resource-uninformed war plans are less likely than resource-informed war plans to contribute to military effectiveness. Indeed, resource-uninformed plans are more likely to degrade military effectiveness by creating a false perception of readiness. This false perception is more dangerous than not having a plan at all.

Types of Resource Constraints

The extent to which a war plan is consistent with resource constraints is observable in two main dimensions. The first has to do with the capacity of available military forces. By available forces, I am referring to a state's standing, active duty forces-in-being plus any military reserve forces that might be accessible in a time of war.

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[61] Arthur Lykke similarly advocates for strategies that balance ends (military objectives), ways (concepts of employment), and means in (resources such as manpower, budgets, and capabilities) Arthur F Lykke Jr, "Defining Military Strategy" 77, no. 1 (January/February 1997): 183-186.

[62] Holger Herwig, "Command Decision Making: Imperial Germany, 1871-1914," in Talbot C. Imlay and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *The Fog of Peace and War Planning: Military and Strategic Planning under Uncertainty* (Routledge, 2007), 117.

Availability of military reserve forces depends upon the expected and realistic

mobilization timelines. The Schlieffen Plan, for example, required the employment of

Germany Army reserve forces that would have eventually been mobilized. This is a

useful approach given Germany's substantial reliance on inactive reserve forces.

However, the plan called for the employment of these reserve forces at the opening of the

war – timing that was unreasonable given the mobilization timeline. The plan was

therefore not resource-informed.

The second dimension is consistency between the prescribed military operations

and the capabilities that available military forces possess. In other words, a resource-

uninformed war plan prescribes activities that require a capability that a state's military

forces do not possess. The difference between the first and second dimension is – the

first focuses on capacity and the second focuses on qualitative capabilities and

technologies. An example of the second dimension is a war plan calls for the

employment of missile defenses to protect critical infrastructure, but available missile

defense capabilities are incapable of defeating the classes of missiles the adversary

possesses.

Expectations of what we will find in the data

We should expect resource-informed war planning to be relatively rare. Military

organizations, as we have seen, have incentives to protect their autonomy and ensure a

continued or increased flow of national resources. A key tool they have at their disposal

to advance these goals is to cause alarm by pointing to a threat that the state is not

prepared to defend against. To deal with the threat, the military organization will argue

that larger defense budgets to meet inflated war plan requirements.

We should further expect that war plans focused on scenarios further out in the

future to be less resource-informed than war plans whose execution is likely to occur in

the immediate future. Longer planning timelines means uncertainty increases. With

higher levels of uncertainty regarding the timing or nature of the next war, military

organizations will have more of a tendency to design inflated plans. And policy makers

will be further distanced from the planning, so their imprint on the plan will be lower

than those plans that are tied to immediate national security threats and opportunities.

War Planning Practice 3: Moderate Civilian Oversight
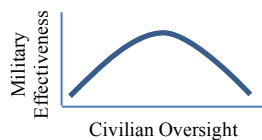
Figure 1: Theoretical relationship between civilian oversight and military effectiveness

When political authorities wield a moderately influential role in military planning,

then military planning should generate relatively high levels of military effectiveness

compared to situations where political authorities are less involved or are overly

involved. By political authorities, I am principally referring to those that possess the

legal authority to authorize the use of military force. For the United States, these are the

President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Congress.[63] The relevant political authorities

in other states differ according to their government system. For example, the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is a dictatorship whose Supreme Leader is solely

responsible. In another example – Imperial Germany prior to the First World War – the

Imperial Kaiser and Imperial Chancellor possessed constitutional authorities over

decisions to go to war, but as we shall see, did not effectively translate these authorities

into oversight of pre-war planning. Regardless of political system, the officials that

possess the legal authority to authorize the use of military force should optimally provide

unique and important inputs into planning. At the same time, if civilian officials become

overly involved, the planning effectiveness begins to suffer.

Why Civilian Oversight is Important

There are four main reasons why a moderately influential role by civilian leaders

in war planning increases the likelihood of increasing military effectiveness. First, most

states endow civilian leaders with the authority and responsibility to authorize, and to set

the political objectives associated with, the use of military force. These civilians'

engagement in the war planning process should increase the probability that war plans

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[63] In practice, the U.S. Congress's current exercise of its authorities related to use of force decisions is decreasingly relevant. However, its exercise over military budgets (and relatedly, over pre-war planning) is impactful. For more on the ways that congressional oversight can impact military effectiveness, see Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). For more on the relationship between the US Presidential use of force decisions and congressional oversight, see Peter Haas, "Does It Even Work? A Theoretical and Practical Evaluation of the War Powers Resolution," *Congress & the Presidency* 44, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 235–58.

address threats and opportunities that civilian leaders care about and prescribe courses of action that are politically supportable.

Second, relationships between civilian and military officials are fraught with natural tensions. War planning offers a key opportunity for these civil-military tensions to get deliberately worked through during peacetime, thereby decreasing the severity of the tensions during future time-constrained crisis decision making. Janine Davidson offers a clear explanation on what the natural tensions are. She argues that civilian and military leaders have contradictory expectations on how the military should advise the President. Civilians, according to Davidson, expect military leaders to produce creative and nuanced options on short notice. Military leaders, by contrast, expect the President to issue planning guidance with long lead times, and then to get out of the way to allow the military professionals to make a plan deliberately. Davidson further argues that civilian and military leaders hold contradictory views on military operational success criteria. Whereas civilians prefer to apply the minimum level of necessary force, thereby reducing the media attention and military footprint, military leaders tend to prefer applying overwhelming force, thereby increasing the possibility of winning quickly and decisively.[64] We can expect that states that are more adept at managing these tensions will be more effective militarily. Thus, the more that peacetime war planning can draw out these tensions early – rather than let them boil under the surface until a crisis requires sudden reckoning with little time to think through or discuss the tensions – the better.

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[64] Davidson, "Explaining the Broken Dialogue," 129–45.

Third, an absence of civilian leader engagement leaves the war planning process increasingly vulnerable to organizational pathologies. For example, many argue that military organizations tend to resist change and/or gravitate toward applying force in ways that support their organizational essence.[65] Yet, these preferred operational approaches may not be the most optimal to achieving the outcomes desired by political authorities. Furthermore, military organizations tend to want to maximize the lead times associated with applying force. Longer lead times requires policy makers to commit to a course of action early. Policy makers, by contrast, tend to want to maximize flexibility and withhold commitments (particularly commitments to resort to war) until the last possible minute, and to prevent escalating the crisis prematurely. Political authorities' engagement is not always pleasant to military authorities. It causes discomfort. But this is the whole point. It is much better to stir this unpleasantness during peace than during a crisis.

Fourth, political authorities' influential role in planning is a way to mitigate the challenges of planning in the face of uncertainty. States cannot know the specific adversary, timing, or nature of their next war. They can and should know, however, a great deal about the national objectives that will form the basis of the next war, should an opportunity or threat emerge. When these national objectives become the focus, war planning becomes much more meaningful and substantive. Political authorities are,

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[65] Weigley, *The American Way of War*; Builder, *The Masks of War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Amy Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), Chapter 2.

naturally, the ones that are qualified to define these national objectives. Without such input, war planning will lack meaning. It will become lost in the cloud of uncertainty.[66]

The four preceding paragraphs explain why moderate civilian oversight over war planning should in theory increase the likelihood of increasing military effectiveness. When we consider the impact of civilian oversight as the intensity increases from moderate to severe, however, we should expect that the result is a lower likelihood that war planning will enhance military effectiveness. The most obvious reason is that civilian leaders simply lack the bandwidth to devote the volume of attention that war in the modern world requires. Frederick the Great and Napoleon were able to operate with two hats – as heads of state and as their own principal war planner. Subsequent evolutions in the conduct of war, including exponential increases in the size of armies and in the destructiveness of firepower have incentivized civilian leaders to delegate most war planning responsibilities.

Given the level of detail that modern war planning requires, civilian leaders that refuse to delegate any meaningful authority, or that insist on making themselves the procedural focal point, undermine the potential impact of pre-war planning. As a practical matter, if military organizations must frequently wait to progress to the next stage of war planning until provided with an opportunity to brief the civilian leaders, then planning is slowed down and resources are kept idle. The U.S. DOD has in recent years

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[66] Colin Gray similarly argues that politics is the most important input to defense planning. Gray, *Strategy and Defence Planning*, Chapter 5.

experimented with requirements for the Secretary of Defense and/or other senior DOD

officials to receive in-progress review briefings at specific stages of the planning

process.[67] This was a logical approach to strengthening civilian oversight and to seeking

the benefits described in the preceding four paragraphs. However, the seemingly simple

act of scheduling these meetings then became the driving factor in the pace of planning.

Until the calendar clears, military organizations have to cease planning. Furthermore,

when organizations within the bureaucracy are forced to constantly compete for an

audience with civilian leaders, then bureaucratic politics rears its head (e.g., intellectual

energy that would otherwise be devoted to war planning is consumed by fighting the

bureaucracy).

Types of Civilian Oversight

One way to categorize instances of civilian oversight of war planning is by

planning phase. This is useful categorization for empirical purposes because political

authorities' engagement should ideally occur spread out across all planning process,

including before planning begins, during planning, upon plan approval, and during crisis

decision making. If civilian oversight is unbalanced – for example if a civilian leader's

first opportunity to review a war plan comes at the tail end of the planning process, then

planning suffers. Ideally, civilian oversight should be spread across all phases, so that

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[67] Loren Dejonge Schulman, Alice Hunt Friend, and Mara E. Karlin, "Two Cheers for Esper's Plan to Reassert Civilian Control of the Pentagon," *Defense One*, September 9, 2019, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2019/09/two-cheers-espers-plan-reassert-civilian-control-pentagon/159716/.

civil-military friction can arise in manageable amounts that can be dealt with before it becomes overwhelming. Without a balanced approach, it becomes increasingly impossible to go back to the beginning of the logical thought process that led to the final product.

Pre-war planning is done in four phases.[68] The first is planning initiation. Founding moments of planning efforts loom large. When political authorities are consulted to determine what military planners should plan for and, within the range of planning efforts, which ones are the highest priority, then the entire planning enterprise enters into the effort with a firmer foundation. This heads off entirely unsuitable planning efforts that do not contribute to military effectiveness. The second phase is during the conduct of actual planning. When political authorities have opportunities to provide substantive input at relatively earlier stages in the planning process, it is much easier to make small adjustments. The third is the plan approval process. The approval authority of a war plan may be a military commander, or a political authority. When political authorities are the approval authority, then this inserts unique considerations into the planning process – knowing that the plan will ultimately be required to be digestible and pass the acceptance test by that political authority. It is a logical way to virtually influence the process. Lastly, at the crisis decision making stage, political authorities will obviously be involved. The point here is that the preceding civil-military dialogue should

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[68] These phases are particularly pronounced and distinct in current U.S. joint deliberate planning, which is based on very detailed procedures and doctrine. Other current and past military planning organizations followed much less prescriptive approaches, but the four phases still applied even implicitly or abstractly. The important point is the four phases are a useful model to support analysis and evaluation.

have lessened the civil-military relations stresses that are inherent to time-constrained crisis decision making.

Beyond the planning phases, another way to categorize civilian oversight is to look at direct involvement by civilian leaders, versus engagement by the civilian leaders' staffs. Civilian leaders' bandwidth will obviously limit the opportunities for direct involvement. So, an important mitigating factor is to empower and employ subordinate officials. For example, the U.S. Secretary of Defense today has at his or her disposal a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Plans whose sole function is to provide oversight of war planning. If an official or even a civilian office/division is appointed by political authorities to oversee war planning, then we should expect for more of the benefits of war planning to be realized than situations where no officially appointed representatives are available. This is, of course, dependent upon the extent to which that official or staff is empowered and perceived as empowered by military planning officials.

Expectations of what we will find in the data

Despite the potential benefits that can come from political authorities' moderate involvement in all phases of the planning process, we should expect for it to be rare. The most important reason is that political officials have finite capacity so cannot physically devote sufficient bandwidth to be present on a continuous basis. We should expect civilian oversight to be especially rare over war planning that is focused on threats or timelines that are not directly tied to high priority national security issues. But even for

these high priority national security issues, it is not a given. For example, Larry O'Brien found in his study of U.S. military planning from 1945-1950 that U.S. policymakers provided no significant policy guidance to military planners on the role that nuclear weapons should have in deterrence or war.[69]

War Planning Practice 4: External Collaboration

We can expect military organizations that frequently collaborate during war planning with external stakeholders, defined here as other government agencies, other states' militaries, and private industry to generate relatively high levels of military effectiveness compared to military organizations that rarely or never collaborate with external stakeholders.

Why External Collaboration is Important[70]

Collaborative planning between military and non-military agencies would be unnecessary if there were a black-and-white distinction between states of peace and war. In other words, if a state had sufficient military power, and an acceptable mandate, to accomplish its objectives through the raw application of brute force, then there would be

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[69] Larry O'Brien, "National Security and the New Warfare: Defense Policy, War Planning, and Nuclear Weapons, 1945-1950" (Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1981), 2-3.
[70] Gordon Craig's assessment of the German General Staff's lack of pre-WW1 external coordination: "It can be argued…that this legitimate occupation, because it was pursued without proper consultation and coordination with other policy-making agencies of the state, had a more disastrous effect upon Germany's foreign policy than Waldersee's approach" Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 256.

less need for integration across national security agencies. However, this is not the norm and war does not occur in isolation.

Thomas Schelling persuasively argues that war would not have any meaning or lead to anything of value if it did not seek to produce specific changes in people's behavior. Military force, diplomacy, signaling all occur simultaneously.[71] Clausewitz observes that "war is…a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means."[72] External collaboration between military planning organizations and non-military government agencies should result in a tighter fit between the military activities called for in war plans and non-military activities that are undertaken to compete in international politics short of war. This politico-military tightness of fit is equally important during wartime, as wars come to an end only through political agreements between the warring parties. Collaborative planning increases the likelihood of closer integration. Peacetime planning activities are ideal forums to deliberately work through sticky inter-agency issues, thereby setting conditions to more rapidly and efficiently design a nested approach during a time-compressed crisis.

Second, collaborative pre-war planning between militaries from different states should enhance multinational operations. War in the modern world is increasingly undertaken by multi-national coalitions.[73] Assuming this trend continues, then effective

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[71] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), Chapter 1.
[72] Clausewitz, *On War*, 28.
[73] Kathleen J McInnis, "Lessons in Coalition Warfare: Past, Present and Implications for the Future," *International Politics Reviews* 1, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 78–90.

military organizations must have proficiency in multinational operations. U.S. Joint

Doctrine on multinational operations specifies five tenets of multinational operations:

"respect, rapport, knowledge of partners, patience, mission focus, team-building, trust,

and confidence."[74] These tenets are obviously better suited to environments where

planners can deliberate and take more time, rather than episodic instances of time-

compressed, dynamic, crisis decision making requiring states with divergent interests to

find consensus. Pre-war planning thus should thus in theory generate opportunities to

strengthen the tenets of multinational operation. Furthermore, multilateral cooperation is

difficult to achieve in international politics due in part to the requirement to convince two

or more states to trust each other under anarchy.[75] Pre-war planning can provide a

relatively safe forum to explore cooperation because planning can be done without

commitment or obligation. Multilateral planning is, to be sure, less efficient than

unilateral planning. So, there is a cost-benefit tradeoff between the costs associated with

inefficiency, and the benefits derived from multilateral planning. The expectation here is

that the benefits will outweigh the costs more often than not.

Third, collaboration with external stakeholders (all types) should produce durable

networks that can become useful more broadly and in the future. For example,

relationships formed during integrated war planning can pay off sometime in the future in

wartime situations that are too dynamic and acute to improvise strong networks or

[74] U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-16: Multinational Operations*, March 1, 2019, P. I-2.
[75] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

relationships. War planning becomes a mechanism to connect organizations and individuals that would otherwise remain stove-piped.

Types of External Collaboration

Empirical instances of inter-agency and multinational collaboration can be usefully categorized as centralized or decentralized (i.e., senior and practitioner levels). Both (centralized and decentralized) types of interactions should increase the likelihood that war planning will enhance military effectiveness. Decentralized collaboration offers some unique potential benefits. In *Dying to Learn*, Mike Hunzeker finds that military organizations with moderately decentralized command cultures experiment more frequently and therefore generate more new ideas which in turn enables more efficient adaptation to wartime realities.[76] This model should in theory also apply to war planning during peacetime. Moderately decentralized inter-agency and multinational interactions can generate more opportunities for better ideas and mutual understanding. It also generates an environment where initiative can thrive at the practitioner level. At the same time, completely decentralized war planning would be a free-for-all. Some aspects must remain centralized, such as plan authorization and strategic guidance.

We can also categorize collaboration according to the phase of the planning process utilizing the same approach as was described above under the 'civilian oversight' heading.

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[76] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, p. 54-57.

Expectations of what we will find in the data

We should expect military planning organizations to avoid substantive external collaboration. Military organizations possess natural tendencies to remain stove-piped and insular.[77] That said, in war planning, military organizations that recognize these natural tendencies and desire to overcome them[78] have an effective mechanism to do so in discrete ways. For example, planning conferences offer discrete and unique opportunities for mid-level foreign service officers at the State Department to engage with military planners.

Another reason why it should be rare is the sheer size of military organizations compared to non-military agencies. The State Department has roughly 15,000 foreign service officers compared to DoD's 1.3 million servicemembers on active duty alone, handing DoD an 86:1 size advantage.[79] The ratio of FSO's to U.S. military officers is 16:1.[80] This ratio shows that there are practical limitations to State-Defense cooperation and therefore normally such cooperation does not occur. When State-Defense cooperation does occur, it is likely the exception and a direct result of focused initiatives to generate conditions for it to occur.

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[77] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, Chapter 2; Rosen, *Winning the Next War*, Chapter 3.
[78] Builder, *Masks of War*.
[79] https://www.afsa.org/foreign-service-numbers
[80] Congressional Research Service, *Defense Primer: Military Officers*, November 30, 2020, p. 1. Accessible at https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10685.

War Planning Practice 5: Strategic Education

Military organizations that provide war planners with rigorous strategic education are more likely to produce war planning outcomes that positively impact military effectiveness, compared with military organizations that do not provide rigorous strategic education.

Why Strategic Education is Important

Strategic education provides war planners with the tools to respond to evolutions in the strategic environment. It also enables war planners to recognize and counter-act organizational interests and cultural factors that may prevent recognition of environmental changes. War planning that is more responsive to environmental changes, and less infused with organizational cultural agendas, is more likely to have a positive impact on military effectiveness.

Strategic education is not free. Military organizations that invest in strategic education absorb opportunity costs. The resources committed to war planning represent resources that could be otherwise invested in other priorities (e.g., equipment modernization, training exercises, language training). A military organization's willingness to accept these real opportunity costs is an indicator that the organization values, respects, and substantively utilizes its war plans. Those that are not willing to accept the opportunity costs are more likely to go through the motions of war planning without any discernable implications to organizational behavior. In these circumstances,

war planning is not likely to provide any positive impact on military effectiveness. It could even degrade military effectiveness.

Another indicator of how seriously military organizations are committed to effective pre-war planning has to do with the types of officers it dedicates to the function. Military organizations that appoint upwardly mobile officers to key plans assignments should produce war planning outcomes that are likely to promote relatively high levels of military effectiveness. There is no disputing the proposition that the more talented and educated the war planners are, the better the war plans will become. The real analytical issue, rather, is associated with opportunity cost. Military organizations must choose to invest finite talent into war planning or into other competing roles (commanders, instructors, intelligence and regional specialists, special operations).[81] My hypothesis is that pre-war planning in optimal quantities and formats offers a superior return on talent investment, at least in terms of military effectiveness as I characterize it, than other activities.

Conclusion

This chapter articulated a theory on the types of war planning practices that should be more likely than other war planning practices to contribute to military

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[81] U.S. DoD dedicates roughly 600 officers to full-time deliberate war planning. This represents only .02% of DoD's 3.4 million personnel.

effectiveness. The next chapter (Chapter 3 Methodology) explains how I will subject this theory to an empirical test, including by operationalizing observable indicators that will equip us to identify the extent to which the theorized war planning practices are occurring or not occurring, as well as the extent to which the outcome of pre-war planning impacts military effectiveness for better or worse.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology I employ to subject the theory described in Chapter Two to an empirical test. The chapter is organized into two parts. In the first part, Case Selection, I explain how I select relevant case studies to base the empirical test upon. In the second part, Research Design, I explain the empirical indicators that I rely upon to observe and measure variation in pre-war planning practices and wartime military effectiveness. I also explain the sources of information I analyze to collect evidence relevant to those empirical indicators. Where applicable, I explain the challenges associated with limited or missing data and to the extent possible, how I mitigated those challenges.

Case Selection

Units of Analysis and Population of Cases

The units of analysis or phenomena of interest are war planning experiences by military organizations and the states they serve. One example is the U.S. Army and Navy's early twentieth century experiences designing and maintaining a series of war plans focused on a future armed conflict with Japan (known by most as War Plan Orange). Another more recent example is the U.S. and Republic of Korea's war planning experiences focused on responding to potential North Korean aggression since 1953. In

seeking to understand these units of analysis, we could dissect them into longitudinal, sequential units of analysis. Alternatively, we could analyze and compare the experience across military services and joint commands, or of different states planning for war against each other.

Temporally, the population of interest includes all war planning experiences since the mid-nineteenth century.[82] Pre-mid-nineteenth century war planning experiences are interesting, but would require a reassessment of the relationship between war planning practices and wartime military effectiveness. For example, individual leaders and heads of state could have made more of a difference and had the span of control to affect entire campaigns.

War planning experiences as units of analysis present some specific challenges. It is unfortunately not possible to limit analysis to the content of discrete war plan documents. The actual outcomes of war planning experiences are in a variety of formats that undergo continuous update over years or even decades and are usually developed in chaotic and non-orderly environments. For example, the most authoritative primary sources today are often formatted in Microsoft PowerPoint, and the practitioners closest to the plans cannot agree on which briefing slides are the most current. By the time senior officials get to the war plan document itself and the approval signature ink dries,

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[82] See my discussion in Chapter 1 on the factors that made the mid-nineteenth century a 'formative experience. See also Paul Kennedy's conclusion that pre-war planning became a main-stream function of industrialized states in "the few decades leading up to the First World War." Reasons that Kennedy cites for the rise of pre-war planning as a necessary government function include technological change, increasing complexity of warfare, increasing size of armies (and consequently, the requirement to plan for a way to mobilize massive armies), and emulation of Prussia's General Staff system in Kennedy, *The War Plans of the Great Powers*, p. 2-3.

the plan is completely obsolete. Even in cases when discrete overarching war plans are

under development, the plans are often refined dozens of time (see Chapter 5 – France

possessed at least seventeen a la the French War plans). Therefore, the units of analysis I

will focus on are war planning experiences which are much more of a set of contested or

established ideas, managed by a community of practitioners, than a discrete document.[83]

Given the lack of boundedness associated with each unit of analysis, it is most

reasonable to limit our analysis to three or fewer cases so that we can conduct detailed

analysis of each selected case. The selected cases should also be sufficiently documented

and rooted in strategic context that is appropriate enough for us to claim that we can learn

something more broadly relevant from the experiences.

German, French, and British War Planning, 1905-1914

The German, French, and British war planning experiences preceding the

outbreak of the First World War are useful and important test cases to assess my theory's

core logic and propositions. These cases provide three specific advantages.

First, many of the challenges that these states and their military organizations

faced, in terms of ensuring sufficient readiness for future inter-state war, resemble the

challenges we face today and are likely to face in the future. Commonalities include the

inherent requirements to anticipate, in the face of uncertainty, the kinds of war that are

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[83] Hamilton and Herwig similarly argue in the introduction to *War Planning 1914* that any characterization of war plans as "a static concept suggesting fixity" or as "clear and unambiguous expressions" or "clear and unambiguous…definitive statements" is "seriously misleading." See Hamilton and Herwig, eds., *War Planning 1914*, p. 2-3; Zuber argues that the most famous war plan in history did not even exist in Terrance Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning 1871-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

most likely to occur; build readiness alongside and in concert with allies and partners that harbor alternative strategic objectives; promote military professionalism and competence while avoiding parochial and strategically counterproductive behavior; understand the military implications of emergent technologies; and design military options that are militarily effective, yet include a suitable approach to control escalation. Michael A. Hunzeker makes a further astute comparison by observing that both eras involved the absence of great power wars in recent times,[84] and therefore states lacked direct combat experience and faced even greater uncertainty about the character of the next war.

Second, the three armies have many similarities that can serve as ideal controls for comparison of pre-war planning practices and wartime military effectiveness. All three relied upon variations of the general staff system initially designed by Prussia. All three were contemplating the implications of the industrial revolution and of increasing bureaucratization and economic interconnectedness. All three were wrestling with contested ideas tied to traditional practices such as employing horse cavalry, practicing offensive doctrines,[85] and basing certain high-level promotions on aristocracy rather than meritocracy. All three maintained high priority war plans focused on the likelihood of a breakout of general war in Europe and designed to win the war quickly. Differences certainly existed, as we shall see. But generally, the cases are as close to *most similar* as the universe of cases offers.[86]

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[84] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, p. 7-8.
[85] Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War."
[86] I am indebted to Michael A. Hunzeker for a series of insightful conversations that led me to see the importance and usefulness of the European great powers' pre-war planning experiences, including on how the German, French, and British cases usefully control for the confounding variables I describe in this

Third, these cases provide the rare prospect of comparing pre-war planning experiences with actual wartime experiences. Most other options do not provide this opportunity. For example, I considered the possibility of analyzing U.S. and NATO plans to respond to Soviet Aggression in Europe during the Cold War. However, these are not suited to my goals because neither NATO nor the United States, nor the USSR or the Warsaw Pact for that matter, implemented their war plans. So, I cannot observe how useful or counterproductive they were, at least in terms of impacts to wartime military effectiveness. By contrast, the war plans of France, Germany, and Britain were all implemented simultaneously in 1914. We can thus make observations on how accurate or flawed the dominant pre-war assumptions were by comparing them with what actually happened on the battlefield. We can also make empirically-based judgements on whether pre-war planning experiences enabled faster adaptation to wartime realities even if the pre-war plans did not match the actual need. Or conversely, whether the pre-war planning experiences slowed adaptation because combatants could not discard their pre-conceived notions even in the presence of wartime evidence to the contrary. In the spirit of this third point, Williamson Murray argues that the First World War provides us (analysts) with "almost perfect conditions" to studying adaptation by complex military organizations from pre-war conceptions to actual wartime conditions.[87]

In summary, the war planning experiences of Britain, Germany, and France preceding the First World War are useful war planning experiences through which to

paragraph. Hunzeker presents a more thorough analysis of the three cases' similarities and differences in *Dying to Learn*, p. 80-87

[87] Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War: With Fear of Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 117-118.

analyze the relationship between pre-war planning practices and wartime military effectiveness. The findings I draw from the analysis will, admittedly, contain limitations. I do not expect, and am not seeking to generate, bullet-proof and perfectly generalizable conclusions. However, I am confident based the three reasons articulated above that the cases are important ones to support my research objective of assessing my core theoretical logic and propositions. Doing so will likely set a firmer foundation for tighter theoretical specifications and more specific and broader empirical testing.

Research Design

My empirical research objectives require a suitable approach to observing and measuring variation in the variables of interest. That is, I must characterize with some accuracy the relevant military planning organizations' pre-war planning practices, as well as their wartime military effectiveness. This section explains the observable implications I use to satisfy these empirical requirements.

I assess and measure each variable on a three-degree scale: low (0), medium (1), and high (2). A three-degree scale optimally supports my research objectives, particularly in consideration of the balance that Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett advocate for between parsimony and richness.[88] The three-degree scale allows for discrimination of the kinds of variation I am looking to capture for each variable (see chapter 2), while supporting simple yet meaningful cross-case comparative analysis.

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[88] George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, p. 85.

Temporally, I limit my analysis of evidence associated with pre-war planning practices to the pre-war period between 1905 (i.e., the First Moroccan Crisis war scare) and July 1914 (i.e., the assassination of Austria-Hungary's Archduke Franz Ferdinand). I limit my analysis of evidence associated with wartime military effectiveness to the wartime period between July-September 1914. These evidentiary boundaries support analysis of how the pre-war planning activities provided solutions that supported strategic, operational, and tactical military effectiveness during crisis decision making and initial combat operations. In more precise methodological terms, the evidentiary boundaries help counter endogeneity between independent and dependent variables that would make any findings tautological.

Observable Indictors and Measurement: Wartime Military Effectiveness

To accompany the aforementioned empirical indicators for the five war planning practices (i.e., my explanatory variables), I also require empirical indicators for wartime military effectiveness (i.e., our dependent variable), or the lack thereof.

Before proceeding, I want to acknowledge the inherent limitations associated with my methodology. Pre-war planning practices are just one determinant of wartime military effectiveness. Non-military factors, for example, may cancel out any potential gains that a perfectly-crafted war plan could generate.[89] To establish any generalizable

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[89] Harkness and Hunzeker's examination of the British Army's counterinsurgency strategy in the Southern Cameroons shows that military effectiveness can depend as much on politics and diplomacy as it does on the actions undertaken by military organizations. See Kristen A. Harkness and Michael Hunzeker,

causal link between pre-war planning practices and wartime military effectiveness, one might argue that I would have to somehow hold other intervening causal variables constant. I have dealt with this challenge in two ways. First, as I explain above, by selecting cases that have useful resemblance to one another, but show variation in the explanatory variables of interest. Second, I overtly recognize that pre-war planning is not the key determinant of or detractor from wartime military effectiveness.[90] Militaries have throughout modern history known that war plans do not survive first contact. Pre-war planning can thus only influence some specific aspects of wartime military effectiveness. The important point, in summary, is that I focus my analysis only on those specific aspects. The discussion that follows will explain this approach further.

Strategic Military Effectiveness

If a military organization's pre-war planning procedures enhance wartime strategic effectiveness, then I expect to find evidence that, in July and August 1914, the pre-war planning procedures produced an option that matched what the civilian leaders wanted to do. I measure the degree to which pre-war planning procedures impacts strategic military effectiveness in two dimensions. The first is the reaction of civilian leadership when, at some point during the crisis, they asked their military leadership about the options available.

"Military Maladaptation: Counterinsurgency and the Politics of Failure," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 6 (September 19, 2015): 777–800.

[90] The literature reflects an increasing consensus that adaptation during wartime is at least as important as pre-war planning to achieving relative military effectiveness advantages over an adversary.

- "1" if the civilian leaders made no clear statements indicating disappointment with the lack of diplomatically or politically attractive options and/or the biases of the military planning processes.

- "0" if the civilian leaders make clear statements indicating disappointment with the lack of diplomatically or politically attractive options and/or the biases of the military planning process.

The second dimension is the quantity of military options that military officials provided to civilian leaders. As I argued in Chapter 2, a key aspect of strategic military effectiveness is flexibility in political decision making. If military officials provide civilian leaders with a range of options, then the civilian leader has greater political decision-making flexibility.[91] Conversely, if military officials tie civilian leaders' hands by presenting a point solution, then the civilian leaders have less political decision-making flexibility. I thus measure political decision-making flexibility, and by extension, strategic military effectiveness, on the following three-point scale:

- "2" if the pre-war planning processes produce war plans that include three or more options and therefore provide superior political decision-making flexibility.

- "1" if the pre-war planning processes produce war plans that include two options and therefore provide some political decision-making flexibility.

- "0" if the pre-war planning processes produce war plans that include only one option and therefore reduce decision-making flexibility.

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[91] The presentation by military organizations of a fait accompli point solution is also an indicator that pre-war planning processes yielded an outcome that inadvertently increased the power of the state's military organizations relative to other elements of the national government.

Operational Military Effectiveness

If a military organization's pre-war planning processes enhance the state's wartime operational effectiveness, then I expect to find evidence that wartime military commanders have in hand plausible plans that provide a useful basis for employing their forces in a way that leads them to believe they can accomplishment their military goals. I measure operational military effectiveness on a three-point scale:

- "2" if the pre-war planning processes produce war plans that articulate an approach for wartime military commanders to adapt to wartime realities that are unknowable in advance.

- "1" if the pre-war planning processes produce war plans that provide a useful basis for wartime military commanders to commence actual wartime operations.

- "0" if the pre-war planning processes produce war plans that lack any utility for the wartime commanders (e.g., the plan requires forces that do not exist, or was designed to protect parochial military interests). Wartime military leaders were forced to improvise without the benefit of a suitable pre-war plan.

Observable Indictors and Measurement: Pre-War Planning Practices

War Planning Practice 1: Specificity

I classify the degree to which a war plan is specific in four dimensions. Each dimension is measurable on a three-point scale

Does the war plan specify:

- A specific adversary state or non-state actor?
    - 0 – no adversary is specified

- o 1 – adversary specified, but the adversary's anticipated course of action is not.
    - o 2 – adversary specified, along with an anticipated adversary course of action.
- An operational approach?
    - o 0 – no specific activities or concepts of operation are prescribed.
    - o 1 – specific activities are prescribed for mobilization and concentration of forces, but not for operations after first contact with adversary forces.
    - o 2 – specific activities are prescribed for an entire campaign, including transition criteria between phases.
- A mechanism to adapt to wartime realities?
    - o 0 – no mechanism. The planners expect to implement the plan as it is written.
    - o 1 – mechanism is implied. The planners recognize that the plan will require modification to address wartime realities that are not knowable in advance. But the planners do not provide a mechanism to do so.
    - o 2 – mechanism is clear. The planners recognize that the plan will require modification to address wartime realities that are not knowable in advance. And the planners provide a mechanism to do so.
- Theory of Victory?
    - o 0 – no an explanation of how the operational approach is expected to contribute to the achievement of a sustainable strategic outcome.
    - o 1 – implied an explanation of how the operational approach is expected to contribute to the achievement of a sustainable strategic outcome.
    - o 2 – clear explanation of how the operational approach is expected to contribute to the achievement of a sustainable strategic outcome.

War Planning Practice 2: Resource-Informed Discipline

I characterize the degree to which pre-war planning is constrained by available/existing military force capacity and capability on a three-point scale.

- 0 – Resource unconstrained. The planners assume that the state will have access to additional military forces in a time of future war.
- 1 – Resource-informed. The planners make assumptions on some additional resources that will be made available in a time of future war.
- 2 – Resource-constrained. The planners limit military options to those that are executable using existing military forces.

War Planning Practice 3: Moderate Civilian Oversight

I observe and measure the degree to which civilian authorities engaged in pre-war planning processes by searching for the evidence (observable implications) listed below. If civilian leaders are exercising *moderate oversight* over the conduct of pre-war planning, then we should see evidence of:

- Regulations or standard operating procedures that require civilian leaders to engage in the planning process at particular stages. (Yes or No)
- Instances where civilian leaders (or their designated representative) issue formal planning guidance before the military develops a war plan.
- Instances where civilian leaders (or their designated representative) formally authorize or approve finished war plans.

If civilian leaders are exercising *excessive oversight*, then we should see evidence of:

- Attempts by civilian leaders to advance domestic or non-national security agenda priorities through civilian oversight of pre-war planning.
- Instances where the general staff must cease or delay pre-war planning because they must wait to brief civilian leaders that are preoccupied with other responsibilities.

If there are no indications of moderate or excessive civilian oversight, then we can characterize the situation as *no oversight*.

War Planning Practice 4: External collaboration

I classify the degree to which military planners collaborate with external stakeholders in two dimensions: with other government agencies, and with other states' militaries. I then measure the level of collaboration as low, moderate, or extensive.

- Collaboration with other government agencies.

    0 – Low. Rare and non-substantive collaboration
    1 – Moderate. Episodic and semi-substantive collaboration
    2 – Extensive. Routine and substantive collaboration

- Collaboration with other states' militaries.

    0 – Low. Rare and non-substantive collaboration
    1 – Moderate. Episodic and semi-substantive collaboration
    2 – Extensive. Routine and substantive collaboration

War Planning Practice 5: Strategic Education

I characterize the degree to which a military organization invests in strategic

education for participants of pre-war planning on a three-point scale:

- 0 – No
- 1 – specialized education exists, but lacks a clear advanced strategic training focus and/or lacks rigor (low standards to qualify to receive the education, or little to no attrition)
- 2 – specialized education exists, and includes a clear advanced strategic training focus and/or is rigorous (tight standards to qualify to receive the education, or high attrition)

Data Collection

This research design requires the collection two types of evidence. The first is

contextual evidence that provides an accurate picture of Britain, France, and Germany's

situation and national security institutions leading up to the outbreak of the First World

War. For example, information on each state's pre-war strategic situation including

national security interests and the most likely and dangerous threats to those interests

helps me determine whether the plan's objectives contain any contradictions.

Information on the state's military institutions (civilian oversight mechanisms, command structure, organizational structure, organizational culture, organizational interests, planning organizations, dominant doctrinal ideas, and civil-military relations frictions) helps tell the story of how pre-war planning occurred. Contextual evidence furthermore helps explain the role of any intervening variables on the inferences I make. In other words, if I observe consistency across cases in military capabilities or doctrine, then I will have greater confidence that military capabilities or doctrine are not the principal cause of cross-case variation in wartime military effectiveness.

The second type of evidence requiring collection is evidence related to the empirical indicators listed above. For example, the indicators tied to strategic military effectiveness require three key pieces of information:

- Records (e.g., civilian leaders' memoirs) indicating the assessed suitability of military options presented to civilian leaders during crisis decision making preceding the outbreak of the First World War (July-August 1914).
- The military options that the pre-war planning processes produced.
- The options that military officials presented to the civilian leader during crisis decision making.

To gather this evidence, I systematically analyze the secondary historical literature and primary source documents listed in Appendix 1. I assessed through a literature review that these are the most important in terms of containing information related to my empirical indicators. After systematically analyzing these sources, I employ a targeted search of other relevant sources for specific information that did not appear in the sources listed in Appendix 1. These supplementary sources are listed in my references (bibliography). This is a strategic data collection approach that is necessary due to externally imposed time constraints and, given COVID-19 related travel restrictions, lack

of access to primary sources located in archival facilities, many of which are temporarily closed.

Data Analysis

The analytic approach is *structured, focused comparison*.[92] I conduct cross-case comparative analysis, as well as within-case analysis, to make inferences on the relationship between pre-war planning processes and wartime military effectiveness. If my hypothesis is valid, the military organizations whose war planning systems most reflect the five specified war planning practices should generate the most operationally and strategically effective war plans.

Conclusion

After completing analysis of each case in chapters 4, 5, and 6, my overall expectation is that we will find that the cases in which our five war planning practices are most predominant are also the cases in which the pre-war planning procedures produced the most strategically and operationally effective war plans. If this is the outcome of the procedure, then that means the test adds some empirical support to the theory and thus will bolster our confidence in the theory's validity. If it does not, then the test should provide us with an informed reason to revisit some specific aspects of the theory. Either

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[92] George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences,* Chapters 3-6.

way, the test will provide some new insight regarding the relationship between pre-war planning and wartime military effectiveness.

This new insight is, as argued in Chapter 1, urgently needed given the substantial attention that contemporary military organizations devote to war planning, and the lack of awareness of the positive and negative impacts. In Chapter 7, Findings and Implications, I explain the insights in terms of policy implications and issues requiring attention in future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: GERMANY

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between the German General Staff's pre-war planning practices between 1905-1914 and Germany's military effectiveness during the initial outbreak of the First World War (July-September 1914). In doing so, my analytic objective is to determine the extent to which the German case supports the theoretical framework specified in Chapter 2.

My theoretical framework, again, starts with a proposition: war planning can enhance military effectiveness in at least two ways. At the strategic level, militarily effective war planning produces a range of suitable options during for national decision makers to consider during crisis decision making. At the operational level, it produces a framework that is useful to wartime military commanders' inherent challenge of adapting to situations that are unknowable ahead of time. The theoretical framework then identifies five pre-war planning practices (i.e., specificity, resource sensitivity, moderate civilian oversight, external collaboration, and strategic education) that should, in theory, produce the two desired war planning outcomes that enhance wartime military effectiveness. Conversely, military planning organizations that do not adopt these practices tend to produce war plans that fail to enhance, and in some cases undermine wartime military effectiveness.

We will see that German pre-war planning was largely devoid of the five best practices. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, German pre-war planning failed to produce the minimum pre-war planning outcomes required to enhance wartime military effectiveness. At the strategic level, it tied the German national leadership's hands by forcing them to accept a single pre-determined course of action. Indeed, we will see evidence that suggests that the General Staff instrumentally designed the course of action to undermine attempts at de-escalation-oriented crisis diplomacy. At the operational level, it tied wartime military commanders' hands by specifying a single pre-determined operational solution that was un-tailorable to the actual wartime situation.

This chapter's four sections[93] begin with an examination of strategic and organizational contextual factors that influenced German pre-war planning practices. The second analyzes Germany's strategic and operational effectiveness during the July-August 1914 crisis and initial August-September wartime operations The third assesses the extent to which German pre-war planning activities aligned with the five hypothesized best pre-war planning practices. The last is a discussion of the relationship between German pre-war planning practices and wartime military effectiveness.

Contextual Factors

This section analyzes how Germany's strategic situation and military planning organizational structures colored the outlook of German pre-war planning stakeholders.

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[93] Subsequent chapters focused on French and British pre-war planning will follow the same structure.

These are important contextual factors that hold explanatory value over why the German

General Staff emphasized some pre-war planning practices and de-emphasized others,

and on how Germany navigated the July-August crisis and initial wartime encounters.[94]

Thus, I address them up front to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Germany's Pre-War Strategic Situation

During the decades leading up to the outbreak of the First World War, Germany

possessed an acute strategic awareness of increasing international isolation. German

officials were cognizant that their neighbors did not benefit from the wars of unification

in the 1860's and 1870's. France in particular espoused an overt objective of regaining

its lost Alsace and Lorraine territories. The 1888 rise of Wilhelm II as the Imperial

Emperor followed by the dismissal of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, led to increasingly

coercive foreign policies which in turn added fuel to the perception of isolation. The

sentiment was justified: other European states, especially France, Russia, and Britain,

proved unwilling to allow Germany to alter a European balance of power that had helped

avoid major inter-state wars since 1815, and in which European diplomats successfully

de-escalated many international crises prior to war's outbreak.

Germany persisted its rise nonetheless. Germany's attempts to foment conflict

between other European powers,[95] thereby clearing the way for its own hegemonic

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[94] Furthermore, the General Staff obviously lacked post-hoc knowledge that global war would break out in 1914. So, we must adjust our ex post perspective and use the pre-war context as our analytic and evaluative basis in line with: Betts, "Is Strategy an Illusion?," p. 14-16.

[95] For example, France and Russia established a mutual defense alliance in part as a result of Germany's sudden abandonment of its Reinsurance treaty with Russia. During the First and Second Moroccan Crises, Germany's attempts to drive a wedge between Britain and France instead solidified their relationship.

ambitions, resulted in the opposite outcome of consolidating the solidarity of an increasingly anti-German Entente. As Imperial Germany looked to the future it saw a classic manifestation of the security dilemma,[96] where it would have to either modify its objectives, or come to armed conflict. This dilemma led many Imperial German officials, especially military ones, to a conclusion that war was inevitable.[97]

A factor that made Germany's strategic situation even more acute was a gradual deterioration of the military balance between Germany on the one hand and the anti-German Entente on the other. France and Russia were modernizing and increasing the size of their militaries at a faster rate than Germany could,[98] so year after year the threats to German national security promised to intensify. This deteriorating trend gave rise to another widely-held German perception that if war was inevitable, it would be better that it came sooner rather than later.[99]

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[96] Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214.
[97] For more on Germany's foreign policy goals and strategy, see Christopher M. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper, 2013), p. 141-150; B.H. Liddell Hart, *A History of the First World War* (London: Cassell, 1970) p. 2-20; and Hew Strachan, *The First World War: Volume I: To Arms*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p. 1-34.
[98] The deteriorating military balance was largely a function of German aristocrats' reticence to expand the recruiting pool to non-aristocratic populations. Germany had a population of about 60 million compared to France's population of about 40 million, yet their armies were roughly equivalent in size. France achieved capacity parity by conscripting 83% of eligible males, compared with Germany's rate of 57%. I analyze this further under "Resource-Constrained Planning" below. For a more detailed comparison of the French and German armies, see Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (Penguin Books, 2005), p. 41-48 and Hart, *A History of the First World War* Chapter 2.
[99] For more on German military officials' advocation for preventative war sooner rather than later, see Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army,* Chapter 7 p. 255-298; Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War*, New Studies in European History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) Chapter 3 p. 106-181; and Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan,* p. 97-163.

The German Army and General Staff

Organizational factors also colored the outlook of German pre-war planning. In Imperial Germany, the General Staff was the institution responsible for pre-war planning.[100] The General Staff was a mature and prestigious institution. Prussia[101] created the General Staff as an innovation to enhance military effectiveness after experiencing operational defeats to Napoleon's France in 1806. The General Staff's domestic and international respect was then greatly magnified after its performance preparing for and executing three successive Prussian wars in the 1860's and 1870's.[102] All other European powers and many extra-European powers emulated the General Staff although most were not willing to make their General Staff version nearly as independent or influential.[103]

Two organizational characteristics are important to provide context to the remaining analysis in this chapter. The first is the German Army's divided military command structure. The German General Staff and War Ministry were independent national security agencies. The Chief of the General Staff and War Minister were two

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[100] The peacetime German Army was in fact comprised of four independent Armies – the Prussian, Bavarian, Wurttemberg, and Saxon Armies. Each of these armies had its own General Staff empowered and responsible for pre-war planning. The Prussian Army was by far the largest and the Prussian General Staff the most dominant in pre-war planning activities and outcomes. For the purpose of this paper, I will use the term activities of all four General Staffs are the term *German General Staff* and *German Army* to refer to activities that in some cases are specific to the Prussia, and in others apply to collective activities of all four Armies. For more on the relationship between the Prussian Army and the 24 non-Prussian Imperial German states, see Janet Robinson and Joe Robinson, *Handbook of Imperial Germany* (Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2009), pp. 125-132.

[101] Prussia was one of the sovereign states that eventually combined to form Imperial Germany in 1871.

[102] After 1871, Army was untouchable. Eventually, the Army helped usher out Chancellor Bismarck, who stood in the way of their preference for a technical focus on military victory. Craig, Politics of the Prussian Army Ch 6 p. 217-254; and Herwig, "Command Decision Making," p. 105-6.

[103] For more on the institutional origins and evolution of the Prussian/German General Staff system, see Dupuy, *A Genius for War*; for a cross-country comparison of European General Staffs, see Porter, "The Evolution of the General Staff."

separate officials, both of whom reported directly to the Kaiser. The General Staff was responsible for war planning. The War Ministry was responsible for most other military functions (e.g., training, modernization, recruiting, budgetary matters). The German Chancellor and Parliament had oversight responsibility over the War Ministry, but no authority to dictate instructions to the General Staff or provide any scrutiny of the General Staff's activities or performance. The bifurcated responsibility and oversight structure provide some explanatory power for the General Staff's war planning practices and to the relatively high influence by military officials in strategic decision making, which I will explain below.[104]

Second, the German General Staff consisted of two organizational elements. The first was the Great General Staff headquarters in Berlin, where the Chief of the General Staff functioned and General Staff officers undertook their pre-war planning and other responsibilities. The second element was the General Staff with Troops, a separate group of General Staff officers assigned as principal advisors and Chiefs of Staff to each of Imperial Germany's twenty-five active duty Corps and fifty Division Commanders. In wartime, General Staff with Troops officers would also form the principal operations staffs Germany's nine field Armies. General Staff with Troops officers had two superiors – the commander of the unit they are serving, and the Chief of the General Staff in Berlin.[105] A key reason why this command network of like-minded General Staff officers

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[104] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, Chapter 1 p. 14-41.
[105] For more on how the General Staff's split organization functioned, see Martin Samuels, *Command or Control?: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 15.

is important to my analysis is its role in magnifying the biases and/or benefits of German pre-war planning beyond Berlin and into the actual maneuver units.

Summary: Contextual Factors

Before proceeding, it is worth noting that the two contextual factors addressed above seemingly suggest that Germany possessed certain advantages that should have led to pre-war planning that produced outcomes that enhance military effectiveness. The pre-war planners, in other words, were confident in their assessment of the likely basic contours of their next war including adversaries and geographic areas. So the level of uncertainty was relatively low. The General Staff was furthermore well organized, held a prestigious reputation, had access to the best and the brightest, and through its War Academy, was able to develop those officers to their liking. I return to and re-evaluate these seeming advantages at several points during this chapter and conclude that they were not as advantageous as they seemed.

German Military Effectiveness, July-September 1914

This section analyzes German wartime military effectiveness between July-September, 1914. I measure strategic effectiveness by analyzing the quality of national decision making and effectiveness of crisis diplomacy during the July-August crisis. I measure operational effectiveness by analyzing the General Staff's last-minute war plan refinements between July 5 and August 2, and by examining how well that operational

commanders adjusted to wartime conditions after the German Army initiated combat operations on August 2.

Strategic Military Effectiveness

Three key events during the July-August crisis are particularly relevant to an assessment of the quality of national crisis decision making. The first was a high-level July 5 meeting chaired by Kaiser Wilhelm II and focused on German policy options immediately following Austria-Hungarian Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand's assassination in Belgrade, Serbia. Participating officials included Chancellor Theobold von Bethmann-Hollweg, War Minister Erich von Falkenhayn, and others.[106] The purpose of the meeting was to consider the national security implications of a potential Austria-Hungarian military retaliation against Serbia in the near future. Specifically, the officials contemplated whether Germany should come to Austria-Hungary's defense if Russia interfered on the side of Serbia due to Germany's mutual defense treaty with Austria-Hungary. This was an open question because in this situation, Austria-Hungary was technically the aggressor so the mutual defense treaty might not have applied. The meeting resulted in consensus that Germany should provide Austria-Hungary with clear assurance[107] that Germany would in fact come to its defense, even if Russian interference was triggered by an Austro-Hungarian military offensive.[108]

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[106] Chief of the General Staff von Moltke was absent on holiday.
[107] This assurance is often referred to in First World War historiography as "the blank check." See Strachan, *To Arms*, 72-75.
[108] Clark, *Sleepwalkers,* 414.

The importance of this meeting lies in what was not discussed: there was no deliberation on available military options that German officials should consider if Russia interfered.   One potential explanation is that meeting participants might have believed that the Balkan crisis would likely remain localized and therefore there was no need to discuss the implications of potential escalation. This explanation is unsatisfying. If German officials were so confident that the Balkan crisis would remain localized, then there would have been no need for them to issue the 'blank check' to Austria-Hungary. Furthermore, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office Arthur Zimmerman indicated the day prior an expectation that an Austro-Hungarian punitive attack on Serbia would generate "a 90% likelihood of a European general war."[109]

The absence of any discussion on contingency options during the July 5 meeting is indicative of strategic military ineffectiveness. This is particularly evident because the relevant contingency was the exact one that the General Staff had laboriously contemplated during war planning for the preceding four decades. German officials thus had a detailed war plan at their disposal that should have supported the decision-making process. It did not.

I do not directly attribute the strategic military ineffectiveness reflected in the July 5 meeting to the German military planners. War Minister Falkenhayn even asked the Kaiser during the meeting if the German Army should make any adjustments to its readiness posture (The Kaiser "replied in the negative"[110]). This episode was more of a

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[109] Zimmerman's quote is recorded in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 414.
[110] Clark, *Sleepwalkers,* 415-416.

failure of political leadership, and reinforces the essential role that political leaders have in overseeing and participating in war planning processes that produce strategically useful outcomes.

The second event, in late July, was an extraordinary, simultaneous attempt by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg on the one hand, and Chief of the General Staff Helmuth Von Moltke on the other, to coordinate with their Austro-Hungarian counterparts. This simultaneous engagement led Austria-Hungary to receive diametrically opposed messages at a critical juncture that influenced the ensuing road to war. In the allies' diplomatic channels, Hollweg urged his counterpart to limit the scale of any punitive military strikes to reduce Russia's incentive to intervene. Simultaneously inside the allies' military coordination channels, von Moltke urged his counterpart to initiate full mobilization as soon as possible in accordance with Austria-Hungary's war plan, an action that would likely trigger Russian intervention. Von Moltke furthermore assured his counterpart that Germany would respond to Russian interference by militarily coming to Austria-Hungary's assistance. The Austria-Hungarian Foreign Minister, who was aware of both Bethmann-Hollweg's and von Moltke's messages, is reported to have cynically asked his staff, "Who rules Berlin? Moltke or Bethmann?" Austria-Hungary opted to order immediate full mobilization, indicating that it was more confident in the messages it was receiving from the German military channels than diplomatic channels. This incident is an example of how Germany's pre-war planning practices, such as the

General Staff's reticence to coordinate planning with Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, led to an impairment of German attempts at crisis diplomacy.[111]

The third event, on August 1, was a meeting including Wilhelm II, Bethmann-Hollweg, and von Moltke. Wilhelm II and Bethmann-Hollweg had just received news (which later proved erroneous) that Britain would not intervene as long as no German offensive against France occurred, and furthermore, Britain would also attempt to restrain France from any actions against Germany. In other words, Britain claimed it could convince France not to honor its treaty obligations with Russia or to interpret the situation as falling outside the scope of a defensive alliance. Not surprisingly, this alleged British proposal appealed to Wilhelm II as a way to limit the scope of the coming war. He thus ordered Von Moltke to cease preparations for the western offensive and instead, prepare for war with Russia alone. Moltke responded that no alteration to the mobilization plan, which was designed to attack France first, was possible in the time available. In Moltke's words, "If His Majesty insisted on leading the entire army to the East then he would not have an army that was ready to strike but a messy heap of disorderly, armed men without supplies."[112] Wilhelm II, clearly dissatisfied with this response, replied, "Your illustrious uncle would have given me a different answer."[113] Given Wilhelm II's disappointment,[114] the General Staff's war plan thus failed to produce a suitable option.

[111] Turner, "Significance of the Schlieffen Plan," 215 (Austria-Hungary Foreign Minister quote); Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 292-293; Strachan, *To Arms*, 86-90.
[112] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 220.
[113] Clark, *Sleepwalkers,* 531 (Wilhelm II quote); Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, 199; Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Presidio Press, 2004), p. 100-101.
[114] The news regarding the British offer later proved erroneous, so Wilhelm II reluctantly told von Moltke, "now you can do what you want." (Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, 533) But the civil-military dialogue that occurred

Operational Military Effectiveness

As a quick refresher, this paper evaluates specific aspect of operational military effectiveness: the efficiency through which a state and its military organizations adjust from pre-war expectations to wartime realities. Other aspects of operational military effectiveness are just as important, but are outside the scope. I dissect Germany's operational adjustments into two categories: those that occurred (or should have occurred) during the July-August pre-war crisis and those that occurred after wartime operations commenced.

Adjustments During the July-August Crisis (June 30-August 8)

The assassination of the Archduke triggered an international crisis that had real potential to lead to outbreak of a general European war. This crisis clarified many of the pre-war uncertainties that had naturally complicated the General Staff's pre-war planning experience. With the outbreak of the crisis, previously unknowable operational factors were now exposed. An indicator of operational military effectiveness during crises is the extent to which military organizations adjust pre-war expectations to emerging realities. For example, an operationally effective military organization would, in the circumstances facing the German General Staff, meticulously review the accuracy of its pre-war

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when Wilhelm II believed the British offer was genuine reveals that the German pre-war plan did not produce the minimum requirements for strategic military effectiveness.

assumptions related to the speed and character of the French and Russian mobilizations, and the suitability of combat power allocations between the eight German Armies.

It is safe to say that the General Staff was keenly aware of the Archduke's Assassination on June 28 and the potential deterioration in international security that the incident could cause. Despite this awareness, we do not have any evidence that the General Staff did anything different than what they were doing before June 28. Von Moltke was on an extended holiday, and his deputy General Waldersee went ahead with his own holiday plans a few days after June 28. Von Moltke did not bother to return to Berlin until late July. Both thus perceived no urgency to curtail holidays, return to Berlin, and oversee crisis action planning. Waldersee later explained, "there was nothing to be arranged…The scheduled mobilization work had been completed on 31 March 1914. The army was ready, as always."[115] The lack of a clearer sense of urgency is particularly puzzling because von Moltke and his staff, as we have seen, desired a war sooner rather than later and the situation in front of them provided the opportunity to advocate for actions that would advance that goal.[116]

Operational Adjustments After First Contact (August 9-Battle of the Marne)

The German Army's success in adjusting to wartime realities after first contact was low to moderate. Three operational events are particularly illustrative. The first

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[115] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 190-193, 196 quote is on page 192.

[116] Mombauer (*Helmuth von Moltke*) and others have argued that German officials' desire to convey a sense of calm, so as not to alarm France or Russia into preparations of their own or to seem complicit with any Austria-Hungarian punitive actions. However, this explanation is unsatisfying because the General Staff was well experienced in secrecy and could have accomplished crisis action planning without signaling anything to their adversaries.

occurred in early August at Liege, Belgium. One of the war plan's early critical requirements was to seize a series of fortresses in Liege. The main railways en route to France all traversed through Liege so the German Army had to seize the fortresses to prevent Belgian forces from interdicting the German Army's planned right-wing envelopment maneuver. The pre-war planners estimated that a show of force on the first day of mobilization would be enough to entice the relatively small Belgian Army force defending the forts to surrender. If the show of force failed, the planners presumed a larger German Army task force could take it by force in two days' time (Strachan, 211). The General Staff predicated all subsequent railway timetables on this raid going as planned.

As it turned out, resistance by the Belgian Army contingent defending the Liege fortresses was unexpectedly strong. The Belgians initially defeated the German raid. The German operational commanders then faced their inherent responsibility to adapt to wartime realities that were different than expectations. They undertook this responsibility in spite of the war plan, which had nothing helpful to offer. Eventually, they secured the Liege fortresses, but only after "an expenditure of men and munitions beyond all expectations" including a high-risk and costly seizure of the Liege city center (ironically led by General Erich Ludendorff who was the principal author of the pre-war plan that underestimated Belgian defenses), a costly 11-day siege of the twelve fortresses, the first-ever aerial bombardment of a European city, and the arrival of artillery of a

large-enough caliber to divest the fortress walls which had not been planned for despite their detailed pre-war knowledge of the fortresses.[117]

The German Army's right wing eventually continued its belated onward movement beyond Liege, but its ability to do so was not, as we have seen, enabled by the pre-war plan, and only by a close margin. The Belgian King's principal military advisor Emile Galet claims that if an even larger Belgian contingent would have defended Liege "the Germans would have been stopped in their tracks."[118] Had they done so, the operational approach prescribed in the German war plan would have become untenable. To sum up the setback at Liege - the pre-war plan lacked any flexibility mechanisms for wartime commanders to fall back on in the event that they faced a stronger Belgian resistance, including the possibility that the seizure of the fortresses would become too costly or not possible.

The second event was the Battle of the Marne in early September. After the initial setback at Liege, the belated German offensive proceeded according to plan, albeit with some new but manageable difficulties given the arrival of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). That is to say, the offensive proceeded according to plan until the General Alexander von Kluck's First German Army ostensibly sensed an opportunity to emulate the approach similar to one that had been previously employed during the 1870 Battle of Sedan – a battle that the General Staff had studied very closely during the pre-war years. Von Kluck, inspired by the Battle of Sedan precedent, prematurely "wheeled inward,

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[117] Strachan, *To Arms,* 211-212; Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 230-232 (Quote is on page 231).
[118] Strachan, *To Arms,* 211.

thinking to roll up the French [Fifth Army's] left." This premature maneuver in turn provided an opening for the newly-formed French Sixth Army to conduct a surprise counter-attack against the German First Army's newly exposed flank leading to an interruption in the German right flank's momentum. A gap then emerged between the First and Second German Armies that French and British forces further exploited.[119] The pre-war plan did not have anything to say about this situation and did not support wartime commanders' necessary adaptations to this unexpected event. German wartime commanders were not prepared to confront a French Army counter-attack. Eventually they decided to withdraw both the First and Second Armies into a defendable position behind the Aisne River. In doing so, they interrupted the continuous momentum that was essential to the operational approach and by extension, rendered the required sequential defeat of France then Russia untenable. The pre-war plan failed.

German operational commanders discovered that when conditions change, and luck does not appear as it had at Liege, that Germany's pre-war plan did not support their inherent responsibility to reassess and adjust the operational approach. They were presented with a situation (i.e., failure to achieve rapid, decisive victory through their preferred double envelopment maneuver) that they could not bring themselves to acknowledge throughout the pre-war years.[120] Von Moltke himself physically collapsed due to what Mombauer characterizes as "the burden of coordinating and leading this massive Army once the strategic 'blueprint' of the first weeks of fighting had expired."[121]

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[119] Hart, *Reputations, Ten Years After* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co, 1928), p 19-26 (quote on page 19).
[120] Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, 147.
[121] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 261.

Ironically, Wilhelm II then replaced von Moltke with Erich von Falkenhayn, who was the pre-war War Minister that the General Staff would not share its war plan with.[122]

The third event was a pair of unexpected operational successes in the east, at Tannenberg (late August) and the Masurian Lakes (early September). This third event contrasts with the previous two because it is a case where the German war plan did not support the exploitation of unexpected *successes*. The German war plan, as we have seen, allocated a single German Army – the Eighth Army – to initially defend Germany's eastern border from the expected Russian Army offensive.[123] Furthermore, the Eighth Army was also responsible for the contradictory mission of supporting a combined Austro-German Army offensive that von Moltke and Conrad had superficially negotiated but for which there was no combined plan (I discuss this later in this chapter).[124] It is safe to say that, given the General Staff's initial focus on defeating France and minimal commitment to the east, that it held little expectation that the Eighth Army would accomplish anything significant beyond limited defensive actions.

The Eighth Army's victories at Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes were thus unanticipated successes. Just as pre-war plans should support wartime commanders' inherent responsibility to adjust to unexpected setbacks, they should enable the exploitation of unexpected success. The German war plan did neither. Simultaneity between the unexpected successes in the east with the setback on the Marne and the replacement of the Chief of the General Staff made a strategic re-assessment in the

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[122] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 252-271.
[123] Strachan, *To Arms*, 319
[124] ibid, 319.

September timeframe particularly important. A debate amongst German military officials regarding which theater of war was most important, in light of the unexpected success in the east and setbacks in the west, in fact did occur.[125] However, the war plan did not envision this situation so failed to support the strategic dialogue. The newly installed Chief of the General Staff Falkenhayn eventually opted to prioritize the west, thus passing up the opportunity to fully exploit the successes at Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes.[126]

Summary – German Strategic and Operational Effectiveness

Table 1: German Military Effectiveness

Strategic Military Effectiveness	Low
Operational Military Effectiveness	Low

Table 1 shows my assessment of German operational and strategic effectiveness during the relevant timeframes specified above. I measure military effectiveness on a three-point scale (high, medium, low).[127]

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[125] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, 276.
[126] For accounts of the early operations on the Eastern Front including the Battle of Tannenberg, see Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, 243-247
[127] See chapter 2 for the standards I associate with military effectiveness.

Pre-War Planning Practices, 1905-July 1914

The General Staff produced war plans that were highly specific in terms of operational-level concepts of mobilization, deployment, and concentration. However, they were unspecific in terms of any mechanisms for commanders to adapt the plan to wartime realities; and in terms of any explanations on how the achievement of their prescribed operational objectives will support sustainable strategic outcomes. The war plans were resource un-constrained because they established operational requirements that the German Army could not accomplish with its available force structure and capabilities. Civilian oversight was non-existent because Imperial Germany's political structure was instrumentally designed to provide the General Staff with autonomy and relatively high influence in the conduct of Imperial Germany's foreign policy. Unencumbered by accountability to national leaders, the General Staff eschewed collaboration with most outside entities, preferring instead to protect and extend its autonomy and to perfect arguments to persuade German leaders to precipitate a preventative war sooner rather than later. Commendably, the General Staff equipped their war planners with rigorous, specialized education. But the curriculum lacked any emphasis on advanced strategic training that would have necessarily equipped planners to make better connections to the bigger picture. Rather, the General Staff's principal educational goal was to indoctrinate General Staff members into a specific, instrumental way of thinking which in turn ensured reinforcement and continuity in the planning practices described above.

Specificity

German pre-war planning produced plans focused on specific adversaries and prescribing a specific operational approach. As I outline below, however, the specificity of German war plans was not accompanied by any flexibility mechanisms nor a clear theory of victory so would likely, according to my theoretical framework, impair wartime military effectiveness.

Adversaries

The German General Staff's clear assessment of the threats on its periphery allowed it to distinctly specify adversaries in its war plans: France, Russia, and Britain.[128] France had been Germany's strategic competitor since at least the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. That war, which in turn led to the unification of Imperial Germany and German annexation of France's Alsace-Lorraine territories, created what Christopher Clark characterizes as "A lasting enmity…to some extent programmed into the European international system." France's objective of containing the newly-formed German Empire led it to secure a mutual defense alliance with Russia in the 1890's. This led the General Staff to adopt a planning assumption that a future conflict with France would mean simultaneous conflict with Russia.

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[128] The General Staff's Intelligence Division also maintained annual estimates that included finite details on each of these adversaries including strength, disposition, and mobilization procedures. An analysis of these annual estimates can be found in Terence Zuber, ed. *German War Planning, 1891-1914: Sources and Interpretations* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004) p. 7-48.

Britain emerged as a potential third opponent after it completed an Entente with France in 1904. The Anglo-French Entente was not a mutual defense alliance, nor did it constitute an 'automatic' commitment by either state to intervene in a future war. The implications to German war planning were thus not as clear as the Franco-Russian treaty. However, the formation of the Anglo-French Entente appears to have strategically influenced Germany's behavior, most visibly by incentivizing a series of coercive actions to impair Anglo-French cohesion, including by intervening in the First and Second Moroccan crises. In any case, German behavior in the Moroccan crises led to the opposite outcome of strengthening Anglo-French solidarity to contain Germany.[129]

Thus, German pre-war planners had a very clear view of who they would fight in the next war and what these opponents would do when war broke out. France would rapidly concentrate forces behind fortifications on the Franco-German frontier, Britain would deploy an expeditionary Force into western Belgium as an independent force or into France as an adjunct to the French Army, and Russia would slowly mobilize and concentrate into Russian Poland. Tightly defined adversaries and clear expectations regarding adversaries' initial wartime actions should have theoretically increased the possibility that German pre-war planning enhanced wartime military effectiveness.

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[129] Clark, *Sleepwalkers* p. 124-125; 152-167; Quote is on p. 124.

Operational Approach

The German war plan prescribed a very specific operational approach.[130] The German Army was to first defeat the French and British Armies in a quick, decisive campaign lasting no longer than six weeks. The General Staff considered a frontal assault across the Franco-German border too costly because France had established a dense network of fortifications; so, they prescribed an axis of advance through Belgium and then across the lightly-guarded Belgium border into northern France. After defeating the French Army, the victorious German Army could then deploy via railroad in time to face the Russian Army before it was fully concentrated. The General Staff's approach of defeating its adversaries sequentially created opportunities for the outnumbered Germany Army to strike decisive points where it possessed localized superiority in numbers.[131]

The war plan's specific operational approach enabled the General Staff to prepare detailed, pre-arranged mobilization procedures and railway timetables.[132] These preparations gave German national security officials confidence in their readiness. However, the preparations also required the German Army to prepare execute the plan to

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[130] There is an open debate regarding the content and character of Germany's war plan. Terrence Zuber claims that the historiography is skewed by post-war writings by retired General Staff officers who 'invented' the Schlieffen Plan as a way to indict Moltke the Younger (who was dead) for failing to implement Schlieffen's design correctly, and losing the initial campaign and ultimately the war. Others, including Herwig and Holmes, find that the war plan did exist as described above. This debate, which is a matter for historians, will remain unresolved due to the destruction of relevant General Staff archives in 1945. For our purposes, the archives that did survive, the direction of Germany's railroad construction, and the character of the General Staff's military advice in the July-August 1914 crisis, it is reasonable to conclude that the operational approach as characterized here fairly reflects the plan. See Terence Zuber, "The Schlieffen Plan Reconsidered," *War in History* 6, no. 3 (1999): 262–305; Terence M Holmes, "The Reluctant March on Paris: A Reply to Terence Zuber's 'The Schlieffen Plan Reconsidered,'" *War in History* 8, no. 2 (2001): 208–32, Herwig, "Command Decision Making," p. 115-6.
[131] Alfred von Schlieffen, "War Against France," 1905, p. 1-3, http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=796 ; Hart, *The First World War*, 48-55.
[132] Hew Strachan argues that General Staff's fixation on railroad mobility was so strong that "strategy became the servant of technology." Strachan, *To Arms*, 167.

the letter regardless of circumstances.[133] For example, the plan required the Army to

seize railroad infrastructure in Luxembourg and Belgium on the first day of mobilization

to prepare for onward movement of German Field Armies into France.[134] There is no

evidence that of any pre-war rehearsals to practice rapid refinement of railroad timetables

if German national decision makers decided not to seize these predetermined cross-

border railroad nodes.[135] Lacking control of these railroad infrastructure nodes, the plan

would become infeasible. There was thus no flexibility mechanism to allow for plan

refinement to fit the actual wartime strategic circumstances which are unknowable in

advance. There were also no alternative or backup plans.[136]

Theory of Victory

Germany's war plan lacked a clear theory of victory.[137] Von Schlieffen concludes

his 1905 memorandum, "War with France," with the sentence: "The French Army must

be annihilated."[138] That conclusion is a good summary of the rest of the memorandum,

which lacks any explanation on how the annihilation of the French Army would generate

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[133] Schlieffen warned in his 1905 memo: "In all these scenarios, the Germans would be well advised to alter their operational as little as possible." Schlieffen, "War With France," p. 9.
[134] Strachan, *To Arms*, 179.
[135] Levy, "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War," p. 199.
[136] Up until 1912, the General Staff did maintain an Eastern Deployment Plan addressing a war with Russia only. However, the General Staff did not like this alternative plan simply because the railroad network in the East was less developed than in western Germany and Belgium, and because of an expectation that Russian forces could simply withdraw into Russia to trade space for time. The General Staff did not take the Eastern Deployment Plan seriously and formally scrapped it in 1912. For more on the General Staff's reticence over alternative options, see Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, 100-103 and Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive,* p. 116-122.
[137] As per the Chapter 2 definition, a theory of victory is an explanation of how the operational approach is expected to contribute to the achievement of a sustainable strategic outcome.
[138] Schlieffen, "War With France," 8.

a sustainable strategic outcome, nor any suggestions on what the German Army should do after accomplishing that objective. Gerard Ritter concludes from his detailed study of von Schlieffen's memoranda that German pre-planning was "purely military…based on military theory rather than on the realities of history and politics."[139]

The lack of a theory of victory in the Schlieffen/von Moltke the Younger plan is particularly notable because earlier plan versions, during von Moltke the Elder's tenure as Chief of the General Staff, did contain at least a primitive theory of victory. Von Moltke the Elder's approach to planning was informed by his personal experience leading the Prussian Army in the 1870-1 Franco-Prussian War. The Prussian Army defeated the French Army in six weeks' time, only to face a popular resistance in Paris that tied the German Armies down for over five months before France and Prussia finally agreed to an unstable armistice. Informed by this experience, Von Moltke the Elder warned: "Germany cannot hope to rid itself of one enemy by a quick victory in the west in order then to turn against the other. We have just seen how difficult it is to bring even the victorious war against France to an end." Von Moltke the Elder's plan instead called for a defensive campaign which would repel French and Russian offensives and achieve limited objectives. The presence of a theory of victory in the earlier versions of the plans, and not in the later versions, serves as evidence that a theory of victory is possible.[140]

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[139] Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter; the Problem of Militarism in Germany.* (Coral Gables, Fla: University of Miami Press, 1969), 201-2.
[140] Gunther E. Rothernberg, "Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment," in Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert, eds., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1986), 303-307 (Quote is on page 306).

In summary, Germany's pre-war plan identified specific adversaries and prescribed a detailed operational approach. These are, in theory, valuable pre-war features. However, the features are insufficient without accompanying flexibility mechanisms or a theory of victory. My theoretical expectation therefore is that Germany's pre-war planning should impair wartime military effectiveness by constraining strategic decision making and undermining wartime commanders' ability to refine the plan to fit the actual wartime situation which is inherently unknowable in advance.

Resource Sensitivity

At a macro-strategic level, there are aspects of German war planning that appear resource informed. The war plan's prescription of quick, sequential offensives was a resource-informed approach to addressing Germany's expectation of fighting outnumbered on at least two fronts, as well as German planners' presumption that the German state could not withstand a protracted war. That said, while this operational approach is ostensibly resource-informed, it was also fraught with grave risks.[141]

A closer look, however, reveals that despite the imaginative thinking on how to solve the intractable operational dilemmas associated with Germany's strategic situation, the German General Staff practiced resource unconstrained planning. This conclusion is most clearly supported by Chief of the General Staff von Schlieffen's 1905 "War with

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[141] Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, p. 279-282.

France" memorandum explaining how Germany should optimally fight a war with France.[142] To execute the German war plan, von Schlieffen argues that the German Army "most urgently needs…eight [new] Army corps on or behind the army's right wing."[143] Hew Strachan, in a more detailed analysis of von Schlieffen's memorandum, finds that the plan required 94 divisions, but the Germany Army had less than 60 divisions available for immediate employment.[144] Von Schlieffen provides no explanation of how the German Army would compensate for the 34-division shortfall. It is beyond dispute that the operational approach articulated in Schlieffen's 1905 memorandum was resource unconstrained and it is reasonable to believe that the memorandum reflects actual German pre-war planning practices at the time.

The Quality vs Quantity Debate

      Beyond von Schlieffen's memorandum, the historical record does not contain data that equips us to definitively evaluate the extent to which the German war plan was resource constrained.[145] However, we do have in the decades-long 'quantity versus quality' debate evidence that the General Staff was at least incentivized to inflate

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[142] Schlieffen's memorandum is not Germany's war plan but many historians including (See Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan*; Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*; and Turner, "The Significance of the Schlieffen Plan") treat it as a primary source document. For dissenting views, see Strachan, To Arms and Zuber, "The Schlieffen Plan Reconsidered." Actual German war plans would provide a stronger evidentiary basis to analyze the extent to which German war planning was resource-constrained, but war plans and other General Staff documents from this period no longer exist. The General Staff, according to Mombauer (Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*) routinely destroyed war planning records that were no longer needed. Most records that the General Staff did not destroy were destroyed during a British strategic bombing attack that affected the German relevant national archive facility.
[143] Schlieffen, "War With France," 7.
[144] Strachan, *The First World War*, 45.
[145] See footnote 145.

operational requirements beyond the ability of the German Army to satisfy them.[146] The

General Staff, driven by a desire to address the deteriorating balance in military power

vis-à-vis its anticipated adversaries, consistently advocated for increasing the size of the

Army by conscripting a larger percentage of the eligible population each year.[147] The

War Ministry, however, was reticent to further expand the conscript pool into certain

demographics that the War Ministry viewed as politically unreliable.[148] This friction

between the General Staff, which set wartime requirements, and the War Ministry, which

prepared the Army to meet wartime requirements, is admittedly natural.[149] But I argue

that the problem was greatly magnified in Imperial Germany due to the divided command

structure and the lack of any civilian oversight of the General Staff.

Civilian Oversight

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[146] This incentive was spurred by a lack of effective civilian oversight, as we shall see.

[147] I cannot fault the General Staff for questioning the War Ministry's refusal to expand its recruiting base. Germany had a population of about 60 million compared to France's population of about 40 million, yet their Armies were roughly equivalent in size. France achieved capacity parity by conscripting 83% of eligible males, compared with Germany's rate of 57%. For a more detailed comparison of the French and German Armies, see Strachan, *The First World War*, 41-48 and Hart, *A History of the First World War*, Chapter 2.

[148] Part of the explanation of the divergence in views also likely lies in the merit-based selection process for service on the General Staff. The General Staff's merit-based membership would have felt less threatened by expanding the diversity of the Army. Some have also observed that the War Ministry's position was bolstered by a preference to invest in more advanced weapons and better training for the existing Army, rather than growing the size of the Army. This was probably less important. For more on the quantity versus quality debate, see Strachan, *The First World War*, 46; and Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, 121-135.

[149] The same friction is alive and well in today's U.S. Department of Defense. Combatant commander requirements eclipse the military services' capacity. See Mackenzie Eaglen, "Putting Combatant Commanders on a Demand Signal Diet," *War on the Rocks*, November 9, 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/11/putting-combatant-commanders-on-a-demand-signal-diet/

The German General Staff's pre-war planning activities were not subject to any formal civilian oversight. In the Imperial German state system, the Chief of the General Staff reported directly to the Kaiser and had no obligation to justify his plans to anyone else.[150] The Kaiser was, therefore, the only possible source of formal oversight. However, the Kaiser held formal military status so was himself part of the military establishment and could not provide oversight of himself. He was Imperial Germany's designated wartime commander, personally participated in annual military maneuvers, and declared his self-identified military status in a December 1912 letter to his brother: "My diplomats are very concerned [about England]. But not us military [men]."[151].

In theory, German law held that the Kaiser was also responsible for Imperial German foreign policy and thus was endowed with a 'grand strategic' perspective through which he could have been the source of the kinds of oversight that I have hypothesized that should enhance the strategic value of pre-war planning. But Holger Herwig convincingly describes Wilhelm II as completely incapable of and unwilling to do so.[152]

In the absence of formal civilian oversight, it is conceivable that enlightened military and civilian officials could have recognized the value in routine consultations to ensure that military plans supported Germany's broader national security strategy. There was precedence, after all, for this kind of difficult but enlightened consultations during the earlier tenures of Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck and Chief of the General Staff

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[150] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 35.
[151] ibid, 139.
[152] Herwig, "Command Decision Making"

Helmuth von Moltke the Elder – one outcome being mutual agreement that any violation of Belgian neutrality would "spur England into action" and thus was ill advised.[153] However, the available evidence indicates that von Schlieffen and von Moltke the Younger did not follow von Moltke the Elder's example. The Chancellors in office during von Schlieffen's tenure raised no objections as von Schlieffen designed his plans for an immediate attack on France by way of Belgium.[154] Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, who occupied the Chancellorship during von Moltke the Younger's tenure, was first exposed to the war plan in 1912, three years into his tenure.[155] Bethmann-Hollweg bears some personal responsibility for this lack of engagement: he explains in his memoirs that he "deferred to military advice whenever questions of German security were being considered."[156] We can confidently conclude that German pre-war planning during the decade leading up to the First World War was subject to no effective civilian oversight.

External Collaboration

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[153] LCF Turner, "The Significance of the Schlieffen Plan," in Paul Kennedy, ed., *The War Plans of the Great Powers*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 200, 205. Quote on p. 205

[154] Ibid, p. 205-207. In these pages, LCF Turner acknowledges that Chancellor Bülow claims in his memoirs that he advised von Schlieffen only to plan to violate Belgian "for the gravest political reasons and then only if Belgian neutrality had already been violated by our enemies." Turner then characterizes Bülow's memoirs as "highly unreliable," a conclusion he bases in part on subsequent German railroad construction that supported a plan to attack through Belgium.

[155] Holger H. Herwig, "Strategic Uncertainties of a Nation-State," in Williamson Murray, Alvin Bernstein, and MacGregor Knox, eds., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 257-258; Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, 83.

[156] Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 291.

We should expect military organizations that collaborate with external stakeholders to generate plans that are more likely to enhance military effectiveness. As I outline below, however, the German General Staff rarely collaborated internally among services or agencies, and had limited and dysfunctional collaboration with its principal ally Austria-Hungary.

Inter-Agency Collaboration

The General Staff's collaboration with the Foreign Office, War Ministry, and Imperial Navy was low to non-existent. The lack of cooperation and communication between the General Staff and Chancellor Bethmann-Bethmann-Hollweg has already been discussed. The practice extended to the foreign office. Foreign Minister Gottlieb von Jagow once requested civil-military consultations to re-evaluate the military requirement to violate Belgian neutrality, but von Moltke simply overruled him by writing a memo.[157] Imperial Germany furthermore lacked a national defense-oriented deliberative body or process analogous to Britain's Committee on Interior Defense or France's Council on National Defense.[158]

I have already discussed the lack of collaboration with the War Ministry, and how this intensified the decades-long 'quality versus quantity' debate because the War Ministry could not have understood the principles behind the General Staff's war plan requirements. Another factor that discouraged General Staff-War Ministry collaboration

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[157] Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 121.
[158] Herwig, "Command Decision Making," 108.

is each organization operated from separate physical headquarters in Berlin. Opportunities for informal collaboration were thus less frequent than if the two organizations were co-located.[159]

As for the Navy, BH Liddell Hart finds no evidence of any formal inter-service coordination mechanism, and criticizes the General Staff for not considering joint options such as intercepting the British Expeditionary Force's predictable deployment across the English Channel.[160] Gerard Ritter adds that the General Staff failed to consider asking the Navy to support Army deployments to the Baltic Provinces in the East.[161] The General Staff was further disincentivized to collaborate with the Navy because until 1911, naval modernization expenditures in part precluded the Army increases the General Staff consistently advocated for to satisfy un-resourced war plan requirements. In a June 1909 meeting, chaired by the Chancellor, focused on German strategic competition with Britain, Moltke argued that the German Navy could never defeat the British Navy, and therefore Germany should come to a Naval arms control agreement with Britain and focus on German superiority on land.[162]

The Navy, for its part, did not do much to open lines of communication with the General Staff. Imperial Germany's leading naval official, State Secretary of the Naval Office Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, for his part, was disinterested in anything that would interfere his own singular formula for victory: remaining concentrated in the North Sea

[159] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, 35, 82.
[160] Hart, *A History of the First World War*, 54.
[161] Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan*, 88.
[162] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*, 117.

for a decisive battle with the British Fleet.[163] Tirpitz furthermore deliberately kept the

Admiralty Staff – which was the Navy's version of the General Staff – weakened in part

to prevent the emergence of alternative naval strategies.[164]

Multinational Collaboration

The General Staff's planning collaboration with allies and partners was low.

Germany's key ally by virtue of a mutual defense treaty dating back to 1879, was

Austria-Hungary. Despite the long-standing existence of this alliance, and despite the

General Staff's heavy reliance upon Austro-Hungarian forces to help delay and disrupt

Russian forces in the East to buy time and space for the initial German offensive against

France,[165] there is no evidence of any working-level staff talks, any combined

contingency plans, nor any discussions of an alliance wartime command structure.[166]

During von Schlieffen's tenure as Chief of the General Staff, contact between the

respective General Staffs was limited to Chief of Staff-level holiday greetings.[167] Von

Schlieffen's confidence in Germany's ability to execute their own war plan without

consultation with allies was evident in his famous declaration that Austria-Hungary's fate

in a future war will be determined on the Seine (in the west - where he expected the

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[163] Hart, *A History of the First World War*, 54-55, Herwig, "Command Decision Making" 112-115; Paul M Kennedy, "The Development of German Naval Operations Plans against England, 1896-1914, in Paul Kennedy, ed., *The War Plans of the Great Powers*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 192-3.

[164] Herwig, *Command Decision Making*, 114, Kennedy, "German Naval Operations Plans," 192.

[165] For further details, see the "Operational Approach" discussion above.

[166] Herwig, *Command Decision Making,* 115-6; Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 114.

[167] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 82.

German and French Armies to meet) rather than the Bug (in the east – where he expected the German/Austrian Armies to meet the Russian Army).[168]

Von Moltke the Younger, to his credit, made multinational collaboration a higher priority than von Schlieffen. This commitment was reflected by von Moltke's agreement with his Austro-Hungarian counterpart Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf to a routine exchange of memoranda starting in 1909. But these memorandum exchanges did little to elevate collective readiness for a future war that both knew would be an alliance war. Their dialogue focused mainly on troop deployment commitments without consideration of political context.[169] Mombauer finds in her detailed examination of these memoranda that von Moltke and Conrad both used the memoranda to deliberately mislead the other. Ironically, both Chiefs of Staff sought to convince the other to commit more combat power to the east, to buy time and space for initially offensives against France and Serbia, respectively. The outcome of this dialogue was a mutual agreement for a combined offensive in the east with smaller forces. But as the actual mobilizations in August 1914 show, neither were committed to actually following through on their combined offensive scheme. When the German military attaché in Vienna realized, on August 1, 1914, that the crucial details for the alleged combined defensive plan had yet to be worked out, he reported back to Berlin: "It is high time that the two general staffs consulted with absolute frankness about mobilization, jump-off time, areas of assembly, and precise troop strength."[170]

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[168] Herwig, *Command Decision Making,* 115-116; Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 82.
[169] Herwig, "Strategic Uncertainties," 265-266.
[170] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 113-117, 215 quote is on page 215.

The other main objective that von Moltke pursued in his memoranda was to manipulate the terms of Austro-German alliance in ways that increased the possibility of war. The treaty was originally designed by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to apply only if Austria-Hungary was a victim of an armed attack. Von Moltke, who unlike Bismarck wanted to see war happen sooner rather than later, knew that Austria-Hungary's long-standing tensions with Russia-backed Serbia was one of the most likely situations that would trigger war. So, he sought to expand the terms of the alliance to accommodate a scenario of Russian aggression toward Austria-Hungary, even if Austria-Hungary was the initial aggressor against Serbia. For example, during the Bosnian annexation crisis in January 1909, Von Moltke assured Austro-Hungarian Chief of the General Staff Conrad that if Austria-Hungary invades Serbia and Russia intervenes, then "that would constitute a *casus foederis* for Germany."[171]

In summary, alliance collaboration that did occur was at a high level and failed to produce a combined plan. Instead, it generated a misperception on both sides that the other side would mobilize initially against Russia. The correspondence furthermore was the medium through which von Moltke worked to manipulate Germany's mutual defense commitment from a defensive one to an offensive one, thereby increasing the probability of war. The likelihood that this limited collaboration would enhance wartime military effectiveness is thus low.

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[171] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 113-117; Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, 288-291 quote is on page 289.

Strategic Education

Military planning organizations that provide their war planners rigorous strategic education are more likely to produce war plans that enhance wartime effectiveness. The German General Staff definitely provided their officers with rigorous and specialized education, but the curriculum did not promote political-military strategic thinking.

The rigor associated with General Staff officers' training is beyond dispute. The General Staff operated a stand-alone War Academy which served exclusively as the pipeline for selecting, evaluating, and indoctrinating prospective officers for General Staff service. The Academy director reported directly to the Chief of the General Staff. The Academy selected only 160 students each year out of 1,000 applicants. Of those selected to attend, only thirty percent ultimately survived the three-year initial training period to go on to service on the General Staff.[172] General Staff officers continued their specialized education throughout their careers by means of weekly map exercises and staff rides.[173] This is a clear case of a military planning organization that demonstrates value in specialized education, even at the opportunity costs associated with not assigning other tasks to officers in training.

The War Academy's curriculum, while rigorous, was not designed to promote political-military strategic thinking. After the General Staff gained control of the War Academy in 1872[174], Helmuth von Moltke (the Elder) designed the War Academy curriculum to inculcate a common doctrine and culture so that all General Staff officers

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[172] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, p. 182-183; Samuels, *Command or Control?* p. 20.
[173] Samuels, *Command or Control?* 25-27.
[174] ibid, 21.

would think alike. This was necessary, according to von Moltke's thinking, to help

mitigate the challenges associated with mobilizing, deploying, and employing massive

Armies. These massive Armies would require, by virtue of limited communication

technology, commanders and chiefs of staff capable of making decisions without

consultation with the Great General Staff.[175]

The War Academy thus did little to broaden students' perspectives and thereby

equip them to place military force into a political/strategic framework. It did a lot to

indoctrinate students into the systematic approach, and the 'right' way of thinking, that

the General Staff applied from day to day in the secrecy of their Berlin headquarters.

Summary – German Pre-War Planning Practices

Table 2: German Pre-War Planning Practices

War Planning Practice	**Emphasis**
Specificity	Medium
Resource Sensitivity	Low
Moderate Civilian Oversight	Low
External Collaboration	Low
Strategic Education	Medium

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[175] ibid, 21-25.

Table 2 summarizes the extent to which the German General Staff adopted each of the theorized planning best practices. I measure the emphasis that the German General Staff placed on each planning practice on a three-point scale (high, medium, low).

Discussion – Relationship between German Pre-War Planning Practices and Wartime Military Effectiveness

Most contemporary military officers believe in the Eisenhower theory (i.e., all war planning is indispensable), and perceive of the German General Staff as the epitome of an effective military planning organization. The evidence and analysis presented above indicate that these perceptions merit some qualifications. The German General Staff possessed seeming advantages in terms of relative clarity over its next wartime opponents, and the institutional resources and prestige to carry out relatively systematic war planning. Yet, German pre-war planning produced outcomes that impaired wartime military effectiveness. Pre-war planning as it was practiced by the German General Staff was, in other words, not indispensable.

Impact of German Pre-War Planning Practices on Wartime Strategic Military Effectiveness

According to my theoretical framework, pre-war planning can enhance strategic military effectiveness in two principal ways. First, pre-war planning can produce a range of suitable options (rather than a point solution) to support crisis decision making. Second, it can produce an option that supports what civilian decision makers want to do.

Conversely, pre-war plans can impair strategic military effectiveness in two ways: by constraining civilian leaders' flexibility; and by advancing the military establishments' parochial interests at the expense of national security.

German pre-war planning activities impaired strategic military effectiveness by constraining decision making. The German war plan consisted of a single option for a full offensive despite the likelihood that this approach would escalate the war, and by extension, lacked any provisions to support crisis diplomacy and de-escalation.[176] Jack Snyder argues that had Germany been "unburdened by the Schlieffen Plan," then Germany could have contributed to localization and termination of the conflict before it escalated out of control.[177]

German pre-war planning activities also impaired strategic military effectiveness by advancing the influence of the German military establishment relative to civilian centers of German power. The General Staff, as we have seen, viewed war as inevitable and, given Germany's deteriorating military balance vis-à-vis France and Russia, preferred that the war come sooner rather than later. Wilhelm II, Bethmann-Hollweg, and others did not share this perspective nearly as strongly as the General Staff.[178] These divergent civil and military views, which must have been amplified during the crisis because of the lack of pre-war civil-military collaboration, provides us with reason to believe that the German military establishment including the General Staff instrumentally designed the war plan to increase the possibility of war, and to ensure that when war

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[176] Levy, "Organizational Routines," 199.
[177] Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, 119,
[178] Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke,* 106-110.

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came, that the war would be a big one. The General Staff's satisfaction was vividly illustrated upon the July 31 mobilization order approval, where staff officers congratulated each other and the mood was more optimistic than ever.[179]

Impact of German Pre-War Planning Practices on Wartime Operational Military Effectiveness

German operational commanders demonstrated low to moderate success in adapting to wartime realities. The lack of civilian oversight, external collaboration, and advanced strategic training led to a war plan that advanced organizational culture and interests but proved to ultimately undermine German Army commanders' inherent responsibility to adapt to wartime realities that are unknowable in advance. The war plan did not provide a framework to support necessary adaptations after unexpected setbacks at Liege and the Battle of the Marne, and unexpected successes at Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes. The plan collapsed within one month and without the operational blueprint that the General Staff had crafted over the preceding decades to guide subsequent operations, Germany and the other combatants descended into what would become by all measures the costliest war to date.

Conclusion

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[179] Arden Bucholz, *Moltke, Schlieffen, and Prussian War Planning* (New York: Berg Pub Ltd, 1991), p. 273; Herwig, "Strategic Uncertainties," 265.

The case of Imperial Germany suggests that Eisenhower's advice – plans are useless but planning is indispensable – requires qualification. Some pre-war planning practices are indispensable; others are counterproductive. German pre-war planning practices led to an outcome that constrained strategic choices, and undermined operational commanders' flexibility to adapt to wartime realities.

CHAPTER FIVE: FRANCE

Introduction

This chapter continues the work of chapter 3 in testing the theoretical framework proposed in chapter 2 by examining the case of pre-war and early wartime France. The first part addresses contextual factors that were important to France's selection of pre-war planning practices. The second analyzes French military effectiveness from July-September 1914. The third evaluates the extent to which French pre-war planning activities aligned with the five hypothesized pre-war planning best practices. The last is a discussion of the relationship between pre-war planning practices and wartime military effectiveness.

Overall, French pre-war planning produced a war plan that supported military effectiveness in important ways. Most significantly, it contained a hard constraint, despite the French General Staff's objections, against the violation of Belgian neutrality. This constraint proved militarily inconvenient but strategically effective because it allowed for British intervention. Furthermore, the lack of focus on planning in any detail beyond the mobilization and concentration phases paradoxically promoted effective adjustments to wartime realities.

French pre-war planning also produced outcomes that detracted from wartime military effectiveness. For example, the General Staff's instinctive preference for offensive doctrine led to the prescription of an initial offensive that proved disastrous.

Parochial hostility toward French reserve forces, along with a mirror-imaged assumption that German reserves would not be a factor, furthermore led to the underestimation of German offensive strength and under-utilization of French military power.

Contextual Factors

This section explains three contextual factors that arose repeatedly in my empirical study of France's pre-war planning and initial wartime experiences. I thus address these three factors up front to avoid unnecessary repetition.

France's Acute Threat Perception vis-à-vis Germany

The first contextual factor was France's clear national security goal of containing Germany. France's memory of defeat from the 1870-1 Franco-Prussian War, and determination to avoid similar humiliation during a widely anticipated future sequel, intensified the clarity of this goal and stimulated decades of reform to elevate military readiness. For example, France constructed fortifications along the newly-drawn Franco-German border, invested heavily in modernizing its railway network, implemented a conscription model that promised to field a standing army comparable to the size of the German army despite a smaller population base, built infrastructure and organizations to facilitate more effective mobilization, and secured an anti-German alliance with Russia and improved security cooperation with Britain. Most importantly for my purpose,

France adopted a General Staff system to enable the intellectual design of strategies and plans to prevail in the next war.[180]

Germany's assertive post-war foreign policies elevated France's threat perception vis-à-vis Germany even further. A series of 1914-like diplomatic crises led Europe to the brink of a war that French officials believed they could not win despite the post-1871 investments in national defense.[181] In at least two of these crises France avoided war only by backing down in the face of German assertiveness leading to additional embarrassment. The clarity and endurance of France's national objective to stand up to Germany was thus French military planning organizations' principal focus for over forty years.

Civil-Military Relations

The second contextual factor was a decades-long French debate on the optimal relationship between the military and the state. The republican left preferred a principally citizen Army comprised of short-term conscripts that broadly reflected French society. It feared a powerful, centrally controlled military establishment that the state could potentially employ to suppress liberty, as in the French Army's role in suppressing the

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[180] For broader analysis of French threat perception of Germany and post-Franco Prussian reforms, see Robert A. Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), Chapter 1 and Porch, *The March to the Marne French Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For a comparison of French and German conscription policies, see Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *The French Army and the First World War*, Armies of the Great War (Cambridge: University Press, 2014), p. 11.

[181] The most significant were the 1905 First Moroccan Crisis, 1908 Bosnian Annexation Crisis, 1911 Second Moroccan Crisis, 1912 First Balkan War. For French assessments on unreadiness for war during these crises, see Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 49.

1871 Paris Commune. The conservative right – by contrast – preferred a powerful, centrally controlled military establishment comprised of long-service professionals capable of advanced and more complex operations. It feared a large, capable militia with citizen soldiers that could form the core of a popular movement to overthrow the government, as in Louis Napoleon III's 1851 coups.[182]

The intensity of the debate introduced above endured in part due to frequent turnover of French government officials. France had forty-two ministers of war between 1871 and 1914, with an average tenure of about one year each.[183] Repeated power alterations between parties with divergent views on defense policy made the turnover even more disruptive. A simmering twelve-year civil-military crisis known as the Dreyfus Affair intensified hostility even further.[184] All of this internal, domestic turmoil led to what Michael A. Hunzeker characterizes as the "splintering [of] the army's ability to plan and coordinate."[185] Specific impacts included politicized senior officer promotions, a divided command structure that prevented centralized military authority, and more as we shall see in the description of French pre-war planning practices below.[186]

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[182] Greenhalgh, *The French Army*, p. 12-13; Doughty, *March to the Marne*, 6; Porch, "The French Army in the First World War," in Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, eds., *Military Effectiveness*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 192-193; Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, p. 48.
[183] Porch, *March to the Marne*, Appendix 1.
[184] The Dreyfus Affair started in 1896 with the Army's investigation and conviction of Captain Alfred Dreyfus on charges of treason. The republican left claimed Dreyfus was innocent and that the Army forged prosecution documents. The crisis intensified the left's anti-militarist stance and undermined the political solidarity necessary to pursue optimal policies to elevate military readiness. For details see Porch, *March to the Marne*, Chapter 4; Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, p. 52.
[185] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn,* p. 364.
[186] Greenhalgh, *The French Army*, p. 13, 15.

Offensive Doctrine

The third contextual factor was the *offensive a outrance* (English translation is excessive offensive) – a conviction in the inherent superiority of the offense that came to dominate French military thought during the pre-war years. The *offensive a outrance* had two main tenets. The first was the broadly-held expectation for quick victories or defeats, based in part on an assumption that societies could not bear the cost of protracted wars given increasingly destructive firepower as well as the requirement to field and sustain massive armies.[187] In an era of quick, decisive wars, the side that seizes the initiative first prevails, even when facing numerically superior forces. The second tenet was the belief that offensive operations on the modern battlefield necessitated above all that troops that possess morale, or in Hew Strachan's characterization, "a will to win." Modern weapons including machine guns, breech-loading rifles, and quick firing artillery increased the cost of offensive operations, so morale equipped soldiers with an otherwise unnatural motivation to participate in them.[188]

The 1913 Regulations on Large Units established as doctrine that "The French Army, returning to its traditions, accepts no law in the conduct of operations other than the offensive" and "An energetic commander-in-chief, having confidence in himself, in his subordinates, in his troops, will never yield the initiative to his adversary under the pretext of awaiting better intelligence. At the beginning of the war, he will launch

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[187] Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," p. 60.
[188] For deeper analyses of the implications of the *offensive a outrance* to France's war plans see Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, Ch 2-3; B.H. Liddell Hart, *A History of the First World War* (London: Cassell, 1970), p. 51-53; Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 187-188 (quote is on p. 187); and Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 25-29.

operations of such violence and fury that the enemy, weakened in its morale and paralyzed in its action, will be reduced, perhaps, to remaining on the defensive."[189]

Discussion – Contextual Factors

In summary, the first two contextual factors interacted into diametrically opposed goals of building and constraining military power. The third contextual factor was, according to Jack Snyder, the military's "organizational ideology" principally intended as a "strategic argument against unwanted transformations in traditional military institutions."[190] All three factors had pervasive influence on the French General Staff's pre-war planning practices, as we shall see.

French Military Effectiveness, July-August 1914

Strategic Military Effectiveness

In accordance with my theoretical framework (see Chapter 2), I measure France's wartime strategic military effectiveness by the quality of French crisis decision making and diplomacy during the July-August crisis. These are the aspects of strategic military effectiveness that pre-war planning should, theoretically, impact the most. One of France's key strategic goals during the crisis was to secure the support of domestic stakeholders such as the republican left and of Britain and Russia for France's

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[189] Quoted in Robert A. Doughty, "France" in Hamilton and Herwig, eds., *War Planning 1914*, p. 160
[190] Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, p. 50-56 quotes on p. 50 and 51.

participation in the war. Domestic support would ensure national solidarity and British and Russian support came with the probability of additive anti-German military power. France achieved these strategic goals in the July-August crisis which leads me to conclude that France demonstrated moderate to high strategic military effectiveness.

French civilian officials believed that a precondition to achieving their strategic goal was to convince domestic and international audiences that France was compelled to respond in self-defense given Germany's premeditated acts of aggression. This was particularly important given France's polarized domestic politics, as well as the importance of securing the operational support of Britain and Russia. French officials did not want to risk fighting Germany without overwhelming domestic support, or without allies, as they had to in 1870.[191]

In pursuit of their strategic goal, French civilian officials chose a course of action over the objection of their generals. The Council of Ministers convened on July 30 to discuss the evolving crisis and to consider Joffre's forceful recommendations to initiate full and immediate mobilization. The Council of Ministers overruled Joffre on the basis that overt mobilization, while militarily prudent, would most likely be perceived as provocative by domestic and international stakeholders. The main conclusion of the July 30 Council of Ministers meeting was recorded as: "For the sake of public opinion, let the Germans put themselves in the wrong."[192] As a result of this strategic patience, the President and Council of Ministers were able to credibly issue an early August statement

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[191] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 51-53.
[192] Doughty, "France," p. 1149.

declaring "At this time, there are no more parties. There is only eternal France."[193] The July-August crisis day-to-day sequence of events was then presented to the French legislature on August 4 as proof of German "premeditated and brutal aggression," generating "an unprecedented show of unity" and enabling passage in an otherwise polarized legislature of the necessary war measures.[194] Meanwhile on the international front, Britain ultimately joined the war. Given the achievement of these objectives, France demonstrated a moderate to high level of strategic effectiveness according to my standards.

Operational Military Effectiveness

I measure France's operational military effectiveness by observing and evaluating instances of last-minute war plan refinements between June 28 and August 8, and instances where operational commanders adjusted to actual wartime conditions after French combat operations began on August 8.

War Plan Adjustments During the July Crisis (June 28-August 8)

Joffre and the General Staff took full advantage of the time available between the onset of the July crisis and the outbreak of armed conflict to adjust the war plan. In mid-July (the same period Germany's von Moltke nonchalantly remained on his extended holiday), Joffre orchestrated "a large-scale command post exercise that included cadre

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[193] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 53.
[194] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 53.

from two armies and four corps."[195] No records from this exercise are accessible, and the

exercise was likely designed and scheduled prior to the Archduke's assassination on June

28. However, given its timing and the flexible wartime employment of French forces that

followed, the exercise was an adept and timely rehearsal and an opportunity to refine

their plan from pre-war expectations to emerging potential wartime realities.

Joffre furthermore made several key adjustments to alter the geographic location

of some concentration points, and optimally reallocate divisions and objectives between

the field Armies given the actual wartime situation as he understood it. In an August 2

warning order he made two major adjustments. He updated the missions of the five

covering corps[196] and committed the Fourth Army[197] to a concentration point that would

allow it to participate in the initial offensive. He fixed the first main attack date to

August 14 to coordinate with Russian plans to launch an offensive the same day. He

established a new Army of Alsace Task Force to improve security. Noting intelligence

that the German right wing appeared stronger than initially expected, he made a

substantial plan adjustment by reallocating three divisions to Fifth Army and adjusting

objectives for Third and Fourth Armies to strike at what he perceived to be weakness in

the center of Germany's forces. Finally, on August 8, he issued General Instruction 1,

which was the final plan that would govern French actions in what was to become known

as the Battle of the Frontiers. Joffre and other French wartime commanders thus

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[195] Doughty, "France," p. 165.
[196] The covering corps are the designated corps responsible for initial occupation of a concentration point.
[197] Joffre initially assigned Fourth Army a counterattack mission so its original concentration point was to the rear of the other four Field Armies.

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demonstrated high operational effectiveness by remaining flexible and pursuing optimization of their plans until the last minute.[198]

Operational Adjustments After First Contact (August 9-Battle of the Marne)

The French Army executed Plan 17 very much according to its pre-war design up until August 20. French cavalry observed and reported on early German Army movements. The French First and Second Armies initiated their planned offensives into Alsace-Lorraine on August 14 with some early success, in full synchronization and coordination with the onset of Russia's attacks.[199] The remaining French Field Armies completed concentration by August 18, an achievement made possible by major pre-arranged logistical plans involving the synchronization of about fifty-six trains per day.[200]

On August 20, however, the French First and Second Armies' offensives in Alsace-Lorraine were repelled far short of the prescribed war plan objectives, and they very quickly found themselves back at their original concentration points with heavy casualties. The Third, Fourth, and Fifth Armies suffered similar fates. BH Liddell Hart argues that August 20 was that day the French Army "discovered that material could subdue the moral, and that in their enthusiasm for the offensive they had blinded themselves to the defensive power of modern weapons."[201] The French Army finally realized that they did not possess the capacity or capabilities to execute their war plan. In

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[198] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 55-60.
[199] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 56-57.
[200] Greenhalgh, *The French Army*, p. 35.
[201] Hart, *First World War*, p. 62.

other words, French operational effectiveness proved to be low in the execution of pre-planned and pre-scripted operations prescribed by the war plan.[202]

In the aftermath of the failure of the initial pre-planned French offensives at the Battle of the Frontiers, the French Army entered the adjustment phase that is inherent to warfare and in this phase of the campaign Joffre and the French armies demonstrated higher operational military effectiveness. Starting on August 24, just days after the failure of the initial French offensives that were the foundation of Plan 17 became clear, Joffre orchestrated large-scale westward movement of French field armies, using railways flexibly, to re-concentrate forces and resume the offensive.[203] These maneuvers were not part of Plan 17, but ultimately and perhaps ironically proved much more effective than the failed pre-planned offensives we have already covered.

The French Army's relative success in executing off-script adjustments continued as the German Army right wing continued its pre-planned wide maneuver. After French field armies consolidated into a new improvised position to counter the German Army's right wing, Joffre was informed of an eastward shift by German First Army. A gap emerged between the German First and Second Armies which British and French forces exploited, stalling the German Army's momentum and thereby undermining the German Army's ability to continue executing their own, more detailed pre-war plan.[204] Joffre and his French Armies thus demonstrated much better operational adaptation when un-

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[202] For a fuller account of the French Army's setbacks in what later became known as the Battle of the Frontiers, see Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 60-76, Hart, *First World War*, p. 62-67; and Strachan, *The First World War Vol 1*, p. 208-220.
[203] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 76.
[204] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 97-98, BH Liddell Hart, *Reputations,* p 19-26.

encumbered by a war plan. France's operational effectiveness is evident by the title later applied by historians later to characterize the outcome: The Miracle on the Marne.

Summary – Strategic and Operational Military Effectiveness

Table 3: French Military Effectiveness

Strategic Military Effectiveness	Medium
Operational Military Effectiveness	Medium

Table 3 shows my assessment of French operational and strategic effectiveness during the relevant timeframes specified above. I measure each aspect of military effectiveness a three-point scale (high, medium, low).[205]

Pre-War Planning Practices

The French General Staff produced war plans that had a high level of specificity in terms of France's anticipated adversary and in terms of concepts for mobilization and concentration of French military power. But the lack of a coherent theory of victory leads me to conclude that the plans were moderately specific. The war plan was likewise moderately resource-constrained. In terms of quantitative forces, the plan allocated sufficient existing French Army troops to achieve parity with the German Army forces

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[205] See chapter 2 for the standards I associate with military effectiveness.

they expected to face. However, the General Staff underestimated the German Army's strength which meant in reality, the operational approach prescribed by Plan 17 required more combat power than France possessed. Civilian officials provided extensive oversight over pre-war planning activities. However, many instances of civilian oversight were motivated more by domestic political factors rather than strategic factors. The General Staff pursued extensive external collaboration within the French Government and with Russia and Britain. The General Staff's willingness to invest in strategic education for planners was moderate. All general staff officers attended the *Ecole de Guerre* for two years but the *Ecole de Guerre* curriculum lacked a clear emphasis on rigorous advanced strategic training.

Specificity

French war planning was highly specific in terms of a named adversary and an initial operational approach. It lacked specificity in terms of a theory of victory addressing what the French Army should do in subsequent phases of the war or explaining the relationship between the plan's prescribed military objectives and a strategically sustainable desired outcome.

Adversary

France's pre-war plan focused specifically on a future war with Germany and contained detailed assumptions regarding the German Army's likely wartime course of action. This is not surprising given the French national consensus on the clarity of the

German threat, as we have seen. This clarity is further evident in a French General Staff document articulating Chief of the General Staff Joseph Joffre's 1911 strategic assessment: "The General Staff of the Army considers it obvious that Germany is our principal adversary…[O]f all the rival nations for France, Germany is the strongest, the most immediately menacing. Its allies are only satellites."[206]

The French General Staff adopted three specific assumptions regarding the German Army's likely wartime course of action. First, the German Army would attempt to solve its two-front security dilemma by initiating an immediate offensive to quickly defeat France before turning its attention toward Russia.[207] This assumption was supported by official German documents France had obtained through intelligence channels.[208] Second, the German Army's main attack would come through Luxembourg and Belgium, bypassing French fortifications, and targeting the left flank of the French Army that would be concentrating in Northeast France.[209] This second assumption was supported by the French Army's observations of recent German war games, German railroad construction activities northwest of Luxembourg, and improvements to German fortifications on the German side of the Franco-German frontier.[210] Third, the French General Staff assumed that Germany's extensive reserve forces lacked the readiness and

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[206] Quoted in Robert A. Doughty, "France," p. 144.
[207] Stefan Schmidt, "French Plan XVII: The Interdependence between Foreign Policy and Military Planning during the Final Years before the Outbreak of the Great War," in Hans Ehlert et al., eds., *The Schlieffen Plan: International Perspectives on the German Strategy for World War I* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), p. 210.
[208] Strachan, *The First World War Vol 1*, p. 184.
[209] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 19, 24.
[210] ibid

skill to participate in the initial German offensive.[211] Germany's standing, active duty

army would thus shoulder the burden. Without any support from the reserves, the

German active duty army lacked the strength required to attempt an offensive any further

west than Southeastern Belgium and Luxembourg. These specific assumptions provided

a firm threat-based foundation that I have theorized will increase the possibility that pre-

war planning will contribute to wartime military effectiveness. That said, the assumption

relating to the German reserves' inability to participate in offensive operations proved

incorrect, as we shall see.

Operational Approach

The French General Staff produced war plans that prescribed a specific

operational approach for mobilization and concentration of French forces at the onset of a

war. The earliest war plan versions from the 1870's concentrated French forces into a

passively defensive posture based on the assessment that Germany could mobilize faster

and more effectively than France. The defensive orientation of the early war plans is

evident by France's construction of fortifications on the Franco-German border between

1874 and 1880 with gaps to channel German forces into isolated positions.[212]

The General Staff eventually evolved to a more imaginative operational approach

where French Armies would initially man the defensive line but then integrate a counter-

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[211] We will see, however, in the discussion below on Resource-Constrained Planning that the French
Army's assumptions were severely flawed. My theoretical framework on the value of threat-based
planning (as opposed to functional- or capability-based planning) focuses on the specificity of pre-war
planning assumptions, not on their accuracy. I discuss this later.
[212] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 12.

attack at the time and place of their choosing. The two principal reasons for this evolution were expanded mobility offered by newly-constructed railroad networks, and the emergent expectation that a simultaneous Russian offensive would occupy substantial German Army forces, thereby weakening the potential strength of a German Army offensive into France. This active defense approach first appeared in Plan 11 in 1891.[213]

The next evolution in the operational approach emerged as the General Staff came to expect the German Army to direct an attack through Belgium, rather than directly across the Franco-Prussian frontier. Given this expectation, French planners established new requirements to defend the Franco-Belgian frontier and further strengthen the effectiveness of the French counter-attack force. Plan 16 (1909), prepared under the guidance of Vice President of the Superior War Council General Victor Michel, thinned out and extended the French Army's initial concentration points all the way to the English Channel. This elongated defensive posture required increasing reliance on French reserve forces, as well as a willingness on France's part to accept the risks of ceding the initiative to Germany and accepting a more protracted war. A protracted war, according to Michel, would introduce an additive benefit of undermining Germany's requirement to defeat France quickly before Russia's full mobilization. The republican right was so hostile to Michel's proposal to integrate active and reserve forces that they succeeded in having Michel replaced with Joffre.[214]

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[213] ibid. As a formatting note, the French General Staff designated numbers to denote sequential revisions of war plans. The literature varies between Roman and Arabic numerals when reference French war plans – I use Arabic numerals for consistency.
[214] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 12-14, Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, 315.

Joffre and his planners redesigned the operational approach more to French officials' satisfaction, as we shall see. Joffre did not believe that the German Army could mount a significant offensive that could extend deep into Belgium, while simultaneously defending Alsace-Lorraine and Eastern Prussia. Plan 17 (1913) thus re-concentrated France's five field armies into designated assembly areas in Northeast France and identified options for the initiation of immediate offensive operations. Joffre's operational approach incorporated flexibility mechanisms that enabled the wartime commander to tailor the offensive after the direction of the German attack becomes known.[215] The wartime commander could elect to direct the offensive westward to the north or south of Germany's fortifications near Metz and Thionville, and/or northwestward through Belgium and Luxemburg.[216]

Theory of Victory

While the plan's specificity on the factors discussed above (mobilization and concentration) was theoretically beneficial, it lacked specificity on other theoretically important factors. Most importantly, Plan 17 contained no explicit theory of victory. A key reason for this was the General Staff's preoccupation with offensive doctrine, reflected most clearly in Joffre's Plan 17 commander's intent: "Whatever the circumstances, it is the Commander in Chief's intention to advance with all forces united

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[215] Levy, "Organizational Routines and the Causes of War," p. 198.
[216] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 38, Hart, *First World War*, 53.

to the attack of the German armies."[217] Numerous prominent historians that have

analyzed French war planning conclude that the planners naively treated the *offensive a

outrance* – a tactical concept – as the primary strategic and operational objective and an

end in itself.[218] SR Williamson, for example, describes Plan 17 as "the virtual incarnation

of the *offensive a outrance.*"[219]

To be fair, French planners' preoccupation with offensive doctrine (which was

shared at a lesser extent by many German and British planners) was not completely

unreasonable. It was based in part on widely-held expectations that modern societies and

states were too fragile to wage a prolonged war of attrition. If protracted wars were

unwinnable, then war planning should logically produce options that generate

opportunities for quick, decisive victories. This logic constitutes a sort of theory of

victory, but it is insufficient without any accompanying guidance on what French Armies

should do if the initial offensive failed to bring about the desired decisive battle, or if the

desired decisive battle did not lead to a resolution of the broader war.

French war planning produced no contingency provisions to account for the

possibility of a protracted war. We know, for example, that the General Staff (like its

German and British counterparts) devoted little attention to wartime production of

artillery munitions, based on the assumption that the existing pre-war supply would be

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[217] S.R. Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy, 1911-1913," in Paul Kennedy, ed. *The War Plans of the Great Powers* (Boston: Routledge, 2014), p. 147.

[218] Historians that make render similar criticisms of French planners' application of tactical offensive doctrine at the strategic level include Doughty, "France," p. 174; Strachan, *The First World War Vol 1*, p 188; and Douglas Porch, "French War Plans, 1914: The 'Balance of Power Paradox,'" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 1 (2006): p. 118-119.

[219] Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy," p. 145-6.

adequate. The General Staff also avoided planning for more extensive employment of France's sizable reserves and colonial army troops. The active duty Army would bring the war to a successful conclusion before these troops would be ready to participate.[220] The plan was thus incomplete and as one prominent historian characterizes it, was just "[a] scheme of mobilization and concentration, rather than a prescribed narrative for the campaign."[221]

One reason for the lack of any non-offensive options was the alignment between a purely offensive war plan and the French Army's organizational interests. Jack Snyder convincingly argues that an offensive plan advanced the General Staff's bureaucratic interests by supporting the justification of a standing, active-duty force with relatively long service obligations. The General Staff could claim, in other words, that the alternative model of active-reserve integration was unsuitable because reserves lacked the morale and/or readiness to participate in an offensive plan.[222] Pre-war planning can thus produce undesirable outcomes, in terms of wartime military effectiveness as I have characterized it. When planning staffs privilege bureaucratic interests or are staffed with naïve planners, then the more systematic planning is, the worse the outcome becomes.

Resource Sensitivity

Some evidence suggests that the French General Staff at least believed it was practicing resource-constrained planning. The General Staff calculated the French

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[220] Hart, *First World War*, 52, Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 34-36, 41.
[221] Porch, "French War Plans," p. 118.
[222] Snyder, *Ideology of the Offensive*, 50-54.

Army:German Army force ratio at about even. Joffre thought Germany could field 870,000 active duty troops in a crisis, and would concentrate 695,000 of these in the west to face France, and 175,000 in the east to face Russia. The French Army could concentrate about 700,000 trained and equipped active duty troops giving France rough parity with Germany. The British Expeditionary Force could potentially add up to an additional 150,000 troops. Joffre's confidence in these assumptions was evident by the way he assured the Russians without ambiguity in 1913 that the French Army was now ready to "commence offensive operations on the eleventh day after mobilization."[223]

Despite the General Staff's demonstrative intentions to practice resource constrained planning, it produced a plan that was not executable by the French Army. This is most evident by our *post-hoc* knowledge of the plan's failure at the Battle of the Frontiers, 8-21 August 1914, which I explain later. The pre-war French General Staff lacked this *post-hoc* knowledge but they were (or should have been) aware of at least three *ex ante* factors indicating Plan 17 required more combat power than France possessed.

The first was the erroneous nature of their pre-war assumption that German reserves lacked the readiness to participate in offensive operations. The German Army did intend to employ reserves from the onset and as a result to execute a stronger and wider right-wing enveloping maneuver than France expected. BH Liddell Hart

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[223] Porch, "French War Plans," 136; Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 35, 39-40, quote is from Doughty, "France," 165.

characterizes the error as a "double miscalculation - of force and place."[224] The General

Staff should have recognized the error, as it was in possession of captured German

documents indicating Germany's intention of integrating active and reserve forces.[225]

Jack Snyder argues that the General Staff insisted on the un-reliability of German

reserves for parochial reasons. If the republican left discovered Germany could employ

reserves in offensive operations, then this precedent would strengthen the republican

left's arguments to integrate French active and reserve units by discrediting the

conservative right's argument that French reserves are incapable of conducting complex

offensive operations.[226]

The second related factor was the General Staff's reticence to employ their own

reserve forces in the initial French offensive. This was particularly the case after Joffre

was appointed as Chief in 1911. Upon assuming office, Joffre adjusted the war plan to

"sideline" 25 reserve divisions that were previously allocated to participate in initial

offensive operations by re-missioning them to secondary tasks such as patrolling the

Franco-Italian border.[227] He furthermore abandoned his predecessor's "demi-brigade"

system which integrated active and reserve forces.[228] Plan 17 was resource

unconstrained, in other words, by virtue of not using the reserve forces that were

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[224] Hart, *First World War*, p. 52. According to Hart, The French General Staff calculated the maximum
strength of the initial German Army offensive at 45 divisions but Germany actually fielded 83 divisions
including reserves in August.
[225] Snyder, *Ideology*, 46, 48.
[226] ibid, 53.
[227] Porch, "French War Plans," p. 120.
[228] Robert A. Doughty, "French Strategy in 1914: Joffre's Own," *The Journal of Military History* 67, no. 2
(2003): p. 437.

available rather than by virtue of setting military objectives that eclipse the forces available. This is not something for which my theory accounted.

The third factor is an idea associated with the *offensive a outrance* that morale was a substitute for material firepower. This assumption is incompatible with resource-constrained planning. The General Staff could, in other words, justify any resource shortfall by claiming that morale could compensate. For example, in January 1914 Joffre approved a study that indicated the French Army's 75mm artillery cannons could adequately counter Germany Army's larger-caliber artillery cannons. He admitted in his memoir that the study was overly optimistic and that he approved the study "for reasons of morale."[229]

In summary, French war planning was moderately resource unconstrained because France's war plan required more combat power than the French Army possessed. That is, barring the early integration and offensive employment of French reserves which the General Staff refused to consider and saw as a threat to the Army's bureaucratic interests and traditions.[230] To justify a resource unconstrained plan, the General Staff consciously or unconsciously adopted an erroneous belief on German Army strength, and another erroneous belief in the potential for morale to substitute for material French Army strength.

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[229] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 32.
[230] Snyder, *Ideology*, Chapter 2.

Civilian Oversight

At least four features of the French state created the ingredients for effective civilian oversight of French military organizations, including the General Staff.[231] France vested complete authority and responsibility for military affairs – including on matters pertaining to the appointments and dismissals of the Chief of the General Staff – into a powerful civilian War Minister.[232] France also employed two committees to formulate defense policy. The Superior Council of National Defense (*Conseil Superieur de la Défense Nationale* CSDN) chaired by the President and comprised of the Premier, Minister of War, Minster of Foreign Affairs, and other civilian officials was a forum to coordinate "all questions relating to national defense." The Chief of the General Staff was required to consult with the CSDN on the "establishment of new strategies."[233] The Superior War Council (*Conseil Superieur de la Guerre*, CSG), chaired by the civilian War Minister and comprised of senior military officers approved all changes to war plans and all other issues "able to affect the constitution of the army and the manner in which it would be employed."[234] The War Minister and all other War Office and Army civilian and military officials were also subject to legislative oversight including by the Army Budget Committee and the Senate Army Committee.[235]

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[231] By way of contrast, Imperial Germany had no analogous state features for oversight of the German Chief of the General Staff. Additional comparative analysis is provided in Chapter 7.

[232] Although general officers were sometimes appointed to fill this position (see Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 6-10), they are still political appointees. Only those that civilian leaders deemed reliable were appointed.

[233] Doughty, "Joffre's Own," p. 441.

[234] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 7.

[235] British General Staff, *Handbook of the French Army 1914*, (London: Battery Press, 1995), p. 126.

With these oversight mechanisms in place, French civilian officials vacillated between strategically useful and detrimental instances of oversight of war planning. In some instances, they provided the kind of planning guidance that I have theorized should translate into increasing wartime military effectiveness; however, in other instances both sides of the political spectrum used oversight mechanisms to advance their domestic agendas related to the optimal relationship between the military and the state. The instances of strategically useful oversight, in other words, were at times "sacrificed to the need to score [political] points on the opposition" which is not something for which my theory accounts.[236]

On the positive side, French civilians provided strategically beneficial guidance on the issue of Belgian neutrality. Joffre believed that the best option for a French offensive was one requiring the violation of Belgian and Luxembourg neutrality. The flat terrain and lack of fortifications in Belgium and Luxembourg, according to Joffre, set the optimum conditions to achieve a decisive maneuver battle between the French and German armies. By contrast, the fortified areas in Alsace and Lorraine, and the complex terrain in the Ardennes Forest, did not. During a January 1912 CSDN meeting, Joffre explained the operational advantages of the routes traversing Belgium and Luxembourg. The President of the French Council of Ministers Joseph Caillaux quickly declared, "Not one French soldier will put a foot on the soil of Belgium if the Germans respect the treaties [of neutrality]."[237]

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[236] Porch, "The French Army," p. 194.
[237] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 19.

The Caillaux government fell shortly after this meeting. Joffre seized the

opportunity to energetically raise the issue again with Caillaux' successor Raymond

Poincarè, who much to Joffre's disappointment affirmed the constraint on the grounds

that this would incentivize Belgium to side with Germany, and Britain to stay neutral.[238]

Joffre received this guidance prior to designing what would become Plan 17, and the lack

of an option for an immediate attack through Belgium in Plan 17 proves that he

responded to and complied with the guidance.[239]

On the negative side, the highly politicized civ-mil environment tempted both

sides to use the military as a political cudgel against the other, which "splinter[ed] the

army's ability to plan and coordinate."[240] For example, civilian officials' reticence to

accept a centrally controlled, cohesive military establishment led them to design and

sustain a War Ministry bureaucracy with blurred lines of authority. Coherent schemes of

wartime requirements were impossible to achieve in this bureaucratic setting. With no

single senior military official vested with authority to make decisions, debates over

budgets and modernization persisted endlessly. This was a key factor in the French

Army's inability to establish and implement a program of investment for heavy artillery,

which would prove costly in the war that was to come.[241]

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[238] Doughty, "Joffre's Own," p. 439-440; Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy," p. 138.
[239] Joffre did admit in his memoirs that he deliberately misled superiors by concealing his intentions beyond the locations of the concentration points to prevent "meddling of the government in military operations." (Doughty, "Joffre's Own," 429) So this makes a clear finding that he complied with political guidance questionable. In any case, French civilian officials succeeded in August 1914 to restrain Joffre from any actions that would risk violation of Belgian neutrality so the civilians got what they wanted in the end.
[240] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, p. 364.
[241] Porch, "The French Army," p. 194, 210-211.

The General staff was also burdened with onerous administrative and bureaucratic requirements which consumed its bandwidth. War Minister Messimy observed that a typical general staff officer "checks charts, arranges numbers, draws up new rosters, reads and files circulars; he is very busy…but his imagination and judgement are never taxed" and argued that the government instrumentally imposed these requirements to "stunt the growth of the general staff by encouraging concern with minutia."[242] One other example of how domestic political agendas negatively impacted the French Army's pre-war effectiveness was a restriction against peacetime staffs for Army and Corps headquarters.[243]

External Collaboration

Inter-Agency Collaboration

Structurally, France's Superior Council of National Defense (CSDN), introduced above, created conditions for relatively high inter-agency collaboration. The CSDN's mandate was to "examine all questions requiring the cooperation of two or more ministerial departments." France's three military agencies, the Ministries of War, the Admiralty, and the Colonies, all had permanent cabinet-level seats on the Council, and contributed to the staffing of the Council's permanent secretariat.[244]

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[242] Porch, *March to the Marne*, p. 220-221.
[243] Porch, "The French Army," p. 211.
[244] Greenhalgh, *The French Army*, p. 14; British General Staff, *Handbook of the French Army*, p. 127.

The General Staff of the Navy held responsibilities analogous to the Army General Staff.[245] However, we have no evidence of any formal or informal coordination mechanisms between the two General Staffs, nor of any exchanges of liaison officers. The War Ministry's Superior Council of War did have provisions to invite members of the Admiralty to participate in meetings related to coastal defenses[246], but I found no evidence of Admiralty participation in these meetings. The two agencies did jointly develop a scheme to ensure prompt transportation of French Army troops participating in colonial missions from Algeria and Morocco back to France in the event of war with Germany.[247] This scheme then incentivized the Admiralty to pursue a division of labor agreement with the British Admiralty where Britain agreed to be responsible for securing the North Sea, English Channel, and Atlantic Ocean; and France agreed to secure the western Mediterranean. But beyond these initiatives relating to colonial forces, the literature provides no evidence of more routine consultations or army-navy staff talks or army-navy joint plans.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs grew more frequent when Joffre was installed as the Chief. Shortly after assuming office, he initiated a formal assessment of Plan 17, including an assessment of relevant political and diplomatic factors. In July 1911, the General Staff delivered a memorandum to War Minister Messimy detailing relevant political factors that would influence the redesign of the plan.[248] During an October 1911 meeting of the Council on National Defense, Joffre and

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[245] British General Staff, *Handbook of the French Army*, p. 419.
[246] ibid, 130.
[247] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 39.
[248] Schmitt, "French Plan XVII," p. 213.

Messimy pleaded for guidance on political-military issues requiring clarifications. Foreign Minister Justin de Selves reluctantly agreed to convene "informal conferences between representatives of the War Ministry and the Quai d'Orsay." The collaboration that followed focused on a range of issues including on the nature of France's commitments to Russia and Britain, and on the scenarios that French officials would support the violation of Belgian and Luxembourg neutrality.[249]

The General Staff's inter-agency outreach stimulated French diplomats to action in February 1912. They tactfully queried British officials on how they might respond to a violation of Belgium by France or Germany. The outcome of these Anglo-French diplomatic engagements was un-substantive because British officials dodged the questions, hoping to maintain flexibility.[250] But the fact that the engagements took place is evidence that interagency collaboration produced meaningful actions and that the Foreign Office was willing and able to support the General Staff's pre-war planning efforts.

Multinational Collaboration

The French General Staff's collaboration with the British and Russian General Staffs on war planning was extensive. France's memory of its lack of allies during the 1870-1 Franco-Prussian War helped stimulate the collaboration.[251] France ultimately succeeded in securing arrangements with Russia and Britain for military-to-military

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[249] Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy," p. 136-7 quote is on p. 137.
[250] ibid, p. 139-140; Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 21.
[251] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 5.

collaboration and followed through on these commitments; as a result, the outcome was significant in terms of elevated collective readiness.

France pursued and Russia agreed to a Military Convention in 1893 which established a common commitment to bring about a situation where "Germany has to fight at the same time in the west and east."[252] The French and Russian General Staffs convened at least nine planning conferences between 1900 and 1913 focused principally on the design and coordination of a simultaneous offensive. France succeeded during these staff talks of persuading Russia to steadily accelerate its planned offensive, ultimately achieving a 1913 Russian commitment to attack on the fourteenth day of mobilization.[253] France countered with a commitment to concentrate its Armies into northeast France by tenth day of mobilization and then to initiate the offensive on eleventh. To coordinate decision making associated with the combined plan, the General Staffs set up wireless communication links in 1909 and then incrementally improved the sophistication of this communication network afterward.[254]

Pre-war Franco-Russian collaboration on war planning culminated with French President Raymond Poincarè's July 1914 trip to Russia to consult on readiness in the event that the simmering Balkan crisis should escalate into a general European War. During these meetings, Poincarè confidently committed to "cooperat[ing] with Russia to

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[252] Doughty, "France," 146.

[253] France's influence over Russia was underwritten by extensive loans and aid including for railroad construction to the Russians to elevate their readiness and persuade them to commit to an offensive as early as possible. Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy," 135, 146.

[254] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, 23-24; Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy," 135.

prevent any intervention in the internal affairs of Serbia."[255] The Russo-French staff talks

over the preceding decade had to have been pre-condition for Poincarè's confidence and

for the credibility of Poincarè's commitment to France's most important ally.

France's second would-be ally in the First World War was Britain.[256] France had

strong incentives to bring about frequent and substantive military-to-military

collaboration with Britain during the pre-war years. French military planners knew that

the British Expeditionary Force could add up to 150,000 troops to counter Germany in

the western front, which would tip the balance from what the General Staff assessed as

rough parity in numbers to a clear advantage. Furthermore, and more broadly, France

saw Britain's navy and potential for mobilizing substantial numbers of troops as a kind of

insurance policy for a protracted war.[257] France's desire to draw Britain into a future

war, along with France's awareness of the possibility that Britain might remain neutral, is

reflected by a frequently-cited remark by French General Ferdinand Foch to his British

counterpart General Wilson: "It doesn't matter what you send us. We only ask for one

corporal and four men, but they must be there right at the start. You will give them to me

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[255] We will see that this communications infrastructure proved valuable during July 1914 crisis coordination. See Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 47; Joseph Jacques Césaire Joffre, *The Personal Memoirs of Joffre, Volume 1;* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), p. 117-8.

[256] France and Britain completed an Entente Cordiale in 1905 focused on establishing spheres of colonial influence in Africa and thereby mitigating the risk of mutual interference in each other's colonial affairs (See "The Entente Cordiale Between the United Kingdom and France, 8 April, 1904" accessible at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/entecord.asp). The Entente Cordiale was therefore not directly related to the initiatives that followed to collaborate on mutual preparedness for a potential future war with Germany. Given the initiation of staff talks shortly afterward, however, it set the foundation.

[257] William Philpott, "Plus qu'un « simple soldat » : la France et la perspective d'un soutien militaire britannique avant 1914," *Revue historique des armées*, no. 264 (September 15, 2011): p. 15, 37.

and I promise to do my utmost to get them killed. From that moment I will be at ease since I know that England will follow them as one man!"[258]

France's objective of drawing Britain into a future war with Germany influenced the behavior of French civilian and military officials. The French Ambassador in London regularly advocated through diplomatic channels for "unofficial communications between [the] Admiralty and War Office and the French Naval and Military Attachés [to discuss]…what action might advantageously be taken in case the two countries found themselves in alliance in such a war."[259] These diplomatic engagements led to the initiation of increasingly common planning conferences, attendances at each other's training maneuvers, and routine collaboration with each other's attaché offices.[260]

Bilateral planning with Britain influenced French war planning in three significant ways. First, it provided France with an important source of credible information regarding British intentions. This was particularly important, as we have seen, on the issue of Belgian neutrality. British Brigadier General Sir Henry Wilson provided French military officials with unambiguous warning in November 1912 that France should not be the first to violate Belgian neutrality. This led Joffre to finally abandon his preference for attacking through Belgium and commit to an offensive into Alsace-Lorraine. Second, Plan 17 had a secret Annex addressing employment of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The applicability of this annex was contingent on British decision making, as

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[258] Keith Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 86.
[259] Samuel R. Williamson, *The Politics of Grand Strategy Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914*, (London: Ashfield Press, 1990), p. 74.
[260] Philpott, "Plus qu'un « simple soldat »," 32-40

France had no assurances that Britain would intervene with land forces, and if they did how quickly and where the deployment would focus. But to account for the possibility of a deployment of the BEF, the sensitive and closely-held Annex prescribed a concentration of the BEF on the left flank of the French Armies and synchronized the timing in significant detail to correspond with French mobilization and concentration plans. And third, as mentioned earlier, the British navy agreed to a division of responsibilities with the French navy where British were responsible for the English Channel, North Sea, and Atlantic Oceans, and French responsible for Mediterranean.[261]

Strategic Education

The French General Staff provided specialized education to aspiring staff officers. France established its *Ecole de Guerre* staff academy in 1876 as part of its strategy to raise military effectiveness in light of the failures of the Franco-Prussian War. Emulating Germany's *Kriegsacademie* model, the *Ecole de Guerre* recruited candidates from the population of French Army Lieutenants and Captains and subjected candidates to an entrance examination. Those that passed the entrance examination undertook a two-year initial training course. The General Staff then designated graduates as 'general staff officers' and alternated them between assignments in French Army units and the General Staff.[262]

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[261] Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy," p. 143, Porch, "The French Army," p. 201; Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 39-40.
[262] Porch, *March to the Marne*, p. 39-41.

The specialized education provided by the *Ecole de Guerre* was un-rigorous, at least in terms of advanced strategic training. The entrance examination principally tested one's rote memorization abilities. Courses focused more on clerical procedures and "nuts and bolts of military administration" than on strategy. The focus on administration reflected the broader trend already discussed above which Douglas Porch calls "[t]he bureaucratization of the general staff."[263]

In 1911, the *Ecole de Guerre*, to its credit, did experiment with a more rigorous and competitive one-year course – the *Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires* (English translation is Center for Higher Military Studies) – for more senior general staff officers. The curriculum was much more focused on strategy, and it intended to produce cadre to staff and employ upper-echelon major units. But the *Ecole de Guerre* then suspended the *Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires* after just one year because the French Army was reticent to accept the opportunity costs of taking these officers out of the troop commands and general staff assignments.[264] The belated and brief rise and fall of the *Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires* thus supports a conclusion that the General Staff did not place much emphasis on advanced strategic training.

Another indicator of a lack of rigor in French military education was a 1905 republican initiative to deliberately lower military educational standards as a way of undermining military professionalism in the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair. Then-republican leader Alfred Messimy argued to the French legislature that "an officer needed

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[263] ibid, p. 219-221 (quotes on p. 220 and 221, respectively).
[264] British General Staff, *Handbook of the French Army Handbook*, 163; Porch, *March to the Marne*, 223

no more than a good primary education." Broader republican anti-militarism initiatives

had the impact of lowering the prestige of military service; as a result, the talent pool of

potential *Ecole de Guerre* attendees was lower than it could have been.[265]

A final indicator of a lower emphasis on advanced strategic training was the

appointment of Joffre as Chief of Staff. Joffre was not a staff academy graduate and did

not have experience on the General Staff. Many argue that his principal qualification was

his non-aristocratic roots and religion.[266] Others claim that the appointment of an under-

qualified Chief of Staff was part of the Left's strategy of preventing a competent,

centrally controlled military establishment.[267]

Summary – French Pre-War Planning Practices

Table 4: French Pre-War Planning Practices

War Planning Practice	**Emphasis**
Specificity	Medium
Resource Sensitivity	Medium
Moderate Civilian Oversight	Medium
External Collaboration	Medium
Strategic Education	Medium

[265] Porch, *March to the Marne*, p. 83-88 (Messimy quote is on p. 83)
[266] Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes," p. 131, Greenlagh, *The French Army*, p. 15.
[267] Porch, *March to the Marne*, p. 217.

Table 4 summarizes the extent to which the French General Staff adopted each of the theorized planning best practices. I measure the emphasis that the French General Staff placed on each planning practice on a three-point scale (high, medium, low).

Discussion – Impact of French pre-war planning practices on wartime military effectiveness

The Relationship Between French Pre-War Planning Practices and Wartime Strategic Military Effectiveness

French pre-war planning had some positive and negative influences on strategic military effectiveness. On the positive side, and in contrast to German war planning, it did not lead to a requirement for the French armies to violate Belgian neutrality. We have seen that this feature of Plan 17 was controversial during the pre-war years. Joffre and his military planners were not fans of it. But the General Staff's collaborative pre-war planning practices and civilian officials' oversight of planning led to a pre-war outcome where the strategic objective of securing British support took precedence over tactical and operational factors. This outcome supported French civilian officials' ability to effectively manage the July-August crisis, at least relative to other states examined in this dissertation.

In other ways, however, Plan 17 was out of synch with French civilians' approach to managing the July-August Crisis. Plan 17 offered national decision makers a single course of action: to concentrate forces in northeast France and then attack. If the war

plan alternatively offered a range of options, such as offensive and defensive ones, then there would have been a higher likelihood of the availability of an option that more closely fit civilian officials' preferences.   Furthermore, Plan 17 required an immediate, overt, and swift mobilization and concentration of French armies into northeast France.[268] This feature undercut the goal of appearing to act in self-defense because overt mobilization was seen as provocative in this era. So in these respects, France achieved strategic military effectiveness in spite of Plan 17 including through civilian officials' success in intervening against (altering) Plan 17's early overt mobilization requirements.[269]

A final point has to do with how Plan 17's lack of rigor and specificity indirectly supported strategic military effectiveness. During pre-war development of Plan 17, we know that Joffre responded to the constraint against planning for an attack through Belgian by watering down the plan.[270] If Joffre would have alternately adopted a more systematic approach (as say, Germany did), then a more prescriptive war plan might have tied civilian decision makers' hands. Civilian leaders might not have succeeded, in other words, in intervening against a more prescriptive war plan and in countering military

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[268] Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, p. 49-50.

[269] Civilian officials' strategic patience was particularly notable because it went directly against Joffre's strenuous requests to deploy initial forces to occupy the concentration points. During the last week of July, Joffre forcefully sought authorization to deploy designated forces to secure the concentration points. Poincarè and Messimy repeatedly denied Joffre's request until finally granting partial authorization on July 30 but with the heavy caveats: keep all French military forces out of a ten-kilometer buffer zone along the border, and to avoid using any railroads to remove any perception that France had initiated mobilization. For more details see Joffre, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 122-123.

[270] This was already mentioned, but Doughty characterizes the plan as just "[a] scheme of mobilization and concentration, rather than a prescribed narrative for the campaign." See Doughty, "French War Plans," p. 118. Joffre also admitted in his memoirs that he deliberately misled superiors by concealing his intentions beyond the locations of the concentration points to prevent "meddling of the government in military operations." See Doughty, "Joffre's Own," p. 429.

officials' more persuasive objections. In summary, there was some indirect benefit to strategic military effectiveness that came from a relative lack of pre-war planning specificity and rigor. My theory does not account for this.

Discussion – Relationship Between French Pre-War Planning Practices and Wartime Operational Effectiveness

French pre-war planning had both positive and negative influences on operational military effectiveness during the July-August crisis and during the initial encounters with the German Army up until the Battle of the Marne. We will see that the positive influences were ironically indirect: the relative lack of pre-war planning rigor appears to have enhanced the French armies' ability to adjust to wartime realities. In other words, the lack of the burden of a detailed plan that had been developed before those wartime realities were knowable appears to have been a good thing. SR Williamson finds that the offensive doctrine school eschewed detailed planning, preferring instead to maximize flexibility for wartime commanders according to the situation.[271]

Conversely, the narrow aspects of Plan 17 that were rigorous negatively influenced operational effectiveness. This makes logical sense because we have seen that those narrower and more rigorous aspects were predicated on faulty pre-war assumptions that the French General Staff adopted to advance their pre-war institutional interests.

Plan 17's specificity relating to mobilization, concentration, and initial offensive operations gave us a theoretical expectation that the French Army would demonstrate

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[271] Williamson, "Joffre Reshapes French Strategy," p. 145-6.

higher operational effectiveness during these prescribed phases of the campaign. This expectation held for mobilization and concentration but did not hold for the prescribed attack into Alsace and Lorraine. French armies participating in that attack were quickly defeated at great cost. We have seen that the pre-war assumptions relating to the attack, including on the strength of German defenses and on the superiority of the offense, were severely flawed. The outcome of pre-war planning – especially the prescribed offensive into Alsace and Lorraine – proved to be as well.

Plan 17's non-specificity beyond the mobilization, concentration, and an initial attack phases gave us a theoretical expectation that the French Army would display relatively low operational effectiveness in those subsequent campaign phases. This expectation proved erroneous as the French armies effectively adjusted off-script after the failed pre-planned attacks at the Battle of the Frontiers. The lack of detail in the French war plan appears to have set Joffre up to effectively call these audibles.

The General Staff's resource un-constrained planning practices gave us a theoretical expectation of impaired operational effectiveness. This expectation held with the failures of the French offensives during the Battle of the Frontiers. A more resource-constrained planning approach would have probably led to a more defensive war plan that better integrated France's considerable reserves.[272]

French civilian officials' extensive oversight of pre-war planning gave us a theoretical expectation of enhanced strategic military effectiveness. This expectation held, given French civilian officials' achievement of their goal of generating a perception

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[272] Porch, "The French Army," p. 200.

that France must fight on the basis of self-defense. The lack of a requirement to violate Belgian neutrality was a significant factor in achieving this goal, as was the lack of rigor associated with Plan 17 which in turn allowed French civilians to prioritize strategic over operational objectives during the July Crisis. On the other hand, pre-war civilian oversight motivated principally by domestic political factors also impaired the French Army's readiness. This second impact was not accounted for in my theory and therefore unexpected.

Pre-war collaboration between the General Staff and French government agencies, and also with Russia and Britain led to theoretical expectations of high strategic and operational effectiveness. This expectation also held given civilian leaders' achievements of their goal, mentioned in the preceding paragraph, of appearing to act on the basis of self-defense. Pre-war multilateral collaboration contributed positively to securing the wartime support of Britain and Russia, which in turn enhanced operational effectiveness.

In summary, the evidence leads us to question the theorized advantages of highly specific, detailed, and systematic pre-war planning. In the French case, the reverse appears to offer more explanatory power. Less systematic pre-war planning turned out to produce more advantageous wartime outcomes than more systematic war planning. This unexpected insight makes some logical sense since we know that the pre-war planning the French General Staff did do was built upon flawed assumptions on the strength of the German Army, and on the inherent suitability of offensive doctrine in all circumstances.

Pre-war civilian oversight over planning, as well as collaboration between the General Staff and external stakeholders, appear to have had beneficial impacts on wartime military effectiveness. These beneficial impacts are accounted for in my theory and so the French case empirically supports them. The impact of France's approach to pre-war military education on military effectiveness is not clear. But Joffre's sacking of fifty French general officers in August and early September, 1914,[273] suggests that the French Army's leader development strategy was not in synch with wartime requirements.

Overall, we can conclude that the French Army's pre-war planning and wartime experiences suggest that the utility of systematic planning has real limits. Indeed, the case suggests that systematic planning can under some circumstances produce counterproductive outcomes in terms of military effectiveness. More civilian oversight, external collaboration, and strategic education would have likely enhanced the utility of French pre-war planning. So a final takeaway is that the French General Staff would have been better off limiting its pre-war planning activities to those that are effectively supported and constrained by civilian oversight, external collaboration, and strategic education.

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[273] Hart, *The First World War*, p. 57.

CHAPTER SIX: BRITAIN

"[I]t is problematic, and perhaps misleading, to speak of British war plans before 1914."
– Keith Neilson[274]

This chapter continues the work of chapters 3 through 5 in testing the theoretical framework proposed in chapter 2 by examining the case of pre-war and early wartime Britain. It starts with an explanation of contextual factors that had important influences on the British pre-war planning experience and military effectiveness. Then the chapter explores British strategic and operational military effectiveness from July-September 1914. The third part turns to explaining the British General Staff's pre-war planning practices, which we will see were relatively flexible and subject to significant scrutiny by civilian officials as well as non-military British agencies. The last part is a discussion of the relationship between pre-war planning practices and strategic and operational military effectiveness.

Overall, I find Neilson's quote above accurate. Britain did not have a war plan analogous to the French and German plans. French and German war plans determined peacetime readiness generation strategies and prescribed detailed procedures for wartime mobilization, concentration, and force employment. British planning produced much less

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[274] Keith Neilson, "Great Britain," in Hamilton and Herwig, eds., *War Planning 1914*, Chapter 6, quote on page 175.

deterministic outcomes, although the British General Staff was trending, as we shall see, toward emulation of certain French and German war planning practices. Nevertheless, British officials demonstrated, in many dimensions, relative competence in managing the July-August crisis and in navigating initial wartime adjustments in August-September, as we shall also see. Though in other dimensions, the British General Staff's ongoing emulation process led to some of the more negative influences on military effectiveness that we observed in the French and German cases.

Contextual Factors

Two contextual factors had important influences on British pre-war planning and wartime military effectiveness during the periods under scrutiny: the relative breadth of British strategic commitments and ongoing evolutions in the British Army's roles and missions after significant military reforms initiated in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Britain's Global Commitments

Britain faced more uncertainty than its European great power counterparts in understanding the likely character and location of its next war. Pre-war planners had to contemplate at least three categories of contingencies.[275] The first was third party

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[275] For a fuller discussion on Britain's pre-war grand strategy, see J. McDermott, "The Revolution in British Military Thinking from the Boer War to the Moroccan Crisis," in Paul Kennedy, ed., *The War Plans of the Great Powers* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman, and Mark Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Chapter 5; and

interventions or indigenous uprisings and rebellions by segments of the 412 million people[276] populating British colonies worldwide. The second was a long-standing threat of invasion of the British Isles by a major European power.[277] The third was an attack on Britain's security interests in Europe, including a substantial disruption to the balance of power which had benefitted Britain since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. Within the third category, Britain was particularly sensitive to preventing a continental hegemon from gaining control of the channel ports in Belgium and Holland, and to preventing a great power that could challenge the Royal Navy's supremacy at sea.

Given the diversity of these threats, the British General Staff could not get by with just one specific, detailed war plan. It required a library of more flexible, inter-related contingency plans. The plans were inter-related because in reality, Britain's next war would include some aspects of all three contingency categories. Furthermore, the British Army was relatively small so whenever Britain committed forces to a contingency in one category, such Imperial defense, then it would be left vulnerable in Europe and at home.[278] Conversely, if Britain intervened with ground troops in Europe, then adversaries could exploit British vulnerabilities in the colonies. Britain thus had to

John Gooch, "The Weary Titan: Strategy and Policy in Great Britain, 1890-1918," in Williamson Murray, Alvin Bernstein, and MacGregor Knox, eds., *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Chapter 10.

[276] Angus Maddison, *The World Economy A Millennial Perspective*, Development Centre Studies (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2001), https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264189980-en, p. 97.

[277] David G. Morgan-Owen, *The Fear of Invasion: Strategy, Politics, and British War Planning, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[278] During the South African War, which consumed most of the resources of the British Army and thus left Britain vulnerable elsewhere and especially in India, one British official (Balfour) characterized Britain as a "third-rate power with interests that are conflicting with and crossing with those of the great powers in Europe." See Neilson, "Great Britain," 177 (quote); McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," 106.

seriously consider the implications of having to fight more than one war at the same time.[279] All of these factors complicated the formation and implementation of a clear national security strategy, including the priorities associated with pre-war planning.

Another factor that complicated prioritization of pre-war planning focus areas was Britain's versatile arsenal of national power. The Royal Navy, second to none worldwide, and the various arms of the British Army including the newly-created British Expeditionary Force and Territorial Forces, gave decision makers flexibility. Britain thus possessed a 'de-facto' range of options that made it was even more difficult to predict what actual wartime needs would emerge. For example, Britain could prepare for invasion by principally focusing the Navy on intercepting invaders at sea, or by employing army elements to defeat raids on land, or some combination of the two. The likelihood of army-navy integration could have logically led to integrated pre-war planning. But, the General Staff and Admiralty were not well integrated, as we shall see. The two planning staffs, for example, produced rival war plans to address German aggression in Europe.[280] The versatility of threats, combined with the versatility of tools, created relatively high uncertainty regarding the actual wartime mission requirements that would emerge and as a result, pre-war planning was naturally un-rigorous.

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[279] The United States in the post-Cold War era faces a similar situation. U.S. defense strategies in the 1990's, for example, were based upon a requirement to have sufficient military capacity to simultaneously fight two major theater wars.

[280] The General Staff's plan for war with Germany called for employing the BEF in France and Belgium; The Admiralty's plan called for employing the BEF in amphibious raids, in conjunction with a blockade and economic warfare. I analyze the implications of these two incompatible war plans later in the context of civilian oversight and external collaboration.

Britain's Evolving National Military Strategy

Traditionally, Britain avoided a powerful military establishment and a large standing Army. One liberal politician helped explain why by indicating a general hesitance to creating a "general military policy…that would create a field for itself." Many British officials in the nineteenth century saw risk in developing "a body of officers…who sit apart and cogitate about war." Britain neglected the Army and knew it was neglecting the Army and this seemed to work well throughout its years of splendid isolation.[281]

The approach worked well, that is, until 1899 when an uprising occurred by two groups in British South African colonies, necessitating a relatively large-scale and closely coordinated British Army response. In the ensuing South African War,[282] Britain's prior neglect of British Army institutions proved costly. Britain had no war plans, and not even adequate maps, that were relevant to the situation. After some initial setbacks by the British force garrisoning the South African colonies, Britain replaced the commanders and sent a larger expeditionary force which regained ground through scorched earth tactics. But the Boers then transitioned to guerilla warfare strategies which protracted conflict for two more years before the warring parties agreed to a truce. The War Office freely admitted that "through neglect and misunderstanding, it had never formed the machinery necessary to comply a comprehensive strategic scheme for action within the Empire." A civilian official argued in 1900 "that our present military organization is

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[281] McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 100.
[282] Also known as the Boer War

seriously defective, and that its continued existence in its present form constitutes a serious danger to the Empire."[283]

Britain's South African War experience, combined with an increasingly potent threat of a Russian military intervention into Britain's India colony, was, in a sense, similar to France's Franco-Prussian war experience. A costly military setback sufficiently dampened anti-militarism leading to and accentuating a recognition that the preceding strategic improvisation model was no longer tenable. British officials finally acceded to the creation of a general staff and Committee on Imperial Defence (CID) starting in 1902.

The post-South African War political consensus that made the creation of the British General Staff possible was not, however, sustained through Britain's inaugural decade of planning leading up to the outbreak of the First World War. Residual interest in reverting to Britain's traditional foreign policy meant that the General Staff as an institution lacked the foundation that Germany, and to a lesser extent, France (particularly after France's 1911 national revival), had. Due to this incomplete acceptance, two general trends emerge. First, although the British General Staff undertook increasing amounts of pre-war planning activities, much of it had little practical effect. Non-military officials and even some military officials did not take it seriously. Second, the General Staff strived, with increasing affect over time, to elevate its stature and influence relative to the Navy and to advocate for an alliance-type commitment to supporting

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[283] For a fuller analysis on how the South African War illuminated organizational deficiencies, Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p. 20-29; and McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking." The first quote is from Gooch, p. 21, The second quote is from McDermott, p. 100.

France in the event of German aggression. As the General Staff made progress toward its goal of eventually actually emulating the German General Staff, it thus began to generate some of the negative dynamics observed in Germany (and to a lesser extent France) with respect to its impact on military effectiveness.

Discussion – Contextual Factors

In summary, a relative diversity of evolving British national security threats and opportunities meant pre-war planners faced relatively higher uncertainty about the likely character of their next war. Amidst this uncertainty, many British officials preferred to improvise their national military strategy. This seemed to work in the nineteenth century, but the costly and frustrating 1899-1902 South African War experience compelled Britain to design and implement reforms that were then unevenly implemented during the decade leading up to the First World War. As these reforms were implemented, British Army officials increasingly advocated for more planning focus to be dedicated to develop options to intervene in a future war in Europe, as this contingency supported the British Army's parochial preferences. When the war broke out, British pre-war planning practices remained in evolution toward closer emulation of those of the great powers in continental Europe, but the process was incomplete and vestiges of the traditional model were still very much present.

Britain Military Effectiveness, July-August 1914

Strategic Military Effectiveness

I measure a Britain's strategic military effectiveness by the extent to which Britain's war planning efforts produced outcomes that supported crisis decision making relating to the question of whether Britain would participation in the war. The plan could have supported crisis decision making, for example, by offering a range of options rather than a point solution, and by virtue of how pre-war civil-military debates and coordination could have generated consensus and familiarity with relevant strategic factors, thereby reducing the pressure associated with time-constrained, hectic crisis decision making. Conversely, pre-war planning activities could have impaired decision making by constraining flexibility that would have otherwise been available at the time of need.

Britain declared war on Germany on August 5, following over a week of debate and crisis decision making that is now well documented in the literature. The outcome of this debate, as we shall see, was far from pre-ordained. As late as August 1, a strong majority of the cabinet opposed any British military role "unless Britain itself were attacked."[284] For my purposes I am interested in the influence that British war planning had on the outcome of these discussions. In particular, I am looking for evidence indicating that British pre-war planning constrained strategic flexibility, or incentivized sub-optimal options on the basis of military necessity. We will see that the evidence shows that the war plan was not a significant factor.

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[284] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 342.

On August 2, Germany delivered an ultimatum to Belgium demanding no interference with imminent German military operations on Belgian territory. This ultimatum caused a shift in British officials' proclivity toward armed intervention.[285] Sir Edward Grey thus took the occasion to pay a visit to the French Ambassador in London to explain the shifting sentiment. For our purposes, the interesting point raised by Grey in this conversation was that if Britain entered the war it would principally employ its land forces for coastal defense and colonial defense.[286] Grey's statement shows that he was not at all committed to the profoundly different approach prescribed by the war plan – that of an immediate deployment of the entire BEF to France.

The following day, Grey made a formal statement to the House of Commons to make the case for British entry into the war. His statement lacked any reference to the operational priorities established by the war plan, such as the need for immediate mobilization and deployment of the BEF if the BEF is going to make any difference. Nor was there mention of the precarious military balance between the French and German armies, which the General Staff believed a BEF commitment would decisively shift in the Entente's favor. Instead, Grey focused on how Britain retained full freedom of action, and would not deploy the BEF at all to Europe until considering the security of the British empire. Then he explained the impact of the war on British interests including security of sea lanes and maintenance of a balance of power in Europe, and how failing to

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[285] Gooch, *Weary Titan*, p. 297-298.
[286] Annika Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War: Diplomatic and Military Documents* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 536; Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 355.

uphold British obligations regarding Belgian neutrality would destroy Britain's credibility.[287]

During a series of cabinet meetings on August 4 and 5 focused on whether Britain should enter the war, Neilson shows that "the details of British war plans did not figure largely…The Cabinet's deliberations about entering the war centered on foreign policy and domestic politics."[288] This is particularly notable because the cabinet's delay in approving war measures resulted in an inability of the BEF to maintain their pre-determined deployment timeline relative to the French Army's mobilization.[289] Civilian officials took their time to deliberate and did not make hasty decisions based on the war plan requirement to deploy the BEF as soon as possible. Unlike Germany, Britain would not let mobilization schedules undercut crisis decision making process.

The one prewar planning-related requirement that some historians cite as an influential decision factor was the 1912 Anglo-French Naval Agreement which committed the British navy, under defined but ambiguous circumstances, to protecting France's northern and western coasts in exchange for a reciprocal French naval commitment to protect British interests in the Mediterranean sea. The cabinet on August 2 determined that Britain should honor the agreement under the circumstances and issued a warning to Germany that Britain would not stand idle should the German Navy threaten the security of the English channel or the French coasts. Despite this seeming concession to war plan requirements by reluctant civilian officials, Williamson convincingly argues

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[287] Mombauer, *Origins*, p. 547-559; Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 359.
[288] Neilson, "Great Britain," p. 191.
[289] Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 205.

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that Britain would not have tolerated German navy activities in the English Channel regardless of whether the Anglo-French Naval Agreement existed.[290] War plans, in summary, did not materially influence, and certainly did not constrain, British strategic decision making in the July-August crisis. This leads to an assessment of moderate to high British strategic effectiveness.

Operational Military Effectiveness

I measure Britain's operational military effectiveness by observing and evaluating instances of last-minute war plan refinements between June 29 and August 5, as well as instances where operational commanders adjusted to actual wartime conditions after British combat operations began on August 5.

War Plan Adjustments During the July Crisis (June 29-August 5)

A defining feature of Britain's pre-war plan was the requirement to immediately deploy of the BEF to France under the logic that any BEF support to the French Army needed to happen immediately to make any difference. We will see that during the July-August crisis, many War Office officials and operational commanders carefully scrutinized the logic associated with this requirement and some even advocated for abandoning it all together before the war even began.

On August 3, the British Army issued mobilization orders to units throughout the British Isles. These orders did not specify the purpose of the mobilization nor include

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[290] Gooch, *Weary Titan*, p. 297; Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 354-355.

any instructions on where or whether to embark onto transports. There was thus nothing automatic about initial British Army actions. On August 4, the acting War Minister even declared that the optimal use of the BEF might not be committing it to fight in France, but rather to support the training and organization of a much larger British Army.[291]

This pattern of flexible thinking continued to define civil-military discussions during the August 5-6 war councils convened to develop a military strategy. None of the war council participants hesitated to advocate for substantial changes to the pre-war plan.[292] The first war council started with remarks by Prime Minister Asquith focused on comparing the situation that "had constantly been considered" during pre-war planning with the actual situation facing Britain, noting differences such as Italy's neutrality and unexpectedly strong resistance by Belgium forces in the face of German attacks. The BEF's Commander-In Chief, Sir John French, then briefed the pre-war plan in just two sentences: "the pre-arranged plan to meet this situation had been that the Expeditionary Force should mobilize simultaneously with the French and concentrate behind the French at Maubeuge by the [fifteenth] day of mobilization. The intention had been for it to move eastwards toward the Meuse and act on the left of the French army against the right German flank." French concluded his presentation with a recommendation to deploy the BEF to Belgium instead to operate independently from France – the very option that General Staff planners had instrumentally derided since at least 1908.[293] Sir John French's proposal for an alternative plan might have actually received a green light,

[291] Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 203; Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 363.
[292] Gooch, "Weary Titan," p. 299.
[293] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 96-97.

regardless of its contrast with the preceding decade years of planning, however the Navy claimed that the maritime routes to the Belgian ports were too dangerous. General Douglas Haig similarly advocated for a substantial change to the war plan by delaying the BEF deployment by three months. In summary, British civilian and military officials demonstrated no hesitance to immediately abandon the pre-arranged plan – and this illustrates that Britain's philosophy of caveating its planning with the principle that strategic decision making would always be predicated on the circumstances at the time of need was real.[294]

Despite the demonstrated willingness by most military and civilian officials to assess the actual wartime situation, and if necessary abandon the pre-war plan altogether, Britain ultimately did deploy four of the six BEF divisions to serve as an adjunct to the French Army. The smaller than expected BEF picked up the pre-arranged deployment timeline and occupied the concentration points that were prescribed in the pre-war entente plan. Some historians thus conclude that the pre-war plan did ultimately constrain British operational flexibility, in similar ways that we saw with Germany and to a lesser extent France. These historians point in particular to General Wilson's behind-the-scenes efforts during the first week of August to convince and even manipulate British politicians and French diplomats to authorizing the pre-arranged plans. The

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[294] The actual minutes from the August 5-6 war council meetings are in Mombauer, *Origins*, p. 582-590 quotes on pages 582 and 583; Sir Douglas Haig recorded his views in a memorandum to Haldane, see Mombauer, *Origins*, p. 569; Williamson provides a summary and analysis of the war councils in *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 364-366; Hew Strachan draws a different conclusion than mine, claiming that the 'war councils' were not a cabinet meeting, but an 'ad hoc committee convened by the Prime Minister and dominated by the army" and resulted in an agreement to deploy BEF to France, this is militarization. See Strachan, *To Arms*, 204.

acting war minister later reflected that the principal reason that drove the decision "was that the plan for co-operation by our Expeditionary Force on the left of the French Army had been worked out by the two Staffs in great detail, and this could not be said of any other plan."[295]

Despite the fact that Britain ultimately selected an option closely resembling the point solution prescribed by the war plan, the records of Britain's July-August strategic and operational debates show that the outcome of British pre-war planning did not tie British officials' hands. They ultimately selected a course of action that resembled the pre-war plan, but might have adopted another course. Pre-war planning activities, which as we will see were collaborative and subject to strong civilian oversight, supported principled and effective civil-military dialogue in a compressed timeframe.

Operational Adjustments After First Contact (August 5-Battle of the Marne)

Like other armies participating in the earliest stages of the First World War, the British Army discovered that wartime conditions were profoundly different than those that they anticipated. The factors that complicated or enabled the British Army's wartime learning and doctrinal optimization experiences have been sufficiently evaluated elsewhere.[296] For my purposes, I find that the General Staff's pre-war planning

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[295] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 363-367 quote is on p. 365.

[296] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*; Aimée Fox, *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Murray, *Military Adaptation in War*, Chapter 3.

experiences did not in themselves constrain the British Army from beginning to adjust to wartime realities.

The British Army's demonstrative ability to adjust its war plan is in part attributed to Herbert Kitchener's appointment as the War Minister the day after Britain's declaration of war. Kitchener, a career military officer until his appointment as War Minister, had not served on the General Staff nor had any exposure to or role in the development of the British war plan. His appointment to lead the War Office, particularly on the eve of war, therefore further reflects the willingness on Britain's part to consider fresh operational perspectives. Unlike the General Staff planners, Kitchener anticipated that the war would escalate into a costly, years-long campaign. He thus advocated immediately for the build-up of the British Army to "an army of millions." He successfully retained two of the BEF divisions from immediate deployment to support this process, and then called for 100,000 volunteers on August 7, a move that was met with a great public response. He furthermore withheld, over Sir John French's objections, sending too many replacements to the BEF so as to retain quality individuals to fill out the new armies. Before the first shots were fired, Kitchener was thus actively designing a longer-term strategy built on profoundly different assumptions as the war plan was.[297]

The BEF deployment from British to French ports between August 12 and 17 went according to plan and, importantly, was kept discreet and thus shielded from any

[297] Roy A. Prete, *Strategy and Command: The Anglo-French Coalition on the Western Front, 1915* (Ithica: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), p. 62-68 quote is on p. 68.

interference by the German fleet.[298] The size of the BEF deployment, as has already been

discussed, was smaller than anticipated by pre-war planners, due to Kitchener's

determination to retain sufficient organizational capacity to support the build-up of the

new armies. Due in part to the General Staff's last-minute refinements of the deployment

scheme, the smaller BEF made up the time that had been lost due to the cabinet's

relatively lengthy deliberations.[299] The BEF's concentration was complete by August 20,

early enough to allow for participation in the initial meeting engagements with the

German First and Second Armies attacking on Germany's right wing.

Once concentrated, BEF commander Sir John French did not have to wait long

until he realized the pre-war plan, which prescribed an Anglo-French offensive, was

untenable. The French Fifth Army, adjacent to the BEF's right flank, commenced its

post-Battle of the Frontiers retreat without informing the BEF. The BEF was a relatively

small force, and was in fact intended by Britain to remain operationally autonomous, so

Sir John French could make relatively nimble adjustments. For example, on August 30,

he announced his intentions to Joffre that he would consolidate his forces in the rear for

ten days before resuming operations.[300]

British forces' proclivity to adjust is particularly notable because General Henry

Wilson and the bulk of his staff from the Department of Military Operations, had

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[298] Hart, *First World War*, 54; Neilson, "Britain," p. 194-195.

[299] Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 206.

[300] Note that Kitchener subsequently overruled Sir John French's announced intention to take a ten-day operational pause in the rear, instructing French to instead prepared to participate in the Anglo-French counterattack that was emerging and that would become known as the Battle of the Marne. For an account of the BEF's participation in the Battle of the Frontiers and the Entente's subsequent retreat, see Beckett, *The British Army*, p. 212-220 and Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 220-224 and 249-250)

deployed to form the core of the BEF's General Headquarters (GHQ).[301] The General

Staff's pre-war planning experiences, in other words, would be an important operational

factor, at least relative to the other combatants.

Summary – Strategic and Operational Military Effectiveness

Table 5: British Military Effectiveness

Strategic Military Effectiveness	High
Operational Military Effectiveness	Medium

Table 5 shows my assessment of British operational and strategic effectiveness

during the relevant timeframes specified above. Each aspect of military effectiveness is

measured on a three-point scale (high, medium, low).[302]

Pre-War Planning Practices

Specificity

British pre-war plans were relatively non-specific but trending toward greater

specificity as the General Staff's planning processes matured and as Anglo-French

combined planning progressed over time.

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[301] Beckett, *The British Army*, p. 211.
[302] See chapter 2 for the standards I associate with military effectiveness.

Adversary

The diversity of threats to Britain's vital national security, and by extension the relative ambiguity as to who it would face in its next war, has already been discussed. I thus expected to find little specificity on adversaries in British war plans. However, during the decade leading up to the First World War, a war with Germany steadily emerged as the top planning priority.[303] There is some strategic logic to this development. Germany's aggressive foreign policies, including its actions during the 1905[304] and 1911 Moroccan Crises, and its naval modernization initiatives, stimulated British concerns. These factors support a characterization of the General Staff's prioritization of planning for a German war as a rational response.

On the other hand, the veracity and nature of the threat posed by Germany was very much an open question. German naval modernization was principally a matter for the Admiralty and Foreign Office. Britain furthermore had created its General Staff to address issues it encountered in a colonial war, not to address the Germans. A costly British contingency commitment to deploy ground troops into Europe would do nothing to address, and it could even exacerbate, the colonial defense shortcomings experienced in the South African War. A continental commitment, in other words, is a distraction

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[303] Neilson, "Great Britain," p. 181-182; McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 107-108; Porch, "The Weary Titan," p. 294-296.

[304] For more details on Britain's reaction to Germany's behavior during the First Moroccan Crisis, see Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 159-167; and Neilson, "Great Britain," p. 181.

from colonial defense requirements. The General Staff's increasing focus on Germany as opposed to other British security interests thus remains puzzling.

One explanatory factor was that Germany was the most convenient opponent for the General Staff, and one that promised to advance the General Staff's organizational interests. Some Britons argued that the Army's principal mission should be to prepare and provide forces for the defense of India from Russian aggression, principally through defenses on India's northwest border. The General Staff was hostile to this idea because it would relegate the Army to a force provider role for a mission that, according to the General Staff's assessment, was intractable and unwinnable. If the General Staff was going to rise in prestige, a continental war against Germany, with allies, was a much better scenario. The General Staff ordered a 1905 war game at the Camberley Staff College that 'proved' British Army participation would be a deciding factor in a Franco-German war. These military initiatives to elevate the German threat all occurred prior to the First Moroccan Crisis. The simultaneity of Britain's increasing threat perceptions vis à vis Germany with the creation of the British General Staff was thus no coincidence.[305]

The 1905 First Moroccan Crisis war scare, and a related political power vacuum emanating from the fall of the Balfour government, gave the General Staff a clear opening to further elevate the German threat. A December 1905 General Staff memorandum on British war plan requirements listed an intervention in Europe to counter German aggression. The General Staff then successfully advocated through a

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[305] McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 101, 104, 108; Neilson, "Great Britain," 180-181.

Committee on Imperial Defense (CID) sub-committee for military-to-military talks with the French General Staff which the newly-arrived Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, endorsed. The resulting Anglo-French planning conferences, which naturally exposed the General Staff to France's acute threat perceptions vis-à-vis Germany, likely pushed the General Staff even further down the path of thinking about a continental intervention. All of this advocacy generated what one prominent historian characterizes as an "anti-German, Eurocentric military strategy...by January 1906...and [the army] established a strategic dominance over the Admiralty which was to last throughout the First World War."[306]

In summary, Britain's principal pre-war plan named Germany as the adversary, even though the threat from Germany was relatively opaque and the optimal British course of action not clear. Furthermore, the existence of the threat was in part engineered by the General Staff for its own bureaucratic interests.

Operational Approach

Along with uncertainty about whom they would face and where, pre-war planners faced uncertainty over what kind of war they would be asked to fight. Colonial defense, homeland defense, counterinsurgency, or large-scale conventional wars were all plausible possibilities. These uncertainties led to plans that did not prescribe pre-determined, specific courses of action or operational approaches and instead declared that the course of action chosen would be contingent on the circumstances that would emerge at the time

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[306] McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 110, 111.

of need. That said, as the General Staff's planning processes matured, the operational approach reflected in its war plan for intervention into Europe gradually gained increasing specificity.

Another factor that incentivized less detailed pre-war planning, or at least did not incentivize detailed planning, was the unsystematic ways that the British parliament authorized major changes to the defense budget. For example, the War Office gained authorization in 1906 to create six British Expeditionary Force (BEF) divisions without any substantive parliamentary debate or War Office explanation of how the six divisions satisfy any war plan requirements. Richard Haldane, the Secretary of State for War at the time, secured political support to establish the BEF through vague statements regarding overseas contingencies and colonial defense requirements and a caveat that he simply could not "calculate…according to an abstract standard for the requirements of the Empire. (sic) What the requirements for the defence of the Empire are depends, to a large extent, at all events on policy." Haldane continued by tying the proposed BEF force structure to a so-called Cardwellian Principle, which arbitrarily calls for equality between the size of the standing army in the British Isles the forces deployed in the empire.[307] The War Office had little incentive to demand more rigorous war plans as long as it could get by with these kinds of ambiguous justifications.

Beginning in 1910, in part due to the appointment and arrival of Brigadier General Henry Wilson as the General Staff's Director of Military Operations (DMO), the specificity associated with the General Staff's anti-German plan suddenly began to

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[307] Williamson, *The Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 90-94 quote is on p. 94.

increase. General Wilson declared upon arrival that he was "very dis-satisfied with the state of affairs in every respect. No real arrangements for concentration and movements of either Expedy. (sic) Force or Territorials. No proper arrangements for horse supply…A lot of time spent in writing beautiful and useless minutes. I'll break all this up somehow."[308] Wilson was determined to gain consensus and authorization for a plan to automatically deploy the entire BEF upon the outbreak of continental war to serve as an appendage to the French Army. He worked feverishly on the justification and gained his opportunity at an August 23, 1911, CID meeting (I discuss this meeting further later).[309] With this authorization in hand, he "conceived it to be my most important duty to continue this work and so far as human foresight was possible to complete a scheme which would be at once useful & practical."[310] Wilson's plan eventually reached a high level of detail particularly on mobilization and transport. Details down to individual soldiers, rail cars, vessels were worked out to the minute.[311] These details, while important to the feasibility of a war plan, did little to enhance strategic flexibility. Under Wilson's guiding hand, British pre-war planning practices began to transition toward the generation of single, detailed, point solutions.

In summary, the relative lack of specificity in British War Plans makes sense given Britain's need to maintain strategic flexibility for a range of contingencies and given Britain's lack of 'automatic' mutual defense commitments. But the increasing professionalization of the General Staff was nudging the plans toward higher levels of

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[308] Gooch, "The Weary Titan," p. 289; Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 87.
[309] Gooch, "The Weary Titan," p. 290.
[310] Jeffery, *Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 86.
[311] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, Chapter 13.

specificity, regardless of policy guidance. The more specific and rigid operational approaches advocated by Wilson served the General Staff's institutional interests of elevating the requirements associated with a future continental war with Germany. By grudgingly accepting a General Staff system, Britain enjoyed some benefits, but also accepted new risks in terms of the tendency for more influential military organizations to orchestrate the elevation in influence of military imperatives at the expense of strategic goals.

Theory of Victory

Britain's strategic objective in a European general war was to prevent a continental hegemon, especially one that would control Belgium or Holland and be within striking distance of the British Isles. The clarity and defensive nature of this objective allowed the General Staff to design a relatively straight forward theory of victory comprised of dual objectives, one short-term and one long-term. In the short term, Britain needed to deploy the entire BEF as soon as possible to shift the military balance in the Entente's favor and thus prevent a quick defeat of France. Any delays in the BEF's deployment, even if the delays would buy time to increase the size of the BEF, would undercut this short-term objective. In the longer term, the Royal Navy in cooperation with the French Navy could achieve naturally slower-accumulating but deciding effects through blockades and economic warfare to force the defeat of Germany.[312]

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[312] Neilson, "Great Britain," p. 184; Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 199.

Resource Sensitivity

British pre-war planning was technically resource informed, at least in terms of

how the General Staff designed the plan to tip the military balance on the Western Front

in the Entente's favor. During General Wilson's briefing at the August 2011 CID

meeting (introduced above), he explained that the BEF's six divisions and one cavalry

division was optimally sized to prevent a quick defeat of the French Army. The German

Army, according to Wilson's assessment, would mount its main attack between

Maubeuge and Verdun. The maximum strength of the German main attack, based on the

capacity of the road networks which Wilson explained that he had personally

reconnoitered on his bicycle, was about forty divisions. The French Army, according to

Wilson, had the capacity to meet this main attack with thirty-seven to thirty-nine

divisions. The BEF's six divisions and one cavalry division thus could tip the military

balance such that a quick German defeat of France would become unlikely.[313]

On the other hand, British war planners failed to openly account for the possibility

that the war might not end quickly and therefore would require a much larger Army than

Britain possessed.[314] From this perspective, British war planning was resource

unconstrained.

What accounts for the lack of planning for the possibility of a protracted war?

One factor is, British pre-war planning appears to have been motivated at least in part by

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[313] Mombauer, *Origins*, p. 49-50.
[314] For critical accounts of the lack of British military power to back up their so-called 'Continental Commitment' see Kennedy, *The War Plans of the Great Powers*, p. 43; Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 200.

justifying the peacetime existence of the six standing BEF divisions. There is reason to doubt the validity of the persuasive math that Wilson used to convince the CID of the suitability of his plan (and by extension the principle that British war planning was truly resource-informed). The composition of the BEF, six divisions and one cavalry divisions, was determined several years earlier and as explained above, designed and justified without regard to any anticipated wartime requirements. Wilson himself, during his preceding tenure as the British Staff College Commandant, had criticized the design of the BEF on the grounds that "there was actually no military question to which the answer was six divisions."[315] Lastly, Wilson's math was based in part on French intelligence which we know now underestimated (potentially deliberately – see chapter 5) the German Army's strength based on the assumption that Germany would not employ reserve forces in offensive operations. These factors provide reason to believe that the plan briefed by Wilson to the CID was designed to create the appearance that the BEF was perfectly sized.

Another factor is that Wilson and his planning staff sought to use war planning as a mechanism to "support the argument in favor of military intervention."[316] But unlike most of its continental Europe counterpart states, Britain had an all-volunteer army. A larger Army would have required some form of compulsory service and this was not politically feasible.[317] Advocates for large-scale British participation in a continental war, including French and British military planners, simply needed to get Britain

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[315] Jeffery, *Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 86.
[316] ibid, p. 96 Footnote 52.
[317] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 303.

involved in the first place under the logic that Britain would then commit its tremendous resources. The British war plan seems to have been designed in some ways to do so. Wilson is said to have asked French General Foch how large a force Britain should send. Foch responded: "It doesn't matter what you send us. We only ask for one corporal and four men, but they must be there right from the start. You will give them to me and I promise to do my utmost to get them killed. From that moment I will be at ease since I know that England will follow them as one man!"[318]

In summary, the British pre-war planning was resource-informed in the strictest sense: the plan as it was written and briefed did not require more forces than Britain possessed. But Britain did not possess sufficient forces to participate in a protracted war contingency. And there is reason to believe that the British General Staff designed the plan simply to justify the forces that it had, rather than to satisfy actual operational requirements. Or worse – to increase the probability that Britain would entangle itself in future European wars and/or create political conditions in favor of compulsory service. This leads to an assessment that British war planning was moderately resource unconstrained and in some important ways, careless.

Civilian Oversight

British civilian officials exercised robust oversight of military planning. A relatively strong fear of militarism, as we have seen, historically left them reticent to empower military organizations to autonomously develop war plans. The South African

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[318] Jeffery, *Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 86.

War experience, along with continued evolution in the security environment toward multipolar competition, however, led many British civilians to a conclusion that they had to accept military institutions capable of relatively higher effectiveness. The ensuing reforms included carefully thought-out structures to ensure strong civilian oversight over planning. One was the Army Council, chaired by the civilian War Minister, created to "direct military policy, to foresee military requirements, and to frame the measures of organization" to prepare for war during peacetime.[319] Another was the CID, created to "deal with questions of National Defense, and foresee Imperial requirements."[320]

A frequently-cited illustration of strong British civilian oversight is the August 23, 1911 CID meeting (introduced above).[321] The purpose of meeting was to consider options for "giving armed support to the French" in the midst of the Second Moroccan Crisis war scare.[322] The Army and Navy each participated in the meeting by providing dueling war plan briefings that were incompatible with one another. The General Staff's plan included a requirement for the Royal Navy to transport the BEF to Europe immediately after the outbreak of a European conflict; the Admiralty's plan, by contrast, included a requirement for the BEF to conduct a series of amphibious raids along the Baltic Sea coast.[323] Participating civilian officials intrusively scrutinized both briefings,

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[319] Britain's Army Council was very much analogous to France's Superior War Council. Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 218.

[320] Ibid, p. 218; McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 110.

[321] Paul Kennedy cites this meeting as an example of how it was possible for Russia and Germany to have better restrained and controlled their General Staffs' pre-war planning activities in ways that could have proved beneficial in the July-August 1914 crisis. The outbreak of the First World War, in other words was not inevitable in light of rampant militarism. See Kennedy, *War Plans of the Great Powers*, p. 17-18.

[322] Mombauer, *Origins*, p. 47.

[323] P. Haggie, "The Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era," in Kennedy, ed. *War Plans of the Great Powers*, Chapter 5, p. 123.

but especially the Admiralty's. The Prime Minister characterized the Navy's plan as "puerile" and "wholly impractical," and then dismissed the Navy's claim that it could not provide transports to support the General Staff's plan.[324] A substantive discussion then ensued on the optimal size of the BEF intervention (four versus six BEF divisions), and whether the BEF should initially concentrate in France or in Belgium.[325] These issues would all re-emerge again in July-August 1914 so the earlier August 1911 substantive civil-military dialogue in theory would have helped support the later time-constrained crisis decision making.

While British civilian oversight over the General Staff's planning activities was relatively strong, it was not perfect. For example, the Anglo-French planning conferences that occurred with increasing frequency between 1906 and 1914, were kept secret from most civilian officials. Only Foreign Secretary Edward Grey and a few other high-level civilians were aware of their occurrence.[326] Secrecy was necessary, according to Grey, because certain British politicians would otherwise require lengthy debate, potentially preventing the conferences from occurring in the first place. And Grey had no intention of repeating the recent predicament that was the 1905 Second Moroccan Crisis war scare, in which French and British officials realized they lacked any combined plans

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[324] Jeffery, *Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 97.
[325] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 187-193; Mombauer, *Origins*, p. 47-52.
[326] In 1911, the planning conferences were disclosed to the full cabinet (but not parliament or the general public) after suspicious cabinet members objected and all subsequent planning conference then required "sanction" of the full cabinet. See Neilson, "Great Britain," p. 187 and Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 312.

and were thus completely unprepared to collectively defeat the German offensive that they thought at the time was imminent.[327]

External Collaboration

Inter-Service Collaboration

Until 1911, we have substantial evidence of competition, but little collaboration, between the General Staff and the Admiralty. The Navy was historically the dominant service owing to its natural leading role in homeland defense and in supporting and securing colonies.[328] But the Esher reforms and increasing Army professionalism after 1902 allowed the General Staff to gain ground on the Navy, and once it made some progress it wanted more. This competition, including through perpetual debates over organizational responsibilities associated with homeland defense, consumed significant intellectual bandwidth that could have otherwise been invested in more useful ways.[329] The CID was designed to enforce coordination on and reconciliation of inter-service friction points. However, the CID was more "a forum for the presentation of current military and naval strategies; it did not provide coordination of those strategies." The CID turned out to be a mechanism that exacerbated the friction points at least until 1911.[330]

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[327] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 368.
[328] Neilson, "Great Britain," p. 177-178.
[329] Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p. 20.
[330] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy,* 192-193, McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," 111-112 quote on p. 112.

The 1911 Second Moroccan Crisis war scare provided the impetus for civilian officials to finally intervene to address the army-versus-navy bureaucratic competition. Civilian intervention during the August 1911 CID meeting, in which the General Staff and Admiralty presented dueling war plan briefings, has already been discussed.[331] Two outcomes of that CID meeting were the ousting of Admiral John Fisher as the First Sea Lord and the appointment of Winston Churchill as the First Lord of the Admiralty. Fisher had during his six years leading the Admiralty purposely kept the Admiralty staff weak.[332] With Churchill at the helm, this quickly changed and collaboration quickly improved. Army and Navy senior leaders organized a 'high-level brigade' to informally coordinate joint plans across a range of topics. To address the previously intractable Army-Navy debates relating to the wartime movement of the BEF into Europe, a naval officer was appointed for the first time in 1912 as a liaison to the General Staff, and the British navy conducted a survey of French ports.[333]

In summary, prior to the 1911 Second Moroccan Crisis and the rise of Churchill as the First Lord of the Admiralty, inter-service competition was fierce. The 1911 war scare incentivized civilian and military officials to work more closer together and this took the form of improvements in the CID's ability to enforce and integrate joint planning improved greatly. Increasing inter-service collaboration over time was in part due to a steadily increasing threat perceptions vis à vis Germany and in part due to the rise of certain personalities such as Churchill.

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[331] Neilson, "Great Britain," 182-184.
[332] Haggie, "The Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era"
[333] For more on steady improvements in inter-service collaboration after 1911 see Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, 312-313.

Inter-Agency Collaboration

Two key mechanisms enabled relatively strong collaboration between the General Staff and the Foreign Office. The first was the CID's permanent secretariat, which Britain established to "c-ordinate (sic) foreign policy with actual military power by collating military advice with information from other departments of state and, in turn, ensuring that the Cabinet appreciated such advice." This is in theory a good thing, but McDermott continues by explaining that the secretariat was dominated by military officers and that most of the "memoranda for discussion came from that department."[334] Still, the General Staff memoranda that McDermott criticizes were important in coordinating issues with the Foreign Office. For example, one senior Foreign Office official – Sir Arthur Nicholson – extensively relied upon them to explain the War Office's position to his fellow diplomats.[335]

Britain also adopted a practice of establishing temporary sub-committees comprised of civilian and military officials to establish policy recommendations for emergent national security issues. For example, in 1908, the CID established a "sub-committee to determine general government policy on the employment of a military force in Europe so as to enable the General Staff to proceed more efficiently with their plans."[336] This sub-committee deliberated over eight months, considering the implications that a BEF deployment to Europe would have on imperial and homeland

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[334] McDermott, "A Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 103-105.
[335] Jeffery, *Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 94.
[336] Gooch, "Weary Titan," p. 287.

defense, and by considering alternatives to a BEF deployment including a blockade of

Germany. This sub-committee practice, for which Germany and France had no

analogous procedures, shows that inter-agency collaboration was strong.

Multinational Collaboration

We know that there was substantial collaboration between the British and French

General Staffs and Navies. The 1905 First Moroccan Crisis war scare led Grey to

conclude that the Army and Navy should begin discussing the possibility of British

support to France in the event of German aggression.[337] The General Staff was happy to

oblige, given their desire to elevate the status of war planning for intervention on the

continent, as opposed to defending India.[338] Between 1906-1910, the British and French

General Staffs met infrequently and came up with rudimentary plans relating to the size

of the BEF, general deployment timelines, and potential concentration points.[339]

Anglo-French military conversations became more systematic after the 1911

Second Moroccan Crisis war scare revealed the need for improvements in operational

detail and integration.[340] The crisis prompted the two General Staffs to work out more

detailed arrangements, including railway movement timelines between French ports to

the concentration points, and on logistics. SR Williamson sums up his detailed account

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[337] Neilson, "Great Britain," p. 181. See also Mombauer, *Origins,* p. 78 and 549 for Sir Edward Grey's description of the 1906 caveats Britain established with France establishing how the conversations would not bind or restrict British freedom of action.
[338] See Contextual Factors discussion earlier in the chapter and McDermott, "A Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 109.
[339] ibid, p. 113.
[340] Jeffery, *Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 92, 101.

of the post-1911 conversations as: "In short, the two staffs attempted to anticipate every conceivable problem involved in the establishment of the BEF along the Belgian frontier."[341]

There is controversy regarding if and how the Anglo-French planning conferences generated an alliance-type obligation for Britain to support France during future wartime circumstances. In the strictest sense, Britain had no obligation analogous to a mutual defense treaty with France. The terms by which Britain authorized the planning conferences in fact emphasized that the conferences did not imply any obligations. Grey re-emphasized this in frank terms to the French Ambassador in a 1912 letter: "[the conversations do] not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force."[342]

Some historians, however, conclude that Britain's attempts to contain French expectations were unsuccessful. BH Liddell Hart argues that the habits of mind developed during the Anglo-French staff talks, and of the "Europeanization of her military organization during the previous decade" led to an obligation and commitment to deploy BEF to France.[343] Christopher Clark finds that General Wilson in his leading role over the execution of the planning conferences "was not simply acting on instructions. He had his own views on Britain's military role in a future continental war and consistently pressed for a military confrontation…[creating a] widening discrepancy between British military planning and an official diplomatic stance."[344] In other words,

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[341] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 313-6, Jeffery, *Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 93.
[342] Mombauer, *Origins*, p. 78; Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 337.
[343] B.H. Liddell Hart, *A History of the First World War* (London: Cassell, 1970), p. 53.
[344] Clark, *The Sleepwalkers,* p. 53.

according to these accounts, through military channels Britain signaled to France that the British would commit the BEF in a Franco-German war. This signaling was dangerously misleading and countered actual British policy which stated that Britain would maintain a free hand. Britain eventually did intervene, but it might not have absent an implied or inadvertent commitment.

One last issue is what signaling effect, if any, that Britain intended the Anglo-French military conversations to have on Germany. Theoretically, the conversations could have produced a deterrent effect by signaling that Britain intended to intervene in future continental wars including through the deployment of the BEF.[345] Germany did in fact suspect the conversations were taking place based on its intelligence sources and through the monitoring of French press reporting. The knowledge led the German General Staff to adopt assumptions that the BEF would support the French Army. However, the British government's carefully crafted, continual, and consistent denials of its participation in Anglo-French staff talks left some significant ambiguity.[346] If Britain sought to create a deterrent effect then it would have used clearer signaling. More likely, British officials did not seek such a deterrent effect as we understand it now in the twenty-first century.

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[345] Jeffery, *Sir Henry Wilson*, p. 95.
[346] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 340-341.

Specialized Education

British General Staff officers received specialized education via the Camberley

Staff College, but this education was un-rigorous and did not include a significant

emphasis on promoting political-military strategic thinking.

The British Army established the Camberley Staff College in the nineteenth

century, and then after the South African War designated it as the institution responsible

to produce candidates for the new General Staff.[347] General Staff candidates attended

Camberley for two years. So in the strictest sense, the General Staff provided specialized

education. That said, the pool of staff college graduates remained very low in 1914: only

103 officers attended Camberley in 1914 and the entire British Army had only 908

officers with any staff training at all.[348]

In terms of rigor, the Camberley course was two years long, one year less than the

analogous courses overseen by the French and German General Staffs. Camberley

required applicants to take an entrance exam which appeared to have some rigor to it, as

it took place "over a 10-day period consisting of 18 three-hour papers." However, about

one quarter of all staff college entrants were exempt from the entrance exam, securing

entry by the alternative avenue of nomination by a prominent individual. Furthermore,

the Army usually struggled to produce sufficient applicants to meet the designated cohort

size so the utility of the entrance exam is unclear. The Staff College curriculum widely

varied year by year according to the commandant's philosophy. Depending on the year

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[347] P. M. Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2016), p. 20.
[348] Beckett et al, *The British Army*, p. 28, 210.

of attendance, students might receive instruction related to strategy and political issues, or more emphasis on detailed procedures and standardized thinking and regulations. Curiously, there is no evidence of any serious academic analysis of the British Army's experience in the South African War, which was the stimulus for the post-1902 increases in educational rigor in the first place.[349]

Two final points. First, attendance at the British Staff College was not career enhancing. Promotions in the British Army were principally earned through successful tours at the regimental level so a two-year course was a distraction for upwardly-mobile officers.[350] Second, the two most senior British Army officials in August of 1914, BEF Commander-in-Chief Sir John French, and War Minister Lord Kitchener, were not staff academy graduates and in Kitchener's case did not have any experience serving on the General Staff.[351] The rise of these two officials, without any staff college credentials, suggests that the British Army did not emphasize military education as an important component of senior leader resumes.

Summary – British Pre-War Planning Practices

Table 6: British Pre-War Planning Practices

War Planning Practice	Emphasis

[349] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, p. 267-268; Harris, *The Men Who Planned the War*, p. 25-27, 33 quote on p. 25.
[350] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*, p. 268.
[351] Holger H. Herwig and Neil Heyman, *Biographical Dictionary of World War I* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1982), p. 157-158, 207-208.

Specificity	Low
Resource Sensitivity	Medium
Moderate Civilian Oversight	High
External Collaboration	High
Strategic Education	Low

Table 6 summarizes the extent to which the British General Staff adopted each of the theorized planning best practices. I measure the emphasis that the British General Staff placed on each planning practice on a three-point scale (high, medium, low).

Discussion – Impact of Britain's pre-war planning practices on wartime military effectiveness

The Relationship Between British Pre-War Planning Practices and Wartime Strategic Effectiveness

British policy makers repeatedly emphasized to domestic and international audiences that they intended to base strategic decision making during future crises on the circumstances at the time of those crises. They demanded flexibility, in part due to the diversity of British national security interests and response options. Historically, one of the ways they ensured themselves of flexibility was by not authorizing pre-war planning to occur at all, and not following in the footsteps of continental European powers' ongoing emulations of the German General Staff. Britain's frustrating experience in the South African War, 1899-1902, and unpreparedness during the 1905 Second Moroccan

Crisis war scare, however, compelled civilian officials to accept a General Staff, and to authorize the General Staff to develop war plans and to closely coordinate those plans with France. Civilian officials accepted these unprecedented steps only with careful mitigations, including the establishment of the CID and careful and consistent caveats that the Anglo-French planning conference in no way implied that Britain had an 'automatic' alliance-type commitment to support France.

With regard to British strategic decision making relating to whether to enter the war, I found that civilian officials succeeded in retaining their flexibility. Pre-war planning activities had no impact, one way or the other, on British officials' debates over whether to declare war on Germany. British officials did not perceive Britain's participation in the Anglo-French army and navy conversations as an 'automatic' alliance-type commitment. Individuals within the General Staff, especially Sir Henry Wilson, probably succeeded in fueling some French expectations that Britain would support France following a German attack regardless of circumstances. But British policy makers were committed to retaining flexibility, and demonstrated this commitment during the first week of August even as the great power European continental powers commenced their mobilization schedules. Some say that the 1912 Anglo-French Naval Agreement was a factor that produced a sense of obligation, compelling British decision makers toward a vote for war, but others more convincingly argue that Britain would not have tolerated a German naval presence in the English Channel in any case. The British General Staff thus undertook pre-war planning without reducing political flexibility associated with the choice of entering the war or remaining neutral.

The only critique I can offer on British strategic effectiveness is the lack of consideration on the part of civilian officials of military advice to support the decision to declare war. They did not substantively consult with military experts until after war was declared. Too much consideration of military advice, admittedly, is detrimental to strategic effectiveness. We have seen, for example, that in Germany, military objectives, rather than strategic objectives, become the dominant decision factors (see chapter 4). However, there is an important role in military advice to support decision making as a less dominant factor to "[grasp] the full strategic ramifications of involvement."[352], particularly in an era like the early twentieth century when the character of warfare was undergoing rapid change. In other words, British officials might have gleaned important insight from military experts that would have supported a more well-informed cost-benefit analysis. This is to say, as long as British officials could cognitively nest the projected military costs and benefits within a broader strategic assessment.

The Relationship Between British Pre-War Planning Practices and Wartime Operational Effectiveness

In terms of operational effectiveness (i.e., the selection and adjustment of a military strategy after war was declared), British pre-war planning had both positive and negative influences. On the negative side, secrecy associated with the Anglo-French planning conferences precluded intrusive pre-war oversight and by extension (and consistent with theoretical expectations), contributed to an outcome of a war plan

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[352] Williamson, *Politics of Grand Strategy*, p. 362.

consisting of a single, point solution. The July-August 1914 crisis debates, however, revealed that civilian and military officials possessed demand signals for alternative options, such as the use of the BEF as a cadre to build a much larger British Army, or a deployment of the BEF to an alternative location such as Antwerp, Belgium. These alternative options ultimately were not chosen which may be attributable to the fact that they were not developed in as much detail as the war plan's option to immediately employ the BEF as an adjunct to the French Army. Less secretive and more inclusive pre-war planning practices would have probably revealed the demand signals for alternative options earlier, thus facilitating more pre-war focus on those alternative options, and potentially led to a different outcome in August 1914.

On the positive side, British war planning produced a detailed plan, carefully coordinated with the French General Staff, that supported rapid mobilization, deployment, and concentration of the BEF into France. Britain did not have a similar plan during the 1905 First Moroccan Crisis war scare, a predicament that Britain sought to avoid repeating by authorizing pre-war planning. British pre-war planning activities including the Anglo-French planning conferences thus produced what they were designed to produce. As a consequence, Britain's predicaments in 1914 were very different than in 1905.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

I started this dissertation by describing a simmering sense I developed during over decade of professional war planning experience. In short, contemporary military organizations do a lot of planning, but it never seems to be enough. I furthermore noted my sense that the Eisenhower theory – "Plans are useless but planning is indispensable" – has come to dominate U.S. military thought. As a result, if any counterproductive effects of systematic war planning exist, then military leaders and practitioners would be blind to them. I argued that if this suspicion is correct, then we urgently require a framework to help us understand the kinds of war planning practices that are most likely to contribute toward, and those that risk undermining, military effectiveness. My dissertation thus asks, does war planning making a difference in terms of military effectiveness? Is the Eisenhower theory correct?

Some key terms in the preceding paragraph such as 'counterproductive, beneficial, military effectiveness, and making a difference' are, of course, meaningful only on a relative basis according to a defined standard. Thus, for analytic purposes I articulated a standard by arguing that useful war planning processes must produce at least two outcomes. The first outcome applies to the strategic level: the production of a range of suitable options that support national-level, crisis decision making. The second applies

to the operational level: the creation of a useful framework that supports initial adjustments to wartime conditions that are unknowable ahead of time. War planning that does not produce these two outcomes is counter-productive.

I then formulated a conceptual framework centered on five factors that should, theoretically, increase the likelihood that pre-war planning produces the two desired outcomes: specificity, resource-informed planning, civilian oversight, external collaboration, and strategic education. My formulation of this conceptual framework was informed by the existing literature on war planning and military effectiveness, and by my own personal war planning experiences. The conceptual framework constituted an untested theory, so I then applied it as a conceptual lens to the 1905-1914 pre-war planning experiences of Germany, France, and Britain and then evaluated the impact of these experiences on subsequent events during in the July-August crisis and initial operational phase of the First World War. In doing so, I found empirical support for certain dimensions of my theoretical framework. I also came across some factors for which my theoretical framework did not account.

In the concluding chapter that follows, I present my findings, acknowledge the inherent limitations of these findings, discuss some theoretical and policy-relevant implications, and contemplate promising issue areas for future related research.

Findings

My broadest finding is that some pre-war planning practices can support military effectiveness; others can undermine military effectiveness. Taken together, and contingent on the validity of how I have characterized military effectiveness, the finding suggests that the Eisenhower Theory is under-specified. The Eisenhower Theory suggests that military organizations have a binary choice – to plan or not to plan – and that the correct choice is to plan as much as possible. My finding, however, suggests that military organizations have important, multifaceted choices regarding the kinds of planning practices they want to implement and those that are best avoided. The results of my empirical analysis are summarized in Table 7 and interpreted in more specificity in the textual analysis that follows.

Table 7: German, French, and British Pre-War Planning Practices and Wartime Military Effectiveness

	Germany	France	Britain
Pre-War Planning Practices			
Specificity	Medium	Medium	Low
Resource Sensitivity	Low	Medium	Medium
Moderate Civilian Oversight	Low	Medium	High
External Collaboration	Low	Medium	High
Strategic Education	Medium	Medium	Low
Total	2	5	5
Wartime Military Effectiveness			
Strategic Effectiveness	Low	Medium	High
Operational Effectiveness	Low	Medium	Medium
Total	0	2	3

Germany

The German General Staff's approach was the most specific, systematic, and in depth. The Eisenhower Theory would have thus predicted relatively high German military effectiveness at least on a probabilistic basis. However, during the July-August crisis and August-September initial military engagements on the Western Front, I assessed German military effectiveness as low. As we saw in Chapter Four, at the strategic level, after national leaders issued their 'blank check' to Austria-Hungary, they did not have a real choice about their response options. Military officials furthermore undercut attempts at last-minute crisis diplomacy and refused to respond to Kaiser Wilhelm II's demand for an eastern deployment option. At the operational level, the General Staff's war plan proved un-executable. The German Armies attempted nonetheless, and achieved some early successes, but the war plan ultimately failed.

German pre-war planning practices contributed to these outcomes. The General Staff undertook war planning without any requirement to explain or justify its approach to anyone. The lack of pre-war accountability over the General Staff established and protected the autonomy of the military establishment and allowed a-strategic organizational cultures to thrive. The General Staff was furthermore not inclined to coordinate the plan outside military channels. The lack of much strategic focus in the General Staff's professional education system simply reinforced these practices.

France

My assessment of France's strategic effectiveness was, by contrast, higher than Germany's. French civilian officials maintained control throughout the July-August crisis and, over the objections of the generals, produced a perception by key domestic and international audiences that France simply had no choice but to respond in self-defense to pre-meditated aggression by a would-be continental hegemon. The French Army also showed relative operational flexibility during the initial encounters with the German Army.

Consistent with my theoretical expectations, French pre-war planning practices contributed to France's relatively higher military effectiveness. Civilian oversight over pre-war planning helped civilians remain in control during crisis decision making, and it prevented General Joseph Joffre from planning for his preferred option for an immediate offensive into Belgium and Luxembourg. Pre-war collaboration with allies led to effective crisis coordination. Flexibility mechanisms reflected in the war plan enabled operational adjustments after first contact.

I also discovered some pre-war planning factors that constrained French military effectiveness. The character of French civilian oversight was, for example, not always strategically desirable. Domestic political factors such as the continuous, decades-long debate over the optimal relationship between the military and the state, undermined military cohesion. These domestic political factors furthermore incentivized the General Staff to adopt planning assumptions that would prove erroneous: the inherent superiority of the offensive, and the fundamental inadequacy of reserves to participate in offensive

operations. Both assumptions appear to have been intended (consciously or unconsciously) to protect the French Army from the republican left's proposal to create a citizen army, and by extension dismantle French military traditions. The negative impact of these domestic political factors was, ironically, mitigated by the General Staff's relatively less systematic approach to war planning.

Britain

I assessed Britain's strategic and operational effectiveness as the highest of the three cases. I also assessed Britain's pre-war planning practices as most closely resembling the practices I theorized as the ones that are most likely to enhance strategic and operational effectiveness. Another pre-war planning factor – the relative absence of rigor – appears to have generated a surprising effect: it led to relatively high political and operational flexibility. I also discovered a trend where increasing British Army professionalism brought with it the early stages of some of the war planning practices reflected in the German General Staff. If this professionalization process could have had some additional time to mature, then this trend might have proved more detrimental to wartime military effectiveness.

Implications

My findings complement, and hopefully add some new angles to, an implication that Hunzeker drew from his analysis of wartime learning on the Western Front:

"Although the US military can and should invest heavily in thinking about – and planning for – future wars, it should also be careful not to exaggerate its ability to predict with accuracy."[353] The General Staffs of the European great powers, along with the civilian masters they served, learned by September 1914 that the wartime utility they could derive from their pre-war planning experiences was limited at best and in some dimensions, negative.

Some of the General Staffs' war planning practices proved particularly counterproductive. I articulated an initial expectation, for example, that the more detailed and specific war planning is, the more likely it is to add value. It appears, after empirical testing, that this theoretical expectation was underspecified. The German General Staff's (and to a lesser extent, French and British General Staffs') prescription of detailed and specific operational solutions without a baseline theory of victory or clear flexibility mechanism was the beginning of error and a seed of the disaster that occurred in the Fall of 1914. This war planning outcome was consistent with Clausewitz's more generalized description of war planning:

"War plans cover every aspect of a war, and weave them into a single operation that must have a single, ultimate objective in which all particular aims are reconciled. No one starts a war – or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so – without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it. The former is its political purpose; the latter its operational objective. This is the governing principle which will set its course, prescribe the scale of means and effort which is required, and make its influence felt throughout down to the smallest operational detail."[354]

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[353] Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn,* p. 429.
[354] Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 579.

The German General Staff's tendency to isolate military activities from a broader strategic context left it with "something pointless and devoid of sense"[355] and this outcome contributed to escalation toward what would become by all measures, at that time, the costliest war in history. French and British planners, led by General Joseph Joffre and Brigadier General Sir Henry Wilson, tried to emulate the German approach. While the impact in the French and British cases was mitigated by civilian oversight and organizational inadequacies, it still mattered.

Another counterproductive outcome of the General Staffs' pre-war planning activities, this one more consistent with my expectations, was the tendency for military organizations' parochial interests to influence the success criteria reflected in their war plans. This tendency advanced the militaries' peacetime agendas but was detrimental to wartime military effectiveness. The German General Staff, for example, designed its war plan to serve as a demand signal for a larger army and, according to some accounts, a preventative war.[356] The French General Staff designed its war plan to undermine the republican left's intention of transforming the French Army into a citizen army.[357] The British General Staff designed its war plan to cement a requirement for a standing Army and for compulsory service.[358] None of these parochial goals were explicitly articulated

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[355] Ibid, 605.
[356] Craig, *Politics of the Prussian Army*, p. 257.
[357] Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, Chapter 2.
[358] McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 108.

in the war plans. Rather, the General Staffs disguised the parochial goals as what Carl

Builder terms as "masks of war."[359]

My analysis of the relationship between the General Staffs' pre-war planning

practices and wartime military effectiveness lends credibility to Sir Henry Campbell-

Bannerman's 1890 warning that if "a body of officers…who sit apart and cogitate about

war…could not find an adequate field in the circumstances of this country…there might

indeed be a temptation to create a field for itself."[360] Britain, as we have seen,

historically responded to Campbell-Bannerman's warning through improvisation, but was

eventually compelled to accept more systematic war planning. It did not take this step,

however, without incurring risk.

Conclusion

One could draw a conclusion from my dissertation that military organizations

seeking to maximize military effectiveness (at least in the ways I have defined military

effectiveness) should redirect their focus from systematic pre-war deliberate planning

activities toward developing leaders and organizations with optimal traits that enable

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[359] Carl Builder argues and shows that US military services produce strategies that contain "masks of war," which are parochial motivations disguised and justified in terms of national security goals. The military services, according to Builder, will not admit (or may not even consciously perceive) that they do this. He argues further that the most effective way to counteract this practice is not to attempt to impose cultural change from the outside, but to generate awareness within military organizations of how the practice is likely to lead to failure in war, and therefore the practice represents an existential threat the services' ability to attract future resources and remain relevant over the long term. See Builder, *The Masks of War*, p. 201-6.
[360] McDermott, "Revolution in British Military Thinking," p. 100.

adaptation. Such a conclusion would be consistent with many advocates of adaptation as

the principal solution to the impossibility of predicting the future.[361]

However, I would say that the more constructive and accurate conclusion is that

pre-war planning (or peacetime innovation, which has been studied more extensively)

and wartime adaptation are not distinct and certainly not competing paradigms. I have

tried to focus on the relationship between the two and hope to have illuminated some

relevant factors. This is important because no matter how appealing it sounds to focus

exclusively on adaptation, military organizations cannot adapt new weapons systems,

organizations, or interconnectivity overnight or under the demands of wartime

environments. Answering a soldier's question in Iraq, Secretary of Defense Donald

Rumsfeld argued that "As you know, you go to war with the army you have, not the army

you might want or wish to have at a later time."[362] Pre-war planning and wartime

adaptation are both, by themselves, necessary but insufficient. What is needed is a better

understanding of how particular pre-war planning activities might preclude the need to

radically optimize in wartime environments. I hope that I have helped shed some light on

this. More research, including additional empirical testing, is needed in the future.

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[361] For recent studies advocating for more focus on adaptation and less on prediction, see Hunzeker, *Dying to Learn*; Fox, *Learning to Fight;* David Barno and Nora Bensahel, *Adaptation under Fire: How Militaries Change in Wartime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) and Eric Wesley and Desmon Bailey, "Beyond Planning: Ensuring Mission Success even when Conditions Change," *Army* Vol 68, No 11 (November 2018). Theo Farrell advocates for operational improvisation (vice a top-down pre-planned operational approach) in "Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006–2009," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (August 1, 2010): 567–94. For a convincing dissent to Farrell see Harkness and Hunzeker, "Military Maladaptation."
[362] Eric Schmitt, "Iraq-Bound Troops Confront Rumsfeld Over Lack of Armor," *The New York Times*, December 8, 2004, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/08/international/middleeast/iraqbound-troops-confront-rumsfeld-over-lack-of.html.

I believe the U.S. military, whose relatively larger endowment of resources provides the opportunity to conduct war planning with little seeming opportunity cost, could learn from the German, French, and British early twentieth century experiences. Of the three states, the United States' current strategic situation most closely resembles Britain's. Yet, it is practicing war planning akin to the German General Staff. Greater awareness of the risks associated with systematic war planning is warranted. Joint planning doctrine persuasively articulates the potential benefits associated with war planning.[363] That same doctrine, however, lacks acknowledgement of the risks associated with certain war planning practices.

Given the pace of technological, political, and social change today, it is a safe assumption that in a future 'general war,' we will find ourselves at least as wrong as the military organizations analyzed in this project were, and the consequences promise to be even more costly. This assumption would probably hold even if we were to perfect pre-war planning. But at the very least, more optimal pre-war planning practices could ease the burden to some extent associated with strategic and operational adjustments that are inherent to the conduct of war.

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[363] U.S. Department of Defense, "Joint Publication 5-0 Joint Planning," 1 December 2020, Chapter 1.

APPENDIX 1: PRINCIPAL DATA SOURCES

General

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BIOGRAPHY

Jim Cahill graduated from Washington High School in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1994. He received a Bachelor of Science from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management in 1999. He was then commissioned through the University of Minnesota's Army ROTC program as an aviation-branched Second Lieutenant. He qualified as an AH64D Apache Longbow pilot in 2001 and then served as a Platoon Leader in the Third Infantry Division and Company Commander in the First Cavalry Division. In 2009, he became a Functional Area 59 Army Strategist, earning a Master of International Public Policy from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and graduating from the Army's Basic Strategic Arts Program (BSAP). He served as a Strategist at in the Department of the Army's War Plans Division; as a Joint Plans Officer at U.S. European Command; as an Army Fellow at the RAND Corporation; as an Alliance Planner at U.S. Forces Korea; and as a Senior Military Advisor at the Department of State. He is supported and enabled by his wife Brianna and three daughters, Corinne (12), Elise (8), and Nora (6).