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William I and monarchical rule in Imperial Germany

William I and monarchical rule in Imperial Germany

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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KÖNIG MAX: Was kann man als die leitenden Tendenzen unseres Jahrhunderts bezeichnen?

RANKE: Ich würde als die leitende Tendenz unserer Zeit aufstellen: die Auseinandersetzung beider Prinzipien, der Monarchie und der Volkssouveränität, mit welcher alle anderen Gegensätze zusammenhängen; ferner die unendliche Entwicklung der materiellen Kräfte und die überaus vielseitige Entwicklung der Naturwissenschaften. Jenseits dieser Streitigkeiten, die den Staat berühren, treten auch noch immer geistliche Tendenzen hervor.

Theodor Schieder und Helmut Berding eds.,
Leopold von Ranke. Aus Werk und Nachlass.
II *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*
(Munich 1971).

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Acknowledgments

‘Every book is a concealed autobiography’ wrote the British historian Hugh Brogan in his biography of Alexis de Tocqueville.¹ This study is no exception to this observation. It marks the culmination of a long-held interest in monarchy in Prussian-German and European history. It represents the fondness for the search for new sources and bring these together in a contribution that challenges existing scholarly literature. It also goes for its coming, even if this cannot be directly discerned from the text. Without the help of numerous individuals and organization the research and writing of this study could not have been undertaken or completed. It is therefore fitting to thank them for all they did.

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¹ Hugh Brogan, *Alexis de Tocqueville. A biography* (London 2006) 565.

This study rests on the basis of academic study that Dr. Nico Lettinck and Aad Arendsen provided me when I was their student between 2003 and 2007. They have continued to provide counsel thereafter. Nico introduced me to academic culture and our correspondence since then has been a perpetual exchange of observations, choices and problems of its workings. Aad Arendsen introduced me into the great debates on German history, in particular between Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Thomas Nipperdey. It not only generated an enduring interest in the subject, but also laid the intellectual foundation for this study. Aad also frequently read some of my early writings for this thesis and gave important comments for the further development of its arguments. After 2007, Professor Dr. Herman Amersfoort taught me the historian's craft in Amsterdam and was an early and consistent supporter of me pursuing a PhD.

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Berlin, 3 October 2017

Declaration

This thesis contains, in chapter III, material that was previously published in Frederik Frank Sterkenburgh, 'Narrating prince Wilhelm of Prussia: commemorative biography as monarchical politics of memory' in: Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi Mehrkens eds., *Royal heirs and the uses of soft power in nineteenth-century Europe* (London 2016) 281-301.

This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Summary

'It is hard being Emperor under Bismarck' quipped German Emperor William I once. Historians agreed and deemed him also an unwilling Imperial figurehead who preferred to remain King of Prussia. This study challenges this long-held assumption of William I's presumed historical irrelevance. It argues that the first Hohenzollern Kaiser was in fact a conscious, astute and strong-willed political actor who drew on varying forms of representation of his persona and the new German polity to forge his Imperial role. By drawing on cultural approaches to political history, this study demonstrates how William forged his political agency. It transcends biographical and national confines, showing how William's conduct was part of a broader European context and how William drew on the practices of political rule he perceived elsewhere and appropriated these for his own realm. It demonstrates that William's belonging to a specific political generation of monarchs influenced the manner in which he crafted his role and related himself to German nationhood. By identifying the strategies of legitimization that William employed, this study uncovers how he addressed the fragmented German polity, projected himself as the prime political centre of gravity in the new German polity and head of the new monarchical nation. This study discusses William's role in the political and military decision-making process, how William presented his role as a military monarch during the Franco-Prussian War, his politics of history, his conception of the German Empire and his monarchical representation in Berlin. This thesis demonstrates that William was no transitional figure, but in fact a key actor in adapting the Hohenzollern monarchy to its new Imperial role at a time when monarchical rule in Europe was fundamentally transformed.

Introduction

On 23 February 1879, Otto von Bismarck invited Moritz Busch for an interview. Among the subjects about which Bismarck voiced his opinion were Emperor William I and Crown Prince Frederick William. Asked by Busch what he thought about the Crown Prince, Bismarck stated that

He is more human, so to speak, more upright and modest – his character resembling that of his grandfather and of Frederick William I. He does not say: ‘I have won the battle, I have conducted the campaign,’ but ‘I know that I am not capable of doing it; the Chief of my general staff has done it, and he therefore deserves his rewards.’ The Most Gracious [William I, FFS] thinks quite differently. He also cannot tell exactly an untruth, but he will have it that he has done everything himself; he likes to be in the foreground; he loves posing and the appearance of authority.²

Bismarck was a tactical politician, whose spoken and written statements were often tailored to befit the actual political situation and recipient.³ Bismarck knew that his utterances would reach an audience beyond Busch, his press officer since 1870. In the three decades thereafter, Busch frequently published book-length accounts on Bismarck.⁴ Moreover, during the 1870s, Bismarck frequently made disparaging comments about William’s role in the political process.⁵ Whether Bismarck’s remarks to Busch were calculated or not, they nonetheless express a judgment by the Chancellor that William’s role was more assertive than he wished. This notion is at odds with the conventional image of William in cultural memory and scholarly literature. Here, the idea of William as an unwilling and modest Imperial figurehead who adhered to his Prussian origins prevails. In his history of Prussia, Christopher Clark has written that William ‘was in his seventies when the Reich was proclaimed and essentially remained a Prussian king until his death (...) the king aspired to be the personification of Prussian simplicity, self-discipline and thrift’.⁶ William is thus primarily seen as a symbolic figure, whereas some contemporaries perceived him as an active political actor. The consequence of this discrepancy is that debates on the role of the Hohenzollern monarchy have

² Moritz Busch, *Bismarck. Some secret pages of his history* II (London 1898) 211-212.

³ Cf. Birgit Aschmann, *Preußens Ruhm und Deutschlands Ehre: Zum nationalen Ehrdiskurs im Vorfeld der preußisch-französischen Kriege des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich 2013) 316; Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the development of Germany II The period of consolidation, 1871-1880* (Princeton 1990) 198.

⁴ Eberhard Kolb, ‘Moritz Busch: Bismarcks willfähriger publizistischer Gehilfe’ in: Lothar Gall and Ulrich Lappenkötter eds., *Bismarcks Mitarbeiter* (Paderborn 2009) 161-171.

⁵ Robert Freiherr Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen des Staatsministers Freiherr Lucius von Ballhausen* (4th edition; Berlin 1921) 75; Karina Urbach, *Bismarck’s favourite Englishman. Lord Odo Russell’s mission to Berlin* (London 1999) 91.

⁶ Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom. The rise and downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge, Massachusetts 2006) 588.

neglected William's role, even though he was instrumental in upholding its monarchical prerogatives and establishing the new Imperial role.

This thesis is about William as a monarchical political actor. It seeks to define his political agency, the historical origins of the conception of his role and how he put this into practice. By focussing on how William staged his own persona in differing spatial, temporal and medial settings, this thesis will detail the manner in which he sought to affect his role and adapt to the changing political, cultural and social situation after German unification. By examining the images, narratives, rituals and ceremonials which he utilized, this thesis will demonstrate which practices constituted William's political agency. This enables new insights on how the Hohenzollern monarchical system responded to the founding and consolidation of the new nation state, differing conceptions of the political nation, the socially and culturally fragmented German polity, the changing media environment and the need for generating support amongst those parts of the population that were considered essential to have support from. This enables us to lift William out of his biographical and historiographical isolation and relate him to broader historical developments and debates about the transformation of monarchical rule in Europe in the nineteenth century.

Despite William's importance for Prussian and German history, scholarly interest in his persona has been remarkably limited. Since 1980 only three biographies of him have been published, all three written by journalists, neither of whom have consulted archival sources or placed their work in broader historical debates. Instead, they narrate his biography from a nostalgic, Marxist or national-conservative perspective.⁷ In turn, debates about the role of the Hohenzollern monarchy in the German Empire have primarily concentrated on William II, disputing the nature and extent of his political agency.⁸ This is understandable, given William II's controversial role in German politics, the outbreak of the First World War and the collapse of the Hohenzollern monarchy. But it has resulted in historians overlooking the two earlier Emperors and their contribution to forging the dynasty. Frank Lorenz Müller has partially corrected this with his study of Frederick III and his role in the Hohenzollern monarchical system.⁹ However, telling for the negligence of William's role is that the (political) history of Imperial Germany is still divided into the Bismarckian phase and the Wilhelminian phase.

⁷ Franz Herre, *Kaiser Wilhelm I. Der letzte Preuße* (Cologne 1980); Karl Heinz Börner, *Wilhelm I. Deutscher Kaiser und König von Preußen* (Berlin 1984); Guntram Schulze-Wegener, *Wilhelm I. Deutscher Kaiser, König von Preußen, nationaler Mythos* (Hamburg 2015).

⁸ The literature on William II and his role is too vast to detail here. Among the more recent studies on William II's role in the Empire's political process and culture are John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II. Die Jugend des Kaisers 1859-1888* (Munich 1993); John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II. Die Aufbau der Persönlichen Monarchie 1888-1900* (Munich 2001); John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II. Der Weg in den Abgrund 1900-1914* (Munich 2008); Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *War der Kaiser an allem schuld? Wilhelm II. und die preußisch-deutschen Machteliten* (Frankfurt am Main 2002); Christopher Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II. A life in power* (London 2009); Alexander König, *Wie mächtig war der Kaiser? Kaiser Wilhelm II. zwischen Königsmechanismus und Polykratie von 1908 bis 1914* (Stuttgart 2009).

⁹ Frank Lorenz Müller, *Our Fritz: Emperor Frederick III and the political culture of imperial Germany* (Harvard 2011).

This is the case in the major histories of Germany during the Empire by Thomas Nipperdey, Hans-Ulrich Wehler and Wolfgang J. Mommsen. All three see Bismarck's resignation in 1890 as the dividing line in the development of Germany.¹⁰ By dividing the Empire's history in two phases in this manner, Germany's development is related or identified with first its leading politician and thereafter with its monarch. This incongruence prevents a perspective on the long-term development of the Hohenzollern monarchy in relation to the Empire's high politics and culture. Above all, executive politics in the first two decades of the German nation state remains, justified or not, primarily related to Bismarck.

Two causes can be identified for this negligence. It is worth reflecting on these, for they explain much of how the subsequent historiographical judgment on William came about. First, the dominant role historians have ascribed to Bismarck has generally obscured William's role. To be sure, there is little reason to doubt Bismarck's dominant role in German politics throughout most of the 1870s and 1880s. But this imbalance was, after William's death and Bismarck resignation, also furthered by the cult around Bismarck's persona as the dominant figure of recent German history. The Bismarck-cult was also stimulated by William II's misguided attempt to establish a counter cult around his grandfather that did not resonate with the times.¹¹ Bismarck himself did much to foster the notion of his dominant role through his influential memoirs, which were primarily an exercise in *Geschichtspolitik*. His considerable literary talent was subsequently demonstrated by the *Friedrichsruher Ausgabe*, published between 1924 and 1935, which since then enabled scholars to detail Bismarck's role. By contrast, no similar comprehensive edition of William's writings was published. Ernst Berner's two volume edition of writings published in 1906 primarily served to glorify William's role.¹² They must be seen within the context of William II's attempt to create a cult around his grandfather. Johannes Schultze's editions of mostly political and family correspondence was of more scholarly use, but because most of these letters predate 1871, their value for researching William as German Emperor is limited.¹³ This imbalance in sources was consolidated recently with the *Neue*

¹⁰ Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918. II Machtstaat vor der Demokratie* (Munich 1992) 359-470, 621-757; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte III Von der Deutschen Doppelrevolution bis zum Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges 1849-1914* (Munich 1995) 848-1168; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Das Ringen um den nationalen Staat. Die Gründung und der innere Ausbau des Deutschen Reiches unter Otto von Bismarck 1850 bis 1890* (Berlin 1993); Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerstolz und Weltmachtstreben. Deutschland unter Wilhelm II. 1890 bis 1918* (Berlin 1995).

¹¹ Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the development of Germany III The period of fortification, 1880-1898* (Princeton 1990) 420-421.

¹² Ernst Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms des Großen Briefe, Reden und Schriften I 1797-1860* (Berlin 1906); Ernst Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelm des Großen Briefe, Reden und Schriften II 1861-1888* (Berlin 1906).

¹³ Johannes Schultze ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms I. Weimarer Briefe. Bearbeitet von Johannes Schultze* (two vols.; Berlin 1924); Johannes Schultze ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms I. Briefe an seine Schwester Alexandrine und deren Sohn Großherzog Friedrich Franz II. / Kaiser Wilhelm I.* (Berlin 1927); Johannes Schultze ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms I. Briefe an Politiker und Staatsmänner I. 1830-1853* (Berlin 1930); Johannes Schultze ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms I. Briefe an Politiker und Staatsmänner II. 1854-1869* (Berlin 1931).

Friedrichsruher Ausgabe of Bismarck's writings. Such an undertaking was not carried out for William. The most recent editions of his writings are those of his correspondence with his Princess Charlotte of Prussia and King Frederick William IV. By implication of the recipients' deaths in 1860 and 1861 respectively, neither collection reaches the post-1871 period.¹⁴

Secondly, both German cultural memory since the 1890s and scholarly literature have been pervaded by a nostalgic understanding of William as the epitome of 'old' Prussia. Partially, this had its roots in William's own self-staging during his lifetime as the embodiment of Prussian virtues. But after his death this representation helped make William the identifying figure for an era, culture and mentality that was presumably lost once Germany was confronted with the social and cultural changes and political upheavals of the Wilhelminian period. Among the first to develop this idea was Erich Marcks, who in 1897 published the entry on William for the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. Its nostalgic stance was revealingly at odds with the glorifying celebrations William II organized that year for the centenary of his grandfather's birth.¹⁵ The entry was simultaneously published as a book-length biography that went through nine editions, the last published in 1943. Theodor Fontane voiced this nostalgia in his 1898 novel *Der Stechlin*, where William's 'humanity' served to comment on the emergence of new social groups and corresponding attitudes.¹⁶ Ten years later, Hildegard von Spitzemberg, a prominent figure of Berlin's court and society, used this trope in her diary to criticize William II's extravagance and mishandling of political affairs.¹⁷ The persistence of this trope is shown by Günter de Bruyn's 2002 essay

¹⁴ Karl Heinz Börner ed., *Prinz Wilhelm von Preußen an Charlotte. Briefe 1817-1860* (Berlin 1993); Winfried Baumgart ed., *König Friedrich Wilhelm IV. und Wilhelm I. Briefwechsel 1840-1858* (Paderborn 2013).

¹⁵ Cf. Erich Marcks, *Kaiser Wilhelm I* (8th edition; Munich and Leipzig 1918) 392: "Die Geister zu führen, das heißt wahrhaft König sein." Freilich, nur ein großer Mensch vermag dem höchsten Amte solchen Inhalt zu verleihen und zu erhalten: den Kaiser selber hörten wir das, in rückhaltloser Dankbarkeit gegen seinen Minister, laut genug anerkennen. Aber hinter dem unvergleichlichen einen Manne steht doch, und mit ihm zusammen siegt, seinen Sieg ermöglicht erst die ganze Vergangenheit dieser Monarchie und die ganze Erbschaft dieser Menschenalter: die alten monarchischen Kräfte und Gesinnungen, die Leiden, Thaten, Erfolge von 1860 zumal und von 1866 und 1870, das ganze alte Preußen mit seiner Tüchtigkeit und seiner Autorität, seinem Schatze an sittlicher Energie und an fester Einheit seines Heeres, seines Staates, seines in Leistung und Stellung nun von neuem erhöhten und gestärkten Beamtenthums. Deutlicher und maßgebender als je zuvor bethätigt sich eben damals, unter all den neuartigen Antrieben, dieses alte Preußen im deutschen Dasein der neuen Zeit. Dieses alte Preußen aber war Kaiser Wilhelm.'

¹⁶ Klaus Peter Möller ed., *Theodor Fontane. Grosse Brandenburger Ausgabe. Das erzählerische Werk XVII Der Stechlin* (Second edition; Berlin 2011) 348: 'Sie waren ja mit unserm guten Kaiser Wilhelm, dem letzten Menschen, der noch ein wirklicher Mensch war', 362: 'Und so muß ich denn sagen, es war doch 'was Erquickliches, den alten Wilhelm so jeden Tag for Augen zu haben. Hab' ihn freilich immer nur flüchtig gesehn, aber auch das war schon eine Herzensfreude. Sie nennen ihn jetzt den >Großen< und stellen ihn neben Fridericus Rex. Nun, so einer war er sicherlich nicht, an den reicht er nicht 'ran. Aber als Mensch war er ihm über, und das giebt, mein' ich, in gewissem Sinne den Ausschlag, wenn auch zur >Größe< noch was anders gehört'.

¹⁷ Rudolf Vierhaus ed., *Das Tagebuch der Baronin Spitzemberg. Geb. Freiin v. Varnbüeler. Aufzeichnungen aus der Hofgesellschaft des Hohenzollernreiches* (Fifth edition; Göttingen 1989) 491: 'Keinen Bismarck möchte ich mir von Gott erbitten – der würde doch gleich zerschmettern –, aber

on Unter den Linden, in which he followed the French poet Jules Laforgue in his description of William who had ‘weder besondere Leidenschaften noch Kunst- und Wissenschaftsinteressen hatte, keine Konzerte, Theater oder Museen besuchte, keine Bücher las, außer militärischen Schriften, und den nicht der Ehrgeiz trieb, sondern die Pflicht. Er war kein Prahlhans, wie später sein Enkel.’¹⁸ Even though Clark is more aware than these authors of William’s conscious acting out of Prussian virtues, he nonetheless perpetuates the nostalgic trope as a historiographical understanding that was primarily a construct of cultural memory.

This historiographical negligence of William is inversely proportional to the advancements made in research into the transformation of monarchical rule in Europe in the nineteenth-century. A first problem applicable to William is that of defending the monarchy as a relevant fixture in the political process. Dieter Langewiesche has argued that monarchs had to ensure their role in the process of state-formation and increased state activity in order to retain their position. This *Herrschaftsverdichtung* meant a strengthening of the ties between the state and its subjects, even if monarchs and civilian representatives had differing conceptions of this.¹⁹ A result of this increased state activity was the formation of competing centres of political gravity, each with different conceptions of the political nation. In Imperial Germany, the consolidation of Bismarck’s power and, since the 1880s, the emerging cult around his persona and the establishment of the Reichstag and political parties at a federal level challenged the political primacy of the Emperor in the political process.²⁰ The most recent biographies of Bismarck by Jonathan Steinberg and Christoph Nonn have pointed at his psychological dominance and manipulation of the political system to befit his needs and objectives.²¹ Equally important is the work of Andreas Biefang on the manner in which the Reichstag sought to raise its public profile in the Bismarck-era through symbolic acts. These included the use of architecture, utilizing the press, making elections a political-ceremonial undertaking and seeking encounters with the population. But Biefang has made clear that Bismarck and William also carefully crafted their public image through speeches, the new means of photography and public performances, both within Berlin society and at ceremonial events. Biefang thus demonstrated that a *Deutungskonkurrenz* between Reichstag, Chancellor and Emperor was a reality of the political process in the early German Empire.²²

einen alten Kaiser, der die rechten Leute an den rechten Platz kommen ließe und nicht sich für den Herrgott hielte. Dann könnten wir in Deutschland es gut machen wie die anderen Völker, deren Gespött wir jetzt unserer Wirrnis sind.’

¹⁸ Günter de Bruyn, *Unter den Linden* (Berlin 2002) 104-105.

¹⁹ Dieter Langewiesche, *Die Monarchie im Jahrhundert Europas. Selbstbehauptung durch Wandel* (Heidelberg 2013) 26-27.

²⁰ Of this William’s court was aware. Pflanze has argued that ‘at court some who witnessed the outpouring of patriotic enthusiasm for Bismarck on his seventieth birthday muttered about the Bismarck *Hausmacht* and its hazards for the prestige of the monarchy’. See Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 187.

²¹ Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck – A life* (Oxford 2011); Christoph Nonn, *Christoph, Bismarck. Ein Preuße und sein Jahrhundert* (Munich 2015).

²² Andreas Biefang, *Die andere Seite der Macht. Reichstag und Öffentlichkeit im >>System Bismarck<< 1871-1890* (Düsseldorf 2009).

Competition between these three poles of Germany's political structure makes clear that at a time of expansion of the bureaucracy and the formation of the new nation state, the representation of a tangible body politic was an important feature to generate political capital. Already Clemens von Metternich and Walter Bagehot recognized this when they pointed to the difference between a monarchy and a republic. In a conversation with the American George Ticknor in 1836, Metternich argued that democracies tended to polarize population through the formation of political parties. By contrast, monarchs tended to be unifying figures for their population and as such were countermodels to the nation state.²³ In his treatise *The English Constitution*, Bagehot argued that constitutions, parties and assemblies were too complex for the population to understand. The figure of a monarch represented a single will, mind and ideas, which was more tangible.²⁴ Modern historians have likewise recognized this possibility. In his biography of Bismarck, Lothar Gall has argued that the monarch represented the individual, personal element in the state and was at the same time the born representative of the whole. As such, the monarch offered a counterweight to an individual overwhelmed by an expanding state bureaucracy.²⁵ With reference to Heinrich von Treitschke, Wolfgang Hardtwig has pointed at the 'silent power' of the Emperor, the capacity to provide political life a degree of steadfastness and security amidst partisan strife. But in particular under William II, the display of the monarchy suggested a larger role for the monarch than the constitution stipulated, helping the monarchical principle and strengthen a dynastic-monarchical consciousness with the population.²⁶ This raises the question if this development predated William II and if so, how William I put this understanding of his role into practice. This question is particularly important as William was acquainted with Metternich and, although he supported the formation of a German nation state under Prussian leadership, did not fundamentally think in categories of the nation state or political representation via the nation state.

Such an understanding required specific strategies of communication to be effected. In the past decade, historians have increasingly overcome biographical and national approaches and instead explored these practices with which monarchs sought to generate justification and legitimacy for their role. Understanding this is important. Although a century of political upheavals and revolutions followed '1789', Europe predominantly remained a continent of monarchies until 1918. Volker Sellin has argued that the Enlightenment and the French Revolution discredited the divine right as a source for political legitimacy. Instead, monarchs

²³ Wolfram Siemann, *Metternich. Stratege und Visionär. Eine Biografie* (Munich 2016) 828.

²⁴ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (London 1965) 82. Simon Heffer has argued that Bagehot forwarded a mere theory and underestimated the electorate in understanding the workings of government. See Simon Heffer, 'Crown and consensus. Walter Bagehot's reflections on a theory of monarchy' in: Frank-Lothar Kroll and Dieter J. Weiß eds., *Inszenierung oder Legitimation? / Monarchy and the art of representation. Die Monarchie in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Ein deutsch-englischer Vergleich* (Berlin 2015) 67-76, there 75.

²⁵ Lothar Gall, *Bismarck. Der weisse Revolutionär* (Frankfurt am Main 1980) 611.

²⁶ Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Bürgertum, Staatssymbolik und Staatsbewusstsein im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1914' In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 16 (1990) 269-285, there 275-276.

had to find and cultivate new sources for legitimacy. This forced monarchs to develop new strategies of legitimization to retain their positions with which it could develop and expand traditional strategies. Consequently, jubilees and rites of passage, religion, command in wartime, support and adherence to a constitution, integration and identification with the nation, support for social reform and charisma were developed as such strategies.²⁷ Langewiesche has seen in the successful adaptation and accommodation the explanation for monarchies' political survival. According to Langewiesche, the integration of nation states in the monarchical state system, the representation of the nation by the monarch and the role of the monarch in expansion of state formation were the main reasons.²⁸ Similar to Langewiesche with regards to the successful adapting and to Sellin in strategies of legitimization are Frank Lothar Kroll's works on how the monarchy sought to modernize itself. Kroll emphasizes strategies that suggested embourgeoisement, monarchical constitutionalism, nationalizing of monarchs and the monarch as patron of the arts.²⁹

The diversification of strategies of legitimization was particularly important for William upon becoming Emperor, given the fragmented state of the new German polity. This feature of the Empire has long been recognized by scholars. Nipperdey has argued that the German Empire was characterized by a pluralization of *Verhaltenstile* and norms which resulted in a particularization and specialization of spheres of lives. The resulting ambivalences explain why Germany never developed a cultural *Gesamthabitus* like other nations. Nonetheless, this fragmentation was overarched by a civil religion, reaching out towards a collective, such as the nation, that provided meaning. The political sphere thus remained a determinant in everyday lives.³⁰ How the Hohenzollern monarchy adapted its Imperial role to this development has only partially been investigated by scholarly literature. Müller has demonstrated how Frederick III as Crown Prince crafted a public image of himself as a paragon of bourgeois virtue,

²⁷ Volker Sellin, *Gewalt und Legitimität. Die europäische Monarchie im Zeitalter der Revolutionen* (Munich 2011).

²⁸ Langewiesche, *Monarchie im Jahrhundert Europas*.

²⁹ Frank-Lothar Kroll, 'Zwischen europäischem Bewußtsein und nationaler Identität. Legitimationsstrategien monarchischer Eliten im Europa des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert' in: Hans-Christof Kraus and Thomas Nicklas eds., *Geschichte der Politik. Alte und neue Wege* (Munich 2007) 353-374; Frank Lothar Kroll, 'Modernity of the outmoded? European monarchies in the 19th and 20th centuries' in: Frank-Lothar Kroll and Dieter J. Weiß eds., *Inszenierung oder Legitimation? / Monarchy and the art of representation. Die Monarchie in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Ein deutsch-englischer Vergleich* (Berlin 2015) 11-19; Frank Lothar Kroll, 'Die Idee eines sozialen Königtums im 19. Jahrhundert' in: Frank-Lothar Kroll and Dieter J. Weiß eds., *Inszenierung oder Legitimation? / Monarchy and the art of representation. Die Monarchie in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Ein deutsch-englischer Vergleich* (Berlin 2015) 111-140; Frank Lothar Kroll, 'Monarchische Modernisierung. Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Königsherrschaft und Elitenwandlung im Europa des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts' in: Frank-Lothar Kroll and Martin Munke eds., *Hannover – Coburg – Windsor. Probleme und Perspektiven einer vergleichenden deutsch-britischen Dynastiegeschichte vom 18. Bis in das 20. Jahrhundert / Problems and perspectives of a comparative German-British dynastic history from the 18th to the 20th century* (Berlin 2015) 201-242.

³⁰ Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918. I Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (Munich 1990) 190-191.

charismatic military commander, a member of the dynasty who shared similarities with Frederick the Great and Queen Luise and appeared in Bavarian costume to appeal to southern Germany. The successful integration of such contradictory and complementary public personas benefitted his popularity.³¹ For William, literature has provided only fragmentary answers. Alexa Geisthövel has demonstrated that William used his appearances in Berlin in front of the window of his study in his palace at Unter den Linden to acknowledge the presence of the public.³² During his annual spas, William consciously staged himself more bourgeois by appearing in civilian dress and suggesting middle-class values by taking a vacation from a year's labour. However, staging such different public personas does not mean that William became bourgeois, as Geisthövel has acknowledged.³³ This suggests that William's self-staging in such diverse settings was underpinned by a coherent approach to his Imperial role to relate it to the divided state of German society and competing political centres of gravity.

Such a coherent approach to uphold monarchical prerogatives was a defining feature of the monarchs of William's generation. Despite their willingness to depart biographical and national confines, historians have not researched monarchs' operating in terms of a political generation. Admittedly, this is not without problems, given the limited size of this specific demographic cohort and their geographical spread. But their shared 'space of experience' and 'horizon of expectations' (Reinhart Koselleck) could help understand their conduct in a broader context.³⁴ Helmut Fogt has defined a political generation as a group of individuals of roughly the same age which within a certain social system during a specific time and which demonstrate the same attitude towards this experience over time. Their formative event can be their birth, while the social system and social-psychological maturing processes can be a shared experience.³⁵ By following this definition, William can be understood to have been part of the political generation of monarchs born between 1790 and 1815. Geoffrey Best has written about this cohort that 'using the word generation loosely, one may obviously say that the generation of 1790-1815 became accustomed to war'.³⁶ This generation experienced first-hand the political upheaval in the wake of the French revolution and military conflict during the Napoleonic wars. They likewise witnessed the political revolutions of 1830/1831 and 1848, saw the rise of

³¹ Müller, *Our Fritz*, 105-148.

³² Alexa Geisthövel, 'Wilhelm I. am 'historischen Eckfenster'. Zur Sichtbarkeit des Monarchen in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts.' in: Jan Andreas, Alexa Geisthövel and Matthias Schwengelbeck eds., *Die Sinnlichkeit der Macht. Herrschaft und Repräsentation der Frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main 2005) 163-185.

³³ Alexa Geisthövel, 'Nahbare Herrscher. Die Selbstdarstellung preußischer Monarchen in Kurorten als Form politischer Kommunikation im 19. Jahrhundert' in *Forschung an der Universität Bielefeld* 24 (2002) 32-37.

³⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Concepts of historical time and social history' in: Reinhart Koselleck, *The practice of conceptual history. Timing history, spacing concepts* (Stanford 2002) 115-130, there 126-127.

³⁵ Helmut Fogt, *Politische Generation. Empirische Bedeutung und theoretisches Modell* (Opladen 1982) 18.

³⁶ Geoffrey Best, *War and society in revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870* (Leicester 1982) 191.

nationalism and liberalism. These monarchs occupied thrones across Europe in the second third of the nineteenth century. Their reign was determined by accommodating to these political challenges.

In the last two decades, these monarchs have each received scholarly biographies, permitting a study of William as Imperial monarch to be placed within such a generational context. In 1991, Manfred Hanisch published a study of Maximilian II Joseph of Bavaria (1811-1864, r. 1848-1864). Hanisch argued that the king recognized the danger presented by the 1848 revolution, the spectre of German nationalism and German unification under Prussian leadership. To counter this, the king drew on history educations in schools, museums, illustrated histories of Bavaria and Bavarian dress to create a distinct monarchical-Bavarian identity.³⁷ In 1995, David E. Barclay published his study of Frederick William IV of Prussia (1795-1861, r. 1840-1861). Barclay argued that he projected the monarchy as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, integrating art, architecture, religion and music to offer a conservative alternative to revolution. He also used ceremonial, images and speeches to propagate his understanding of his role and modernize the Prussian monarchy.³⁸ Although Richard S. Wortman's two-volume study of the use of ceremonial by the Russian monarchy discussed this problem for the whole Romanov dynasty, his work nonetheless contained an important chapter on Nicholas I (1796-1855, r. 1825-1855). Recognizing the rise of nationalism, the Russian Emperor used public and court ceremonial and military parades to present the dynasty as epitomizing the essential qualities of the nation.³⁹ Gita Deneckere's 2011 biography of Leopold I of the Belgians (1790-1865, r. 1831-1865) demonstrated that the first King of the Belgians had no nostalgia for an absolute kingship and accepted the constitutional restrictions to his powers.⁴⁰ In his 2013 biography of King William II of the Netherlands (1792-1849, r. 1840-1849) Jeroen van Zanten highlights that, like Frederick William IV, the second King of the Netherlands also used arts and architecture to suggest his monarchy as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Departing his earlier liberal sympathies, William II of the Netherlands had become more conservative in the course of his reign and only reluctantly agreed to proposals for changing the constitution, which went beyond

³⁷ Manfred Hanisch, *Für Fürst und Vaterland. Legitimitätsstiftung in Bayern zwischen Revolution 1848 und deutscher Einheit* (Munich 1991); See also Manfred Hanisch, 'Nationalisierung der Dynastien oder monarchisierung der Nation? Zum Verhältnis von Monarchie und Nation in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert', in: Adolf M. Birke and Lothar Kettenacker eds., *Bürgertum, Adel und Monarchie. Wandel der Lebensformen im Zeitalter des Bürgerlichen Nationalismus* (Munich 1989) 71-91.

³⁸ David E. Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian monarchy 1840-1861* (Oxford 1995). See also David E. Barclay, 'Das "monarchische Projekt" Friedrich Wilhelm IV. von Preußen' in: Frank-Lothar Kroll and Dieter J. Weiß eds., *Inszenierung oder Legitimation? / Monarchy and the art of representation. Die Monarchie in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Ein deutsch-englischer Vergleich* (Berlin 2015) 35-44.

³⁹ Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of power. Myth and ceremony in Russian monarchy I From Peter the Great to the death of Nicholas I* (Princeton 1995) 255-332.

⁴⁰ Gita Deneckere, *Leopold I. De eerste koning van Europa* (Antwerp 2011) 354.

what he himself envisaged.⁴¹ Prince Frederick of the Netherlands (1797-1881) played an important role in keeping up the popularity of the dynasty in the second half of the nineteenth century through his engagement for the social question and presence at commemorative events with veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, as Anton van de Sande has argued in 2015.⁴² The common responses of these dynastic figures to the forces of nationalism and liberalism that challenged the monarchical form of government suggest that a generational perspective on William's conduct can make clear how his behaviour relates to that of his generational peers. This is important because William was the last of his generation to become monarch, outliving other members of his generation and reigning into the last third of the nineteenth century.

This European context raises important questions about how monarchs of a particular generation shared assumptions and behaviours. Indeed, scholars have increasingly studied the governing practices of monarchs in a wider, European context. This makes clear that any attempt to explain William's conduct in terms of him as the embodiment of Prussian virtues is a red herring. In two forms this European context is important for consideration. First, certain problems related to William as a monarch can be perceived in other countries as well. Exemplary here is the problem of competing centres of political gravity. Henk te Velde has argued that in the second half of the nineteenth century leading parliamentarians became prominent public figures who rivalled with the monarch for public attention. In the Netherlands for example, Queen Wilhelmina had to compete with Abraham Kuyper, whilst in the United Kingdom Queen Victoria faced William Gladstone.⁴³ A second problem is that how the persistence of dynastic networks and relations affected the manner in which William orchestrated his role. Wolfgang Neugebauer has pointed at the persistence of *Verflechtungsstrukturen* of pre-national and aristocratic ties and political cultures in Prussia that persisted until the late nineteenth century, but which were neglected by subsequent historiography that focussed too much on the state.⁴⁴ This raises the question how William's place in a pre- and supranational 'dynastic family cartel' (Heinz Gollwitzer) related itself to the ever-stronger national confines of his role, particularly in foreign policy.⁴⁵ It also begs the question how these dynastic linkages provided William with channels via which monarchical practices perceived elsewhere could be appropriated to benefit his own Prussian and German context.

⁴¹ Jeroen van Zanten, *Koning Willem II 1792-1849* (Amsterdam 2013). For reference to his building activities, see pp. 396-397; see for his accepting of the political reality of the 1840s and capacity for adapting to this pp. 592-593.

⁴² Anton van de Sande, *Prins Frederik der Nederlanden 1797-1881. Gentleman naast de troon* (Nijmegen 2015).

⁴³ Henk te Velde, 'Cannadine, twenty years on. Monarchy and political culture in nineteenth-century Britain and the Netherlands' in: Jeroen Deploige and Gita Deneckere eds., *Mystifying the monarch: studies on discourse, power and history* (Amsterdam 2006) 193-203, there 196-199, 200-203.

⁴⁴ Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Wozu preußische Geschichte im 21. Jahrhundert?* (Berlin 2012) 35-37.

⁴⁵ Heinz Gollwitzer, *Ludwig I. von Bayern. Ein Königtum im Vormärz. Eine politische Biographie* (Munich 1986) 22.

These problems – of competing centres of political gravity, of presenting the monarch as the central political figure, new strategies of legitimization, the fragmented German polity, William as part of a political generation and the European context – form the historiographical framework within which the case of William as German Emperor shall be debated. To this end, this thesis is not a conventional biography of William, for a chronological discussion of his life is too problematic for the aims of this thesis. This thesis agrees with Kershaw’s argument that biography comes with ‘the natural risk of over-personalizing complex historical developments, over-emphasizing the role of the individual in shaping and determining events, ignoring or playing down the social and political context in which those actions took place.’⁴⁶ Furthermore, Kershaw has argued that it is better ‘to move away from concentration of “personality” to consider the related but separable issue of the effect of the individual on the political process, quite specifically on the shaping of major political change.’⁴⁷ Instead, this study aims to analyse the practices with which William forged his political agency. In this vein, this study moves beyond categories of the historical individual, a problem in historiography of the Hohenzollern monarchy that both Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann and Neugebauer have pointed out.⁴⁸ It follows David Cannadine’s plea for departing the biographical mould in studying monarchs for a more historical approach that looks at the practices with which the institution perpetuates itself. This goes in particular for monarchs in the nineteenth and twentieth century, when, ‘they are responding to events rather than initiating them, presiding over a period of time but not dominating it’.⁴⁹

To give effect to this perspective, this study’s methodology combines the study of practices with a cultural approach to political history. Arndt Brendecke has argued that practices mark a shift from the study of the explicit to the latent, from texts to acts. Brendecke defines practices as a ‘typical, routinized and socially understandable bundle of activities’. Practices enable the study of actors and agency, not of individuals and their will, requiring that we establish the origin and changes of these practices as the result of specific processes.⁵⁰ According to Marian Füssel, practices serve to change and perpetuate a social order and structure social relations. For this frequent performativity is required.⁵¹ This performative dimension is what relates the study of practices to cultural approaches to political history. Thomas Mergel has stated that this approach sees

⁴⁶ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1936: Hubris* (London 1998) xxi.

⁴⁷ Ian Kershaw, ‘Facts don’t reflect myths of power’ in: *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 16th January 2004.

⁴⁸ Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann, ‘Militärische Prinzenziehung und monarchischer Oberbefehl in Preußen 1744–1918’ in: Martin Wrede ed., *Die Inszenierung der heroischen Monarchie. Frühneuzeitliches Königtum zwischen ritterlichem Erbe und militärischer Herausforderung* (Munich 2014) 438–467, there 483; Neugebauer, *Wozu preußische Geschichte*, 25.

⁴⁹ David Cannadine, ‘From biography to history: writing the modern British monarchy’ in: *Historical research* 77 (2004) 289–312, there 298.

⁵⁰ Arndt Brendecke, ‘Von Postulaten zu Praktiken. Eine Einführung’ in: Arndt Brendecke ed., *Praktiken der frühen Neuzeit. Akteure, Handlungen, Artefakte* (Cologne 2015) 13–20.

⁵¹ Marian Füssel, ‘Praxeologische Perspektiven in der Frühneuzeitforschung’ in: Arndt Brendecke ed., *Praktiken der frühen Neuzeit. Akteure, Handlungen, Artefakte* (Cologne 2015) 21–33, there 25–30.

political power not constituted by institutional or geographical dominance, but by dominance over cultural systems and fabrics.⁵² According to Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, all politics requires representation to become a social reality. The cultural approach to political history deconstructs essentialist understandings of political institutions, values and motives and instead reconstructs practices and discourses with which political power structures become visible. In this manner, it demonstrates how the political is defined, how it is historically changeable and how decisions are forged that effect the polity as a whole.⁵³ Such representations can be forged in what Karl Rohe has defined as the *Deutungskultur* in a political culture. A political *Deutungskultur* denotes the level in a political culture where views, symbols and values of the political are converged and contested by actors.⁵⁴ Such contests are typical according to Sven Reichardt, because all cultures are a contest over interpretations between asymmetrically related actors that make a cultural consensus and stability unlikely. Instead these contests are the expression of ‘practical problems and symbolic power struggles in a dynamic world.’⁵⁵

This methodology enables this study to explain William’s conduct beyond categories of him as an individual. It helps to overcome explanations for William’s conduct in terms of his personal characteristics or merits, which some historians have used for explaining his popularity and which became visible at his funeral in 1888.⁵⁶ Instead, by reconstructing the practices with which William forged his political agency it becomes possible to challenge assumptions of him as a mere soldier who compared unfavourably to his, presumably, more artistically and imaginative brother Frederick William IV.⁵⁷ Through a reconstruction of William’s practices of political rule, he can be studied more precisely within the context of his political generation and the European context at the time of his reign as German Emperor, tracing back the origin of these practices and how William appropriated them for the Prussian-German context. In so doing, this approach can demonstrate how William crafted his public persona in ever-differing settings to befit the intentions he had for that specific context and audience. It can look at how William responded to the competing centres of political gravity and the fragmented German polity. Consequently, this study does not distinguish between William’s ‘private’ and ‘public’ persona. As representation was instrumental for William to establish and perpetuate the political order he headed, all his appearances were per definition constructions of his ‘public’ persona. In this sense, this study disagrees with Biefang’s methodological distinction for his study

⁵² Thomas Mergel, ‘Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Politik’ in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002) 574-606, there 577.

⁵³ Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, ‘Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?’ in: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger ed., *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?* (Berlin 2005) 9-24, there 13-14.

⁵⁴ Karl Rohe, ‘Politische Kultur und ihre Analyse’ in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 250 (1990) 321-346.

⁵⁵ Sven Reichardt, ‘Zeithistorisches zur praxeologischen Geschichtswissenschaft’ in: Arndt Brendecke ed., *Praktiken der frühen Neuzeit. Akteure, Handlungen, Artefakte* (Cologne 2015) 46-61, there 52.

⁵⁶ Cf. Jürgen Angelow, ‘Wilhelm I.’ in: Frank-Lothar Kroll ed., *Preussens Herrscher. Von den ersten Hohenzollern bis Wilhelm II.* (Munich 2001) 242-264, there 262-263.

⁵⁷ Cf. Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the development of Germany 1 The period of unification, 1815-1871* (Princeton 1990) 131.

of the Reichstag's powers between 'instrumental' power, as derived from the constitution, and 'symbolic' power, as resulting from its public presentation via architecture, ceremonial and speeches.⁵⁸ Instead, this study contends that no such distinction can be made: all William's effecting of his power came through representation, regardless whether this was in the decision-making process or grand ceremonial appearances.

The historiographical framework and methodology determine the structure of this study. Rather than a strict chronological discussion, this thesis is structured by five thematic-analytic chapters. Chapter I discusses William's role in the political decision-making process. Chapter II investigates how William forged his role as a military monarch during the Franco-Prussian War. How William sought to substantiate his reign with an historical dimension is explored in chapter III. Chapter IV analyses how William staged his role in relation to the German Empire. The fifth and final chapter looks at how William utilized political ceremonial to stage his role in the Empire's capital. In each of these chapters, William's conduct is discussed in relation to specific historical debates. The chapters demonstrate that a gradual shift in William's role took place. He was more active in the decision-making processes in the early parts of his reign, but gradually limited this due to his age, without weakening the exercise of his prerogatives or recognizing their symbolic significance. Each chapter also provides the framework for subsequent chapters: how William took part in the political decision-making process explains his conduct as military monarch; the importance he attached to this role was a factor in his politics of history. This in turn affected how he conceived and forged his role as German Emperor, while this conception gradually came to the fore in his monarchical representation during his travels through Germany and in Berlin. Above all, these chapters aim to deconstruct the image William crafted of himself and instead reconstruct how and to what political ends this self-staging was key to his political agency.

Understanding William's political conduct in this manner explains Bismarck's remark about his Imperial master to Moritz Busch. This study will demonstrate that William's conduct was not done solely for personal motives or simply highlight his own role. Rather, as Bismarck's frustration illustrates, William's conduct was essentially about the exercise of power in competition with other centres of political gravity, but also set against the context of his political generation, the European context and the fragmented Germany polity and give this a central, political figure for identification. This study will demonstrate the necessity of reevaluating William's role in the forging of the early Germany Empire's political culture and structure and the Hohenzollern dynasty's adapting to its Imperial role.

⁵⁸ Biefang, *Andere Seite der Macht*, 13-14.

I. William and the political decision-making process

Introduction

In April 1872, William travelled to Wiesbaden for a spa, as part of his annual rhythm of travels through Germany. He was accompanied by Louis Schneider, his librarian and reader. The weather was particularly hot, so that already in the morning a bucket of ice would be placed in William's room to lower the temperature. Upon leaving his bedroom, William wore only white *Sommerbeinkleider* and a gilet, but had not put on his uniform coat. Schneider expressed his amusement on finding his Imperial master in this state. When William invited him to take off his coat as well, Schneider deferentially refused. William told Schneider that the Minister of War, Albrecht von Roon, had informed him that the army's supplies, material and arms had been renewed. Expressing his satisfaction over the activities of Roon, William stated to Schneider that 'Ich fange gewiß in meinem Leben keinen Krieg mehr an, aber ich habe auch gesorgt, daß die Anderen es sich wohl überlegen werden, ehe sie mit mir Krieg anfangen!'⁵⁹ It is doubtful that this was a chance encounter. Schneider had been closely affiliated with William since the 1850s and had, at William's instructions, written biographies of him. Schneider also prepared memoirs of his proximity to William with the latter's consent. William thus knew that encounters such as these would become public knowledge, turning Schneider, and via him his readers, into an audience to be addressed. It permitted William to stage himself as in charge of the government, with ministers reporting to him and handling governmental affairs even whilst taking spas. Whether or not he was actually effective in this, is of lesser importance; what mattered was that an image was communicated of the Emperor who was actively involved in the political decision-making process.

The notion that William was an active participant in Germany's decision-making process has not been substantiated by scholarly literature. Two strands in historiography prevented a debate on his role. The first has seen William's role in the political process primarily via his relationship with Bismarck. It argues that it was the Chancellor's dominance which limited William's role. This goes in particular for Bismarck's biographers Gall, Ernst Engelberg, Otto Pflanze, Steinberg and Nonn. They have defined the Chancellor's dominance in personal and psychological terms, and, to varying degrees, pointed at William's pliability.⁶⁰ Konrad Canis has argued that Bismarck's dominance over William was not just the result of constitutional arrangements or his personality; it was also the result of the weaker position Bismarck found himself in vis-à-vis William, because of the Imperial approval he perpetually required. He thus had to project personal

⁵⁹ Louis Schneider, *Aus dem Leben Kaiser Wilhelms 1849-1873* III (Berlin 1888) 253-254.

⁶⁰ Gall, *Bismarck*; Ernst Engelberg, *Bismarck. Urprenße und Reichsgründer* (Berlin 1985) 756-758; Ernst Engelberg, *Bismarck. Das Reich in der Mitte Europas* (Berlin 1990) 54, 509-512; Pflanze, *Bismarck* II, 355-356; Pflanze, *Bismarck* III, 188-191; Steinberg, *Bismarck*, 197, 432; Nonn, *Bismarck*, 212-213.

loyalty, whilst demanding to be conducting his own politics.⁶¹ By contrast, Nipperdey has pointed at the length of Bismarck's term in office, the strength of his personality, his eagerness for power and William's reticence. This resulted in a dominant position for the Chancellor, whilst William's power receded, becoming mere 'potential' powers and making Bismarck the deciding political figure.⁶² What makes this strand problematic is that William's exercise of his prerogatives, if acknowledged at all, is primarily defined from Bismarck's perspective in personal, psychological and institutional terms. It defines his political role solely in relation to Bismarck. How William figured as a political centre of gravity in his own right and exercised his prerogatives remains unclear.

This problem is also discernible in the second strand in historiography that debated William's role in terms of his constitutional prerogatives and their development. Nipperdey has acknowledged the far-ranging military prerogatives but stressed that in the final instance William's position had a constitutional character. His dependence on the constitution, cooperation with the Reichstag, government, Chancellor and consensus of public opinion made William's role constitutional, even if his prerogatives still gave him 'potential' power.⁶³ Martin Kirsch has challenged the idea that this signified a unique Prussian-German model of constitutional monarchy. He argued that this was in fact a type of constitutional monarchy that can be discerned across Europe. In it, the sovereign held political priority, even if cooperation with a parliament was necessary.⁶⁴ Oliver F. R. Haardt has shown that the constitutional powers of the Emperor expanded in the 1871-1918 period, although these powers were complicated through his Prussian powerbase, his reliance on countersignature and the Reichstag's ascendancy as the main body of legislation.⁶⁵ But Haardt concentrates on the expansion of constitutional prerogatives under William II and less on William I. What makes this approach problematic is its search for constitutional normativity and not discussing its actual practice. Furthermore, Kirsch has been criticized by Biefang for overlooking the specifics of the Prussian-German situation. The latter has argued that William understood himself as king by divine right, who actively exercised military command and rejected any form of political modernization, whilst a Prussian minister-president could not have sustained himself in office without the support of the monarch.⁶⁶ Hartwin Spenkuch has criticized Kirsch for overlooking that Frederick William IV, William I and William II were self-conscious monarchs who actively exercised their constitutional prerogatives. Especially in personal matters, the monarch retained important decision-making powers. While in other German states monarchs abdicated in times of political

⁶¹ Konrad Canis, 'Bismarck und die Monarchen' in: Lothar Gall ed., *Otto von Bismarck und die Parteien* (Paderborn 2001) 137-154, there 140-141.

⁶² Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* II, 101.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 98-101.

⁶⁴ Martin Kirsch, *Monarch und Parlament im 19. Jahrhundert. Der monarchische Konstitutionalismus als europäische Verfassungstyp – Frankreich im Vergleich* (Göttingen 1999) 299-373.

⁶⁵ Oliver F. R. Haardt, 'The Kaiser in the federal state, 1871-1918' in: *German History* 34 (2016) 529-554.

⁶⁶ Biefang, *Andere Seite der Macht*, 22-24.

turmoil, William, despite threats to do so in 1862, never did.⁶⁷ In addition, Kirsch's conception overlooked the actual political practice of the monarch.⁶⁸ Katharine Anne Lermann has rightfully suggested that while William I did not insist on his monarchical prerogatives like William II, he was never a 'quantité négligeable' for Bismarck.⁶⁹ The more pertinent question is thus how William exercised his constitutional prerogatives.

In order to answer this question, this chapter considers William's role in the political decision-making process. It does so by building on Stollberg-Rilinger's work on decision-making. She has argued that decisions are not the result of intentions of individuals or rational actors, but the outcome of a process and of social and communicative acts. What a decision is, how it can be staged and identified as such, depends on the specific historical and cultural context.⁷⁰ Decision-making procedures come about through symbolic-ceremonial markings and assigning specific procedural roles. This symbolic-expressive nature of the procedure is essential in order to establish an instrumental function.⁷¹ What needs to be reconstructed in order to understand decision-making processes, are the formal and informal modes of decision, what constitutes a decision, what resources are drawn on during and afterwards to justify a decision, how participants use symbolic-expressive and performative acts to stage the process as a 'social drama' and the narratives of decision-making with which the process is described.⁷² Stollberg-Rilinger's work can help reconstruct William's performativity in the decision-making process via the symbolic acts, narratives and resources he drew on to effectuate his prerogatives. It allows for researching what role the mutual dependency of William and his officials in establishing a decision played, when he deemed a decision politically opportune, how his understanding of his role affected his stance, how William used Crown Councils, audiences and memoranda to make his role in the process tangible and ritual and print media to stage decision-making as primarily a monarchical affair. In order to demonstrate how these features determined William's conduct, this chapter will look at four fields in which William sought to make his position felt: his role in the Prussian State Ministry, personnel policy, foreign policy and relation to the Prussian Diet and the German Reichstag. William's constitutional prerogatives

⁶⁷ Hartwin Spenkuch, 'Vergleichsweise besonders? Politisches System und Strukturen Preussens als Kern des "deutschen Sonderwegs"' in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 29 (2003) 263-292, there 272.

⁶⁸ Hartwin Spenkuch, 'Prussian governance' in: Matthew Jefferies ed., *The Ashgate research companion to Imperial Germany* (Farnham 2015) 33-53, there 35-36.

⁶⁹ Katharine Anne Lermann, 'Imperial governance' in: Matthew Jefferies ed., *The Ashgate research companion to Imperial Germany* (Farnham 2015) 13-32, there 18.

⁷⁰ Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Praktiken des Entscheidens. Zur Einführung' in: Arndt Brendecke ed., *Praktiken der frühen Neuzeit. Akteure, Handlungen, Artefakte* (Cologne 2015) 630-634, there 632.

⁷¹ Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Einleitung' in: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger and André Krischer (eds.), *Herstellung und Darstellung verbindlicher Entscheidungen. Verhandeln, Verfahren und Verhalten in der Vormoderne* (Berlin 2010) 9-31, there 27-28; André Johannes Krischer, 'Sociological and cultural approaches to pre-modern decision making' in: Marie-Joséphine Werlings and Fabian Schulz, *Débats antiques* (Paris 2011) 129-140, there 140.

⁷² Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Zur Einführung', 633.

also granted him considerable power in military affairs.⁷³ However, this study considers these to have been more important for his staging as a military monarch and will therefore discuss these in chapter II.

William and the State Ministry

The most important forum for William's role in the decision-making process was the Prussian State Ministry. As its presiding member, William could initiate and steer its deliberations through his physical or medial presence. He had been a member of the body since 1840, when Frederick William IV had appointed him to bind him into the affairs of state, as William was known to have political views that opposed those of the new monarch. Though William regularly took part in its meetings, he rarely intervened in its deliberations. If he did so at all, he mostly served as defender of the absolute monarchy, resulting in tense relations with the Cabinet ministers.⁷⁴ In the 1850s, William was no longer a member of the cabinet and would only take part in the Crown Councils and even this declined because of disagreements with his brother.⁷⁵ During the regency, William took active part in policy deliberations and organized Crown Councils.⁷⁶ The appointment of Bismarck enabled a division of labour in which the minister-president took charge of the day-to-day running of the government. But William did not allow himself to be reduced to a mere symbolic figurehead. Rather, William still intervened in those areas which he deemed important or affected his standing. Rainer Pateau and Spenkuch have pointed out that William not only reigned, but also governed himself for a considerable part. After 1866, communication between William and his ministers tended increasingly to concentrate on William and Bismarck. Indicative for this is that the number of Crown Councils in comparison to the Liberal Era and up until the appointment of Bismarck declined, showing Bismarck's consolidation of power. Their number dropped from 1867 onwards and especially in the 1870s, with the last Crown Council of William's reign taking place in 1877. This has been interpreted by Spenkuch as a withdrawal from the everyday running of the government. Yet, in particular during political crises or when William sought to have his way, Crown Councils could be convened, especially in those areas he considered important, such as the military, foreign affairs and the church.⁷⁷

⁷³ Cf. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* II, 99; Biefang, *Andere Seite der Macht*, 23.

⁷⁴ Berlin-Brandenburgischer Akademie der Wissenschaften / Jürgen Kocka and Wolfgang Neugebauer eds., *Acta Borussica, Neue Folge*. I. Reihe. *Die Protokolle des Preußischen Staatsministeriums 1817-1934/38*. Bärbel Holtz ed., III 9. *Juni 1840 bis 14. März 1848* (Hildesheim 2000) 22-23.

⁷⁵ Berlin-Brandenburgischer Akademie der Wissenschaften / Jürgen Kocka and Wolfgang Neugebauer eds., *Acta Borussica, Neue Folge*. I. Reihe. *Die Protokolle des Preußischen Staatsministeriums 1817-1934/38*. Bärbel Holtz ed., IV/1 30. *März 1848 bis 27. Oktober 1858* (Hildesheim 2003) 38.

⁷⁶ Berlin-Brandenburgischer Akademie der Wissenschaften / Jürgen Kocka and Wolfgang Neugebauer eds., *Acta Borussica, Neue Folge*. I. Reihe. *Die Protokolle des Preußischen Staatsministeriums 1817-1934/38*. Rainer Pateau ed., V 10. *November 1858 bis 28. Dezember 1866* (Hildesheim 2001) 33.

⁷⁷ Berlin-Brandenburgischer Akademie der Wissenschaften / Jürgen Kocka and Wolfgang Neugebauer eds., *Acta Borussica, Neue Folge*. I. Reihe. *Die Protokolle des Preußischen Staatsministeriums 1817-1934/38*. Rainer Pateau and Hartwin Spenkuch eds., VII 3. *Januar 1867 bis 20. Dezember 1878* (Hildesheim 2004) 41-42; Berlin-Brandenburgischer Akademie der Wissenschaften / Jürgen Kocka

William thus remained a significant factor in the decision-making process of the State Ministry. His activity explains the disparaging remarks Bismarck frequently made about him in the 1870s and which have been taken over by scholars. Pflanze for example has written that because William's health began to decline in the early 1870s and his powers of concentration waned, he became more receptive to those around him seeking to influence him, such as Augusta.⁷⁸ But Pflanze based his account on the diary of agricultural minister Robert Lucius von Ballhausen, who recorded on 28 February 1875 that Bismarck complained about William's tendency to intervene in governmental affairs.⁷⁹ Such remarks were frequently made by Bismarck out of frustration and to discredit William's role. Bismarck likewise made comments to the British envoy to Germany, Odo Russell: to him he complained about William's frequent stubbornness and refusal to delegate work.⁸⁰ In reality, William's continued participation in the State Ministry's deliberations helped raise the veneration his ministers felt for him. Despite the differences the cabinet ministers had with their monarch, all revered the aging Emperor.⁸¹ Culture Minister Robert von Puttkamer stated in his memoirs that

‘der Kaiser begnügte sich keineswegs damit, Vorträge und Vorschläge entgegenzunehmen: seine rege geistige Aufmerksamkeit verfolgte unablässig die meisten Vorkommnisse des politischen und öffentlichen Lebens, er sandte dem Minister des Innern oft schriftlich seine Bemerkungen und Beobachtungen, gab Anregungen und Ratschläge behufs Verwertung der etwa zu ziehenden Folgerungen im Parlament, kurz, war bis in sein höchstes Alter an der Leitung der Regierungsgeschäfte in strengster Pflichterfüllung und nie erlahmenden Eifer persönlich beteiligt.’⁸²

Two means were available for William to exercise his prerogatives towards the State Ministry: attending its deliberations or corresponding with its members to make his views known, forcing the Cabinet to take a position. This was an effective means, especially when he was absent from Berlin or after he attended less or no longer its deliberations. On some occasions a simple note would suffice. Exemplary in this sense are the press laws discussed in 1873 in the State Ministry. To William's consternation, these lacked a paragraph forbidding blasphemy. To Augusta he wrote that

and Wolfgang Neugebauer eds., *Acta Borussica, Neue Folge*. I. Reihe. *Die Protokolle des Preußischen Staatsministeriums 1817-1934/38*. Hartwin Spenkuch ed., VII 8. *Januar 1879 bis 19. März 1890* (Hildesheim 1999) 23-25.

⁷⁸ Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 355-357.

⁷⁹ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 70.

⁸⁰ Urbach, *Bismarck's favourite Englishman*, 91.

⁸¹ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle VII*, 23.

⁸² Albert von Puttkamer ed., *Staatsminister von Puttkamer. Ein Stück preußischer Vergangenheit 1828-1900* (Leipzig, without date [1928]) 113.

‘Ich liege im Kampf mit den Ministerien, weil es ein neues Pressgesetz welches der Reichstag selbst verschärft vorgelegt, keine § wegen der Überhandnahme der Angriffe nicht mehr bloß gegen die Kirche, sondern gegen des Dasein Gottes in der Presse klar und bestimmt aufgenommen und mit strenger Strafe belegt hat. So hat die hiesige Zeitung „Der Sozialdemokrat“ (...) einen infamen Artikel geliefert, der mit den Worten endigt: „Christus ist tot! Es lebe Lassalle!“ Und der in Leipzig erscheinende „Volksstaat“ hat folgendes vor 14 Tagen gedruckt als Schluß eines Artikels: „Das Dasein Gottes ist Menschen-Erfindung. Kein Mensch hat ihn gesehen, also alles, was von Gott stammen soll, ist Menschenwerk, und daß können und wollen wir Menschen ändern nach unserem Willen.“ Und so etwas was nur in der Schreckenszeit der ersten franz[ösische] Revolution geadigt und deshalb Gott abgeschafft wurde, wird in Deutschland im tiefsten Frieden gedruckt und ist bisher nicht inkriminiert (?). Dagegen ist die hiesige Charfreitag-Scheußlichkeit geistlich verfolgt und von Gericht – vorgestern freigesprochen worden [de] manque eines Straf-§ im Gesetzbuch!!!!’⁸³

This then resulted in William sending a note to the State Ministry, which was forced to discuss the matter and insert a paragraph that could make publishers responsible for what was being printed in their media.⁸⁴

Combining notes and memoranda with his physical presence at the cabinet’s deliberations could strengthen William’s role further. This was particularly clear in the debate over the death penalty. William had usually been reluctant to implement death sentences because of his conscience. As public opinion increasingly shifted towards abolition, the Reichstag voted on 28 February 1870 in favour of excluding the death penalty from the criminal code. The State Ministry now wished to push through a new criminal code, but during its deliberations William led the minority view that the death penalty should be retained for treason. In a memorandum of 14 April 1870, he argued that the security of his position would be undone by abolishing the death penalty for high treason.⁸⁵ As a result of this note, the State Ministry considered William taking part in its deliberations necessary. By way of demonstrating the importance he attached to the issue, William convened the Crown Council in his palace on 18 May 1870. But the ministry argued that the criminal code provided an important tool to bind the German states together. William stated his dilemma: his God-given position was there to ensure order, security and honour, which his fellow German princes were entitled to expect from the state. It was thus in the state’s interest that the monarch’s life would be protected. Abolishing capital punishment for high

⁸³ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz. BPH Rep. 51J Kaiser Wilhelm I. und Kaiserin Augusta. No. 509b. Briefe (Abschriften) Kaiser Wilhelm I. an seine Gemahlin Augusta. Band 1873, Bl. 31-32, William to Augusta, 21 May 1873.

⁸⁴ Pateau and Spenkuch eds. *Protokolle VI*, 317.

⁸⁵ Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of retribution. Capital punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (Oxford 1996) 327-341.

treason would remove protection of the divine mission of a monarch. To order someone's execution is difficult for a monarch, but abolishing the death penalty for high treason would mean that any perpetrator knows he will spend a lifetime in prison. William ended the meeting with the remark he would consider his decision. The next day, he informed the cabinet he had decided against its majority.⁸⁶ William caused an impasse, which provided Bismarck the opportunity to write a new draft that removed the death penalty for murder and high treason in peacetime. Bismarck succeeded in turning the tide in the Reichstag, resulting in the death penalty for the murder or attempted murder of the sovereign and for murder and high treason being approved for the Criminal Code, as per William's wishes.⁸⁷

William's performative use of memoranda and physical presence at the State Ministry's deliberations increasingly determined his stance during the Culture Wars as he moved from protecting Prussia's state interests to upholding the role of religion in society and social harmony. Karl von Wilmowski, head of William's *Zivilkabinett*, has stated in his memoirs that William privately made no distinction between denominations, but rejected Catholicism because of its mass and clerical customs, even if a mass sometimes could impress him. But during the Culture Wars, William believed that Ultramontanes and the Centre Party undermined the Crown's authority and sought to subject this to papal authority.⁸⁸ This determined William's operating during the so-called Kremetz-affair in 1872. Philipp Kremetz was bishop of the Ermland. In this capacity he had excommunicated a teacher of religion named Wollmann at a gymnasium in Braunsberg and taken away his teaching permission for his opposition to the doctrine of papal infallibility. Because of the resistance against this doctrine that existed among some Catholics, such as teachers and academics, they were subsequently threatened with a conviction by the church and excommunication. Because of their status as civil servants they subsequently received support from the Prussian state.⁸⁹ The Prussian Cabinet sought to intervene to solve the conflict.⁹⁰ In order to terminate the conflict so as not to lose support from the population, the Cabinet, at Bismarck's insistence, on 18 April 1872 sought to give Kremetz a clear choice in solving the conflict and emphasize that his stance implied that he did not recognize the authority of the Prussian state laws and instead only canonical law.⁹¹ Kremetz' answer subsequently led to a temporal ban on his position.⁹²

Up until this point, William had not been publicly involved in the Kremetz-affair. This changed when the confrontation of the Prussian state with

⁸⁶ Pateau and Spenkuch eds. *Protokolle VI/I*, 182-184.

⁸⁷ Evans, *Rituals of retribution*, 341-347.

⁸⁸ Gerhard Besier ed., "Die Persönlichen Erinnerungen des Chefs des Geheimen Zivilkabinetts Karl von Wilmowski (1817-1893)" in: *Jahrbuch für Berlin-Brandenburgische Kirchengeschichte* 50 (1977) 131-185, there, 146.

⁸⁹ Pateau and Spenkuch eds. *Protokolle VI/I*, 23.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, 267, 269, 270.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, 274, 275.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 280.

Kremetz became public in September 1872. William, accompanied by the Crown Prince, was to travel to Marienburg for the centenary commemoration of West-Prussia's inclusion in the Hohenzollern state. The commemoration entailed the laying of the first stone for a monument of Frederick the Great, for which the Catholic clergy of the Ermland were likewise invited. Kremetz had expressed beforehand the hope that he be received by William, a request that the latter rejected. In order to present an undivided government, William had a letter drafted by Culture Minister Adalbert Falk.⁹³ The letter stated that because of Kremetz' continued refusal to recognize Prussia's state laws and place papal authority higher than that of the Prussian state, William could not receive him at the commemoration.⁹⁴ Bismarck reiterated this position in a personal letter to Kremnitz one week later.⁹⁵ Consequently, Kremetz was not present at the actual commemoration, though the other Catholic clergy of the Ermland diocese were.⁹⁶ To Augusta, William described his frustration that the *Spenersche Zeitung* quoted from a letter from Kremetz in which the latter suggested differences in the letters written to him by William and Bismarck with regards to the demands that he comply with the Prussian state. Nonetheless, William kept a straight face: 'Ich habe die Katholische Geistlichkeit, welche in Marienberg erschien, absichtlich sehr freundlich behandelt, um zu beweisen, daß ich gegen die Kirche nichts habe wohl aber gegen die unangenehme Personen.'⁹⁷ Through his performance William ensured that Prussian state interest were projected via an undivided government.

William's stance became more assertive as the Culture Wars intensified and affected his notion of the role of religion in society and on social harmony. The act on civil marriages can illustrate this. Primarily, the act on civil marriages was part of Bismarck's attempt to counter the Catholic bishops' call against the May laws of 1873. Bismarck wanted to approve civil marriage in Prussia and Germany to undermine Catholic priests' continued performing of marriages. Like Bismarck, William too had been initially opposed to the idea of civil marriage. According to Wilmowski, William saw in the bill an endangering of religion; baptisms and religious marriages would be the exception. 'Lange widerstand der König, die Ermächtigung zur Einbringung der Vorlage zu vollziehen; so oft ich sie zur Sprache brachte, wurde er ärgerlich u. heftig – das Ministerium drängte in der Besorgniß, im Landtage erschüttert zu werden.'⁹⁸ William's struggle with the proposed act led him to delay the decision, even if pressure around him increased. According to Johann Heinrich Gelzer, a confidant of Grand Duke Frederick of

⁹³ Ibidem, 281 and fn. 2. That the letter was written at William's behest follows from a letter William wrote to Augusta after attending the commemoration: GStA PK. BPH Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Band 1872, Bl. 108-109, William to Augusta, 17 September 1872.

⁹⁴ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, 281-283.

⁹⁵ Konrad Canis, Lothar Gall, Klaus Hildebrand and Eberhard Kolb eds., *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Neue Friedrichsruher Ausgabe. Abteilung III. 1871-1898*. Andrea Hopp ed., I. *Schriften 1871-1873* (Paderborn 2004) 378.

⁹⁶ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 17 September 1872.

⁹⁷ GStA PK. BPH Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Band 1872, Bl. 108-109, William to Augusta, 17 September 1872.

⁹⁸ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 147.

Baden, pressure was put on William in July 1872 in the matter by likewise pointing at the conflict over the resistant Catholic military bishop Namszanowski. At the same time, Empress Augusta threatened to transfer to another church.⁹⁹ Gradually, William had come to the conclusion that the idea was unavoidable, as he stated to Frederick of Baden.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, in a meeting of the Cabinet on 29 October, it had come to the conclusion that the measure had become unavoidable, that William had to be convinced to agree to the measure and negotiations with him had to be started.¹⁰¹ But Albrecht von Stosch had written on 7 December 1873 that the monarch had ‘unausgesetzt mit dem Civilehegesetz beschäftigt; er habe erst am Donnerstag auf ein Schreiben des Kaisers an Wilmowski an diesen einen 1 Bogen langen Brief geschrieben, der Kaiser habe seitdem Wilmowski nicht empfangen.’¹⁰² Eventually, Wilmowski succeeded in convincing William by pointing out that the act was primarily a financial matter which would compensate priests for the loss of income as a result of the law, so as to prevent consternation coming from the Evangelical church. But William was dissatisfied with the act on civil marriages after having signed these into law.¹⁰³ In the end, he had succeeded in delaying the decision by well over a year and was only convinced by letting state interest prevail over social harmony.

In the course of the culture wars, William’s concern over social cohesion would conflict with his adherence to the primacy of the Prussian state, causing his conduct in the decision-making process to change. This became particularly clear during the struggle over the act to close monasteries in 1875. The act was one of the measures developed by the Prussian government in response to the Catholic church’s resistance against the May laws. The consideration had not been without precedent. As early as 2 February 1870, the State Ministry discussed the possibility in a Crown Council held in William’s palace. William expressed being torn between dissatisfaction over Catholic monasteries intervening too much in matters such as marriages and at the deathbed, whilst wanting to treat the Catholic religion equally. But the growth of monasteries required that the cabinet upheld measures to curtail this. Bismarck pointed out that it helped the support of the dynasty if Catholics did not fear prosecution. But William nonetheless retained his fear that Catholic orders could subject their members too much.¹⁰⁴ When the matter was taken up again in April 1875, William had grown increasingly concerned over the effects of the culture wars. He refused to sign the law on monasteries that the cabinet presented to him and instead took the papers with him on his annual Kur.¹⁰⁵ As a result, the cabinet on 27 April decided to urge William to sign the bill, as delaying was publicly understood as a temporary halt or even a turning point of

⁹⁹ Walther Peter Fuchs ed., *Großherzog Friedrich I. Von Baden und die Reichspolitik 1871-1907 I 1871-1879* (Stuttgart 1968) 62.

¹⁰⁰ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 179.

¹⁰¹ Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI*, 286.

¹⁰² Winfried Baumgart ed., *Albrecht von Stosch: Politische Korrespondenz 1871-1896* (Berlin 2014) 118.

¹⁰³ Besier ed., ‘Wilmowski’, 147.

¹⁰⁴ Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI*, 172.

¹⁰⁵ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 74.

policy towards the Catholic church, which in turn would undermine the standing of the cabinet.¹⁰⁶ This turned out to be the case. The same day, *Germania*, which was closely associated with the Centre Party, commented that liberal uproar over the matter was selective when it argued that William should have been restrained when he hinted that he had reservations against the law on monasteries.¹⁰⁷ William promptly demanded that those monasteries which provided education and health care would be allowed to continue to exist.¹⁰⁸ William called for a Crown Council on 4 May to reinforce his demands. There he stated that, contrary to press reports, he was not an opponent of the dissolution of monasteries, but instead supported the dissolution of those Catholic orders in the Rhineland which damaged state interests. But William also deemed it important that the feelings of Catholic subjects were acknowledged. He insisted that replacements would be found for the provision of education and requested that the timespan for dissolution would be extended from two to four years, even though a two-year period had previously been agreed to by the Prussian diet.¹⁰⁹ Both the bill and the opposition it generated did little to affect William's stance.

The Crown Council infuriated Bismarck, whose health had already suffered because of the 'war in sight'-crisis. He signed a request for resignation from his posts the same day, but its official delivery was postponed, so as not to coincide with the presence of the Russian Emperor Alexander II and his foreign minister Alexander Gorchakov. William insisted that the request remained secret to prevent public embarrassment and not to suggest publicly that the diplomatic crisis with France was the cause of Bismarck's request. Bismarck suggested in his letter a transitional period to form a new government, but William rejected this idea and sent him on an extended leave instead.¹¹⁰ To the Grand Duke of Weimar he expressed hope that the leave would help Bismarck recover, as the latter believed he was irreplaceable.¹¹¹ Yet Bismarck's resistance was not the only William faced. Whilst in Wiesbaden considering Bismarck's request, his daughter Luise agitated against the law.¹¹² Augusta also offered strong resistance against the law in her dealings with William.¹¹³ Their resistance had little effect, because the Prussian Diet passed the law. Despite the outcome, William did enquire with Falk on 9 June on the execution of the law.¹¹⁴ Most Catholic orders were dissolved with exceptions for those that provided health care and women's education.¹¹⁵ Writing to Heinrich VII. Reuß, William's adjutant general, Bernard von Werder,

¹⁰⁶ Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI*, 395.

¹⁰⁷ *Germania*, 29 April 1875.

¹⁰⁸ Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI*, 396, fn. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 396-397.

¹¹⁰ Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 278.

¹¹¹ Schultze ed., *Weimarer Briefe II* (Berlin 1924) 118-119.

¹¹² Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 214.

¹¹³ James Stone and Winfried Baumgart eds., *Heinrich VII. Prinz Reuß. Botschafter unter Bismarck und Caprivi. Briefwechsel 1871-1894* (Paderborn 2015) 133.

¹¹⁴ Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI*, 396, fn. 2.

¹¹⁵ Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918 II*, 374.

the military *Bevollmächtigter* at the Russian court wrote on 15 May ‘Gott sei Dank hat der Kaiser eine so glückliche Natur, daß Alles an ihm abgeleitet.’¹¹⁶

William’s determination to retain a role in the decision-making process also meant seeking to exclude other members of his family from his undertakings, in particular Augusta and Frederick William. The examples discussed here nuance the presumed influence of Augusta over William. Literature has often pointed at the frequent interferences the more liberal-minded and intellectually better developed Augusta made, especially in the field of foreign policy and relations with Catholics and Poles. She corresponded with foreign sovereigns, often suggesting she did so on William’s behalf and receiving ambassadors at her weekly salons.¹¹⁷ Angelow has pointed out that while their marriage was settled in 1829 for political reasons and not primarily out of love, over time respect, trust and friendship emerged.¹¹⁸ This helps explain why William was capable to resist Augusta’s attempts at seeking influence, as their unpublished private correspondence demonstrates. At the height of the Kremetz affair for example, William wrote on 29 May 1872 to Augusta that

‘Die Analyse dabei, die Du über kirchliche Dinge machst, beantworte ich theils mit meinem Dir bekannte Grundsätze in unseren Kirche und mit einen kurzen P[ro] M[emoria] über [die] katholische Frage bei der Cremenzschen Histoire. Ich warne Dich nochmals, die Dinge niemals nach Personen und Gefühlen zu betrachten, sondern nach Gesetze und Recht und dabei nie zu vergessen, daß die Staatsgesetze in der ganzen Welt über die kirchlichen stehen, was alle katholischen Geistlichen beschwören aber namentlich sei dem neuen Dogma nicht mehr halten, weil die durch 600 Priester erfundene Infallibilität alle weltlichen Pflichten sich unterordnet des 2. Heilands.’¹¹⁹

Four days later, on 2 June, William pointed out to Augusta that others might follow the example of Kremetz and Namszanowski in their attempt to place church laws over state laws and added that ‘Der Staat im Staat ist also vorhanden und Alle, die dies bisher leugneten und uns ins Gesicht leugneten, handele nur danach. Das ist es, was ich Dir immer sagte und Du nie glauben wolltest, weil Du das mehr glaubst, was Dir unter der der Farbe eingeflüstert wird.’¹²⁰

Yet, we should not pursue this argument too far, for William was likewise willing to accommodate Augusta’s wishes if he agreed with them. In November 1876 the question was raised whether Germany would formally participate in the World Exhibition in Paris. Maria Grever has argued that world exhibitions provided a chance for nineteenth-century monarchs to project a more populist monarchy and sustain a royal culture, combining royal grandeur with

¹¹⁶ Stone and Baumgart eds., *Briefwechsel*, 133.

¹¹⁷ Lamar Cecil, *The German diplomatic service, 1871-1914* (Princeton 1976) 193-194.

¹¹⁸ Angelow, ‘Wilhelm I.’, 248.

¹¹⁹ GStA PK. BPH Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Band 1872, Bl. 31-32, William to Augusta, 29 May 1872.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, 2 June 1872, Bl. 35-36.

more bourgeois elements, whilst also presenting themselves as the embodiment of their nation on an international stage.¹²¹ But the Prussian Cabinet was against the idea, fearing a defeat for German industry and a national humiliation.¹²² Nonetheless, Augusta had insisted to William that he make the case in the cabinet. According to Lucius von Ballhausen, ‘Der Kaiser wolle, von Ihrer Majestät beeinflußt, die Pariser Ausstellung beschicken, während er keine Lust dazu habe und es weder politisch noch wirtschaftlich richtig finde. Wer bürge dafür, daß der Kronprinz nicht, wenn er in seiner Kürassieruniform erschiene, dort insultiert würde?’¹²³ As a result, William called a Crown Council for 6 December. William feared loss of face for Germany if it did not accept the invitation and enter the contest with other nations. Most Cabinet ministers disagreed with William, arguing that the profit for the industry would be little as would popular interest. It was telling according to them that most opposition parties, including the Centre Party and the social democrats, and the Crown Prince were opposed to the idea. William expressed regrets disagreeing with the cabinet, but would not push his dissenting opinion.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, Germany did send a delegation of artists, led by Anton von Werner. As he found out later, William had paid for the delegation entirely from his *Privatschatulle*.¹²⁵

William was more persistent – and successful – in keeping his son excluded from the decision-making process. This perpetuated a Hohenzollern tradition of antagonism between ruler and heir. Clark has written that throughout the dynasty’s history, the relation between ruler and heir was strained because of personal conflicts, sometimes because of psychological causes and differences in governing style between expensive and ostentatious monarchs and frugal, more disciplined monarchs.¹²⁶ But, as Müller has argued, the exclusion of Frederick William from the decision-making process was also the result of the Crown Prince’s sympathetic remarks towards the liberal cause during the Crown’s conflict with the Diet in 1863-1864. William’s distrust in his son did not lessen in the next two decades.¹²⁷ In June 1871, William had stipulated that Frederick William be introduced to governmental affairs, sending him transcriptions of the votes and protocols of the *Bundesrat*. Although he was present at meetings of the Crown Councils, he mostly remained silent, likely out of consideration for his father.¹²⁸ Nonetheless, Frederick William was systematically excluded from the rest of the decision-making process. One poignant example occurred in the 1870s,

¹²¹ Maria Grever, ‘Staging modern monarchs. Royalty at the world exhibitions of 1851 and 1867’ in: Jeroen Deploige and Gita Deneckere eds., *Mystifying the monarch: studies on discourse, power and history* (Amsterdam 2006) 161-179.

¹²² Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI*, 437.

¹²³ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 94.

¹²⁴ Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI*, 438-439.

¹²⁵ Anton von Werner, *Erlebnisse und Eindrücke* (Berlin 1913) 245.

¹²⁶ Christopher Clark, ‘Fathers and sons in the history of the Hohenzollern dynasty’ in: Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi Mehrkens eds., *Sons and heirs. Succession and political culture in nineteenth-century Europe* (Basingstoke 2016) 19-37.

¹²⁷ Müller, *Our Fritz*, 13-29.

¹²⁸ Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI*, 42.

when William had sent Wilmowski to convince Bismarck not to resign. Wilmowski succeeded in doing so and reported back to the palace. Only through Frederick William's coincidental presence at that report did he find out about the affair.¹²⁹ This constellation continued throughout the 1870s and 1880s. On 19 December 1881, Frederick William recorded in his diary that 'Niemals hat S.M. weniger als gerade in diesem Jahre mit mir über irgend eine ernste Frage gesprochen, vielmehr geht Alles nur zwischen S.M. und Bismarck'.¹³⁰ As will be seen below, this did not prevent William being adamant that Frederick William was present at public appearances in order to demonstrate monarchical unity.

William's personnel policy

William's role in the State Ministry was complemented by his right to appoint cabinet ministers and government officials. Through this, William could – in theory – exercise considerable influence over the direction of policy, complicating affairs for Bismarck.¹³¹ A second tenet of his personnel policy was the right to receive officials in an audience to be given reports. This helped to establish a direct relation between the monarch and his officials which could go beyond Bismarck's interference. Together, these two features strengthened William's independence and as a locus point in the political decision-making process, forcing other political centres of gravity to take account of him.

Of the right to make appointments, none was more important than that of appointing the minister-president of Prussia and Imperial Chancellor. Although Bismarck held this post throughout most of William's reign, this did not mean that the prerogative was not exercised or shape the dynamics of their relationship. Bismarck's requests for resignation from office were a staple of Imperial Germany's politics, but so were William's refusals to let him go. The Chancellor requested resignation in December 1874 in the wake of the Arnim-affair, in May 1875 after the 'War-in-sight' crisis, in 1877 during the 'Chancellor'-crisis, in 1879 during the dispute with William over the Dual Alliance, in 1880 over the stamp tax, in 1882 and in 1884 over the reinstallation of the *Staatsrat*. In all of these cases, William refused Bismarck's requests. Literature has – rightfully – pointed out that Bismarck's threats and requests for resignation were often a means of forcing William into agreeing to his policy or demonstrate his indispensability.¹³² But literature has often omitted William's perspective, failing to understand how he contributed to the relationship with Bismarck. Three arguments need to be made to provide correction.

First, by exercising his prerogative to refuse Bismarck's request for resignation, William consciously chose to retain Bismarck in office. Literature sometimes points out that William retained Bismarck because he would not be

¹²⁹ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 156-159.

¹³⁰ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 400.

¹³¹ Cf. Pflanze, *Bismarck* II, 375, which quotes Bismarck: 'In all questions that have to do with personnel the Kaiser is difficult, but, when it comes to substituting one person for another, he is almost impossible.'

¹³² Cf. *ibidem*, 272-278.

able to govern without him.¹³³ But this overlooks that it was politically expedient for William to keep Bismarck in office. The cult that centred on Bismarck as the founder of the German Empire was by no means there in the 1870s and 1880s as it would be from the 1890s onwards, primarily because Bismarck did not cultivate it and his popularity was disputed.¹³⁴ But William sufficiently recognized that keeping Bismarck as his Chancellor also served his own stature and political legitimacy. In matters regarding the Evangelical church for example, Bismarck mostly refrained from interfering, this being foremost William's field as *summus episcopus*. But as Grand Duke Frederick of Baden has testified, William often included Bismarck in church affairs to gain additional legitimacy in settling affairs.¹³⁵ This went also for Moltke. Eberhard Kessel has written that 'tatsächlich blieb aber diese Sorge sowohl auf dem alten Kaiser wie auf Moltke länger lasten, als vorauszusehen war, und der Kaiser, der durch sein hohe Geburt in seiner Stellung auszuhalten gezwungen war, mochte der Waffengeführten siegreicher Feldzüge in der nun folgende Friedensarbeit nicht missen'.¹³⁶

Secondly, retaining Bismarck in office was a choice of policy. Both Karina Urbach and Pflanze have pointed out that after 1880 the relation between William and Bismarck eased and remained solid. Primarily, the end of the Culture Wars and the exhaustion of both over the dispute they had over the Dual Alliance, had stabilized relations between the two.¹³⁷ This did not prevent Bismarck to request resignation in 1880, 1882 and 1884. In general, the easing of relations likewise seems to have come from William's withdrawal from the State Ministry's deliberation and his support for Bismarck's conservative turn of politics from 1875 onwards. It was no secret that William was suspicious of any cooperation with the National-Liberals. Throughout the 1880s, William repeatedly expressed his satisfaction with the ministers and direction of policy. At the reception in the palace for his birthday in 1882, he stated to Lucius von Ballhausen that 'Se. Majestät antwortete: das Ministerium sei jetzt ganz nach seinen Wünschen und Ansichten zusammengesetzt und arbeitete sehr gut'.¹³⁸ At the 1886 church service for the commemoration of his accession to the throne, he gave an address in which he stated according to Ballhausen that 'Er danke Gott besonders dafür, daß er ihm den Fürsten Bismarck zugeführt habe. Er danke auch uns allen, wir seien nun ja ein homogenes Ministerium und er wünsche nur, daß wenigstens in seiner Regierungszeit eine Änderung nicht mehr einträte'.¹³⁹

¹³³ Clark, *Iron kingdom*, 587.

¹³⁴ Robert Gerwarth, *The Bismarck myth. Weimar Germany and the legacy of the Iron Chancellor* (Oxford 2003) 11-12.

¹³⁵ Fuchs ed., *Reichspolitik I*, 129.

¹³⁶ Eberhard Kessel, *Moltke* (Stuttgart 1957) 596.

¹³⁷ Urbach, *Bismarck's favourite Englishman*, 92; Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 277-278. Pflanze has also pointed out that the conflict between William and Bismarck had also strained the latter more: 'Bismarck's dispute with Wilhelm over the Dual Alliance was hard on the nerves and health of both, but Bismarck was the one who did the complaining.' Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 514.

¹³⁸ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 225.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, 327.

Thirdly, some of Bismarck's requests for resignation from office were countered by William with a threat of abdication, forcing Bismarck to give in. Ernst Engelberg raised the question whether William deliberately threatened abdication in September 1862 to convince Bismarck to accept the position of Prussian Minister-President.¹⁴⁰ When William's threats of abdication on later occasions are considered, then there is reason to assume that William did indeed use this threat deliberately. Of this Bismarck was aware. On 27 April 1876, he stated to Lucius von Ballhausen that 'er habe diese Besorgnisse seit Jahren und bleibe doch im Amt, weil der Kaiser sein Gehen als Fahnenflucht auslegen würde. Der Kaiser wolle abdizieren, wenn er ginge, darum blieb er.'¹⁴¹ William's threats were not without effects, as Lucius von Ballhausen testified in 1879. During the crisis over the Dual Alliance, William again brought up possible abdication: 'Als 1877 Bismarck seinen Abschied forderte, hat Se. Majestät ihm vorgeworfen, er wolle ihn allein lassen, um der Welt zu zeigen, daß er (Bismarck) allein die große Politik der letzten Jahre gemacht habe. Er werde aber alsdann auch abdizieren. Se. Majestät scheint das aber weniger im Ton des Vorwurfs als wie in der Form eines Appells an Bismarcks Loyalität und Ergebenheit gesagt zu haben. Seitdem hat Bismarck eine größere Zurückhaltung mit Entlassungsgesuchen geübt.'¹⁴² Bismarck had good reasons to be reluctant in risking William's abdication. In the nineteenth century, monarchs abdicated only as a result of political crises, such as Louis Philippe of France and Ferdinand I of Austria in the wake of the 1848 revolutions, or in the case the monarchy had lost a war, such as Napoleon III in 1870. William's abdication would have equalled a political disaster for Bismarck, something that the staunchly monarchist Chancellor would never risk.

William required less political drama to make his role tangible in the case of lower-level appointments. Foreign policy was one of those areas where he could on occasion actively intervene in matters of personnel, even if Bismarck often had his way. One example was the appointment of Herbert von Bismarck as state secretary in 1885, against which William offered considerable resistance. Conversely, once William was attached to any diplomat, Bismarck likewise had to overcome considerable resistance to have such an official removed. Countering Bismarck's objections, William held on to Count Albrecht von Bernstorff in London and appointed Baron Karl von Werther, an old friend as minister to Constantinople in 1874. In similar fashion, William held on to Harry Count von Arnim as ambassador in Paris and only after considerable efforts from Bismarck could Arnim be removed from his position in Paris.¹⁴³ What caused Bismarck's wrath against Arnim was that he supported the restoration of a monarchy in France, was close to both William and Augusta, opposed Bismarck's church policy and was closely aligned to the conservative Prussian aristocracy. As a result, Bismarck feared Arnim was lined up as a potential successor and worked

¹⁴⁰ Engelberg, *Bismarck. Urpreuße*, 525.

¹⁴¹ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 88.

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, 173.

¹⁴³ Cecil, *German diplomatic service*, 200-201.

to have him removed.¹⁴⁴ In general, William would prefer middle-aged men for bureaucratic appointments and for ambassadorships. In 1876, William rejected Bismarck's proposal to appoint Robert von Keudell ambassador in Vienna, who, at fifty-two-years old, was deemed too young by William. Only by then suggesting Prince Otto zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, who was younger than forty, but of impeccable aristocratic lineage, did Bismarck overcome William's obstinacy. In general, William preferred high-standing ambassadorial appointments to be given to proven lineage, a preference Bismarck failed to overcome until the end of his reign.¹⁴⁵ In domestic affairs, Rudolph Delbrück's resignation demonstrates that William could have a considerable degree of independence in this field too. Delbrück bypassed Bismarck in 1876 and tendered his resignation directly to William, who did not respond until one month later.¹⁴⁶ Lermann has rightly pointed out that in so doing, Delbrück gained independence vis-à-vis Bismarck.¹⁴⁷ But it equally demonstrates William's independence too.

This independence was further strengthened in the 1880s by William's willingness to dismiss cabinet ministers when they had, in his view, not sufficiently defended his government in the Reichstag. This was the case with the resignation of Stosch, the head of the admiralty, and Georg von Kameke, the minister of war. To be sure, the fall of both was prepared by Bismarck. As War Minister, Kameke was in charge of defending military legislation in the Reichstag. But Bismarck believed that Kameke let the Reichstag have too much influence in military legislation. Furthermore, Kameke had drawn the wrath of Emil von Albedyll, head of William's military cabinet, and Alfred von Waldersee, Quartermaster-General and deputy to Moltke. Both sought to establish the independence of their agencies at the cost of the War Ministry. After having come under criticism from centrist and liberal factions in the Reichstag, Kameke advised William in February 1883 to compromise and accept demands regarding tax exemptions on private income of officers. This infuriated Bismarck, both because of Kameke's willingness to make concessions, as well as bypassing him and communicating directly with William. According to Pflanze, Albedyll and Waldersee convinced William that Kameke encouraged parliamentary government.¹⁴⁸

However, the evidence suggests that the resignation of Kameke also came about because William asserted himself. On 13 February 1883, Lucius von Ballhausen encountered Kameke, who detailed how a heated exchange between him and Albedyll had led him to submit his resignation with William. Kameke assumed, as Pflanze later did, that William was steered in this direction. But Lucius von Ballhausen – correctly – concluded that Bismarck withheld from

¹⁴⁴ Fritz Hartung, 'Arnim-Suckow, Harry Graf von', in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* I (Berlin 1953) 373-375.

¹⁴⁵ Cecil, *German Diplomatic service*, 201-202.

¹⁴⁶ Rudolf Morsey, 'Rudolph Delbrück (1817-1903)' in: Lothar Gall and Ulrich Lappenküpfer eds., *Bismarcks Mitarbeiter* (Paderborn 2009) 69-89, there 83-84.

¹⁴⁷ Lermann, 'Imperial Governance', 18.

¹⁴⁸ Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 38-39.

intervening.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, two months later, on 8 April, William explained his decision to Lucius von Ballhausen in a detailed conversation. Kameke had done too little to counter attacks from the Reichstag on the army. Everything that concerns the *Kommandogewalt* was his, and not the minister's affairs and was not for the Reichstag to intervene. Kameke was willing to offer concessions to the Reichstag on the military pensions law, even if he had previously with William discussed a stronger version of the law. William had urged Kameke to follow a stricter course in a written note on 12 February, whereas Bismarck had declined to intervene. At the Reichstag session of 24 February, Kameke suggested he spoke on behalf of William and that he, Kameke, was willing to make concessions, even though William had urged him not to do so. In this, Kameke saw a loss of confidence from William and subsequently tendered his resignation. William informed Bismarck, who believed the position of Kameke indeed to have been untenable and subsequently decided to grant Kameke his resignation.¹⁵⁰

William's self-assertion is shown by his simultaneously dismissal of Stosch from office. Originally, William was always willing to defend Stosch, despite attacks from Bismarck. The latter suspected in Stosch an ally of the Crown Prince and a potential successor, when Frederick William would ascend the throne. Especially Stosch's reticence raised Bismarck's suspicions that he was a spy for William and the Crown Prince. During the 1877 Chancellor-crisis, Bismarck derided Stosch in the Reichstag, seeking to trigger him to submit his resignation. Seeing through this, William refused Stosch's request and in effect rebuked Bismarck.¹⁵¹ But Stosch thereafter no longer participated in meetings of the Cabinet and only of the Crown Council, whilst no longer being sent confidential reports.¹⁵² Because of Stosch's close cooperation with Kameke in 1883 on the contested law, he likewise tendered his resignation. At first, William refused this request and only granted after Stosch had resubmitted his request with a more detailed argumentation. The crisis had profoundly shaken William, but he was nonetheless determined to keep *Deutungshoheit* when it came to change of cabinet ministers. On 3 April, and without ministerial countersignature, he issued a note to the cabinet on the grounds for the release of Kameke and Stosch, with the intention that the members of the cabinet 'näher informiert werden solle, damit jedes Mitglied des Ministeriums die Angelegenheit genau kennen, zugleich aber auch die Gesichtspunkte kennen lerne, welche Se. Majestät im Verlauf derselben als Seine Ansicht und Sein Wille aufgestellt habe, und welche Er überall beachtet und erforderlichenfalls vertreten wissen wolle'. In addition, William had added a summary of the course of events, stating that the resignation of Stosch was a matter between him and Stosch and all other matters reported in the press were invented.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 251-252.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 257-260.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 362-363.

¹⁵² Pateau and Spenkuch, *Protokolle VI/I*, 41.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, 260.

The result of these personnel changes was that William's military prerogatives were strengthened. At Albedyll's insistence, Kameke was replaced by Paul Bronsart von Schellendorf. He agreed to separate the military cabinet and General Staff from the War Ministry and offer a stronger counterweight to the Reichstag. In addition, Albedyll demanded that the Chief of the General Staff would be given direct access to the Emperor. Bronsart von Schellendorf, being eager to accept the post, agreed to these conditions.¹⁵⁴ This strengthened the position of the military cabinet, but also William's military prerogatives. Already a year earlier, Friedrich von Holstein had urged that Moltke be given direct access to William, because, as he stated, 'der Kaiser im Kriege wie im Frieden der Oberbefehlshaber ist. Moltke hielt, dem neueren Gebrauch entgegen, allein einen Vortrag, dessen Ergebnis dem Kriegsminister durch eine Kabinettsordre bekanntgegeben wurde, Inhalts welcher ihm befohlen ward, einige bereits getroffene Verfügungen in Ausführung zu bringen.'¹⁵⁵ Via a cabinet order on 24 May 1883, William decreed that the Chief of the General Staff would have henceforth direct access and provide direct reports to him as monarch and no longer required the support of the Minister of War.¹⁵⁶ In the remaining years of his reign, William continued to draw on this prerogative actively and regularly received reports from the military cabinet three times per week in his palace.¹⁵⁷

By receiving audiences, William formed another direct connection to officials next to their appointment and resignation. His withdrawal from the government in the late 1870s did not withhold him from receiving regular reports from cabinet and bureaucracy officials. Indeed, until the end of his reign William held on to this right, receiving even reports whilst being ill at 90 years old in 1887.¹⁵⁸ Puttkamer has described this process, who, as Minister of the Interior from 1881 onwards, was in close contact to William. Contrary to the head of the Berlin police, Puttkamer did not have regular audiences with William, but had to submit a request to this end if he wanted so. William determined the day when he would be received, though the official was given a choice of hour, which William would then uphold with military punctuality. Nonetheless, William remained an affable monarch throughout such encounters. During an audience with Puttkamer on 23 August 1880, and after having discussed about church policy and recent events with parliament, William grasped Puttkamer's hand across the table and said 'Ich habe Ihnen schon meine Anerkennung über Ihr Verhalten in der kirchenpolitischen Diskussion schriftlich ausgesprochen: und möchte es Ihnen mündlich wiederholen, wie sehr ich mich gefreut habe.' Such encounters were not

¹⁵⁴ Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 39; Gordon A. Craig, *The politics of the Prussian army 1640-1945* (Oxford 1955) 230-231.

¹⁵⁵ Norman Rich and M. H. Fisher eds., *Die geheimen Papiere Friedrich von Holsteins II Tagebuchblätter* (Berlin 1957) 18.

¹⁵⁶ Günther Wohlers, *Die staatsrechtliche Stellung des Generalstabes in Preußen und dem deutschen Reich* (Bonn 1921) 32.

¹⁵⁷ Wolfgang Neugebauer, 'Funktion und Deutung des „Kaiserpalais“'. Zur Residenzstruktur Preussens in der Zeit Wilhelm I.' in: *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen und preussischen Geschichte* 18 (2008) 67-95, there 78-79.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 83.

without the intended effect of projecting the image of a dutiful monarch. In his memoirs Puttkamer stated that

‘der Kaiser begnüge sich keineswegs damit, Vorträge und Vorschläge entgegenzunehmen: seine rege geistige Aufmerksamkeit verfolgte unablässig die meisten Vorkommnisse des politischen öffentlichen Lebens, er sandte dem Minister des Innern oft schriftlich seine Bemerkungen und Beobachtungen, gab Anregungen und Ratschläge behufs Verwertung der etwa zu ziehenden Folgerungen im Parlament, kurz war bis in sein höchstes Alter an der Leitung der Regierungsgeschäfte in strengster Pflichterfüllung und nie lahmenden Eifer persönlich beteiligt.’¹⁵⁹

William’s palace, and especially his study, formed an important spatial context to stage his role as a governing monarch. Like his father, but contrary to his other predecessors and subsequent successors, William did not take up residence in the Berliner *Schloss* upon his accession in 1861. Instead, he remained in his palace at Unter den Linden.¹⁶⁰ The rooms of William’s apartment were located on the front left side of the building. Passing through the entrance hall, visitors would arrive in a second entrance hall, before being received in the *Adjutantenzimmer*. Hereafter visitors would be led through the *Fahnenzimmer*, where the regimental colours of all guard regiments were displayed. This served to demonstrate William’s role as supreme warlord.¹⁶¹ After this, visitors entered the *Vortragszimmer*, where William received reports from court, cabinet, governmental and military officials. Finally, in the corner of the palace, was William’s study, where at his desk he studied papers, often until late into the night. Neugebauer has argued that the sequence in which the rooms were laid out made that their political importance increased from one room to the next. In the *Adjutantenzimmer* the head of the Berlin police was received and the heads of the Civil and Military Cabinets presented their reports. In the *Fahnenzimmer* military reports were received and in later years also reports from Bismarck and Moltke. In the *Vortragszimmer* William received reports from Bismarck and high-ranking officers, including Roon. In William’s actual study Bismarck was likewise received.¹⁶² Geisthövel has interpreted William’s study and in particular his appearances at his window as a means of interaction with the population and personifying the Prussian-German government.¹⁶³ However, not only for the outside population did the palace serve

¹⁵⁹ Puttkamer ed., *Vergangenheit*, 108-111, 141.

¹⁶⁰ Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Residenz – Verwaltung – Repräsentation. Das Berliner Schloß und seine historischen Funktionen vom 15. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Potsdam 1999) 9.

¹⁶¹ Helmut Engel, *Das Haus des deutschen Kaisers. Das „Alten Palais“ Unter den Linden in Berlin* (Berlin 2004) 24-25.

¹⁶² Neugebauer, ‘Funktion und Deutung’, 74-76.

¹⁶³ Alexa Geisthövel, ‘Wilhelm I. am ‘historischen Eckfenster’. Zur Sichtbarkeit des Monarchen in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts.’ in: Jan Andreas, Alexa Geisthövel and Matthias Schwengelbeck eds., *Die Sinnlichkeit der Macht. Herrschaft und Repräsentation der Frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main 2005) 163-185.

to project William as the active governing monarch. By receiving reports until his death, William ensured that government and military officials were likewise reminded about his role in the decision-making process and that the government was personified by him in his palace.

William and foreign policy

Foreign policy formed perhaps the most contentious field of policy between William and Bismarck. What guaranteed William's formal inclusion in the process was his constitutional right to conclude treaties.¹⁶⁴ But in this field their fundamentally opposed conceptions of international relations collided. Whereas Bismarck saw the role of the monarchy primarily in national terms, William saw its role in institutional terms, as Jaap van Osta has observed.¹⁶⁵ Bismarck's conception saw the international system as one of nation states, whereas William's was based on transnational dynastic networks and, where possible, dynastic solidarity. In practice, this meant that William would have supported the restoration of a monarchy in France, whereas Bismarck in 1884 could argue that a republican France was less strong and more isolated on the international stage.¹⁶⁶ To investigate how this tension burdened and determined the decision-making process, this section will take the coming of the Dual Alliance in 1879 as a case study. What makes this a compelling case is that here Bismarck's diplomacy collided with William's doubling of German Emperor with his sympathy for Russia that dated back to the Napoleonic Wars and affection for Alexander II, son of his sister Charlotte.¹⁶⁷ Kroll has discussed the possibilities for the formation of dynastic networks between Russia and Prussia in the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁸ In addition, Arno Becker has discussed how Bismarck mobilized the press in order to force William to agree to the proposed treaty.¹⁶⁹ But the more pertinent question is how William's conception and conduct affected the coming of the Dual Alliance and what this says about the decision-making process in foreign policy.

This is not the place to debate the coming of the Double Alliance in all its nuances.¹⁷⁰ The Congress of Berlin in 1878 ended with little gains for Russia, so that dissatisfaction over Bismarck's politics grew, in particular amongst pan-Slavists, the military and Alexander II. Because of this, Bismarck doubted in the

¹⁶⁴ Ernst Rudolf Huber ed., *Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte II Deutsche Verfassungsdokumente 1851-1900* (3rd Edition; Stuttgart 1986) 389.

¹⁶⁵ Jaap van Osta, *De Europese Monarchie in de negentiende eeuw. Het Britse en Duitse model* (Utrecht 1982) 7. I thank Aad Arendsen for pointing me at this argument.

¹⁶⁶ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 299-300.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Angelow, 'Wilhelm I.', 245-246.

¹⁶⁸ Frank-Lothar Kroll, 'Staatsräson oder Familieninteresse? Möglichkeiten und Grenzen dynastischer Netzwerkbildung zwischen Preußen und Rußland im 19. Jahrhundert' in: *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preußischen Geschichte* 20 (2010) 1-41.

¹⁶⁹ Arno Becker, 'Die Bedeutung von Pressepolitik im ausserpolitischen Richtungsstreit zwischen Bismarck und Wilhelm I. 1879' in: *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preußischen Geschichte* 21 (2011) 101-123.

¹⁷⁰ See for a more detailed discussion Klaus Hildebrand, *Das vergangene Reich. Deutsche Außenpolitik von Bismarck bis Hitler 1871-1945* (Stuttgart 1995) 57-64 and Konrad Canis, *Bismarcks Außenpolitik 1870-1890. Aufstieg und Gefährdung* (Paderborn 2008) 141-159.

second half of the 1870s that any durable alliance with the Russians could be formed. Bismarck's conservative turn in politics and the introduction of tariffs likewise strained the relationship between the two countries, resulting in ever more accusations towards Bismarck. Within this strained international constellation, Austria-Hungary showed willingness to form an alliance with Great Britain or France, whilst the former was eyed by Russia for the same. Bismarck then initiated an alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary and excluded Russia to prevent this.¹⁷¹ Such an initiative was bound to be met by opposition from William because of his closeness to the Russian dynasty. Indeed, throughout the whole process of the coming of the Double Alliance, William sought to effectuate his opposition in different forms of representation, thereby straining the process.

The conflict between William and Bismarck escalated when Alexander II sent William a personal letter on 15 August 1879, harshly criticizing Germany's and Bismarck's politics. The letter afterwards came to be known as the *Ohrfeigenbrief*.¹⁷² Bismarck sought to ease tensions by sending Field Marshal Edwin von Manteuffel to Alexander II and assure the latter of his peaceful intentions.¹⁷³ This mission went without further instructions from William, as Bismarck resided in Gastein.¹⁷⁴ Bismarck subsequently drafted a reply to Alexander in William's name.¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, William held on to the idea that an encounter between him and Alexander II would solve difficulties, as Alexander II had suggested to Manteuffel and agreed to it.¹⁷⁶ William's plan for an encounter with Alexander was met with rejection from Bismarck, in particular because it was to take place on Russian soil, which, given the tone of *Ohrfeigenbrief* of Alexander, Bismarck could not approve of.¹⁷⁷ Nonetheless, William persisted with the idea, even if it met with the rejection from the officer's corps, who though mostly pro-Russian, were against the initiative, especially since the meeting was to take place on the Russian side of the border.¹⁷⁸ This would effectively have been a concession of William to Alexander.

William's decision to meet in person with Alexander in Russia marked a spectacular break from Bismarck's politics and was a powerful demonstration of the monarchical factor in foreign policy. William interrupted his attendance at the annual military manoeuvres in East-Prussia and travelled to Alexandrowno. He sought reassurance from Alexander that Bismarck's politics had not gone too far with his nephew, which he received. So much was William assured, that he even handed out a medal to Field Marshal Dimitry Milyutin, who was known for his

¹⁷¹ Nonn, *Bismarck*, 300-305.

¹⁷² Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Friedrich Thimme eds., *Die große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914 III Das Bismarck'sche Bündnissystem* (Berlin 1922) 14-16.

¹⁷³ Engelberg, *Bismarck. Reich*, 290-291.

¹⁷⁴ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 313; Konrad Canis, Lothar Gall, Klaus Hildebrand and Eberhard Kolb eds., *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Neue Friedrichsruher Ausgabe. Abteilung III. 1871-1898*. Andrea Hopp ed., IV *Schriften 1879-1881* (Paderborn 2004) 139-144.

¹⁷⁵ Lepsius, Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Thimme eds., *Grosse Politik* III, 20-22.

¹⁷⁶ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 316.

¹⁷⁷ Hopp ed., *Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke* III/I, 147, 156-157.

¹⁷⁸ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 318.

anti-German views.¹⁷⁹ What made William's visit notable, was that it occurred in the context of what Johannes Paulmann has demonstrated as the break-up of the Vienna system and its replacement by a system of competing monarchical nation states, which made monarchical encounters increasingly instruments for staging monarchical power. This occurred against the background of an emerging public sphere with mass printed media that required performativity.¹⁸⁰ Befitting such a type of encounter, William's visit was a well-publicised event, even if access for the population was limited because of the guards the Russian army had set up. By no means was the encounter, for all its spontaneity, unprepared. Both monarchs met at the railway station at Alexandrowno, which had been carefully decorated beforehand. Upon his arrival, Alexander II inspected a Russian regiment named after William's father. Upon William's arrival, both inspected the guard of honour, after which they took up residence in the building of the station, where later a dinner took place.¹⁸¹ As such, the encounter served to display monarchical solidarity. A.J.P. Taylor has rightfully argued that the encounter made it more difficult for Bismarck to oppose William.¹⁸²

William's encounter with Alexander was complemented by a second demonstration of his role in the decision-making process in three lengthy memoranda to counter Bismarck's arguments. The extensive correspondence was necessary because of their physical separation: whilst Bismarck was in Gastein and Vienna, William was in Berlin, Alexandrowno and East Prussia, while William had travelled to Baden-Baden when Bismarck reached Berlin. Pflanze has stated that Bismarck's memoranda were 'fine examples of Bismarck's talent for persuasion, the capacity to orient his discourse – without obvious injustice to the facts – to fit the thoughts, prejudices, and predilections of the recipient. Wilhelm's counterarguments were also lengthy and skilful for a person his age.'¹⁸³

William's replies to Bismarck consisted of three pieces, making his case primarily based on the encounter he had had with Alexander and his officials and concentrating on Russian reliability for an alliance, whilst identifying France as the real foe. In effect, William had used the personal encounter with Alexander to curtail Bismarck's freedom in foreign policy, a limitation the Chancellor refused to accept. Writing on the 7th, Bismarck countered Alexander's arguments and stated that 'Euere Majestät haben zwar die Gnade gehabt, mich zur Fortsetzung der Besprechung mit Graf Andrassy in Wien zu ermächtigen, ich fürchte aber daß solche Besprechungen wenig Aussicht auf Erfolg haben, wenn ich nicht erklären kann, daß Euere Majestät, ebenso wie Kaiser Franz Joseph das Defensiv-Bündnis wollen.'¹⁸⁴ However, such arguments did little to deter William. In a first, brief

¹⁷⁹ Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 504.

¹⁸⁰ Johannes Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik. Monarchenbegegnungen zwischen Ancien Régime und Erster Weltkrieg* (Paderborn 2000).

¹⁸¹ *Vossische Zeitung*, 5 September 1879, evening edition.

¹⁸² A.J.P. Taylor, *The struggle for mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford 1954) 261.

¹⁸³ Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 505-506. By contrast, Taylor has written that 'as usual, when he was forcing a distasteful policy on William I, he kept away and carried on a long-distance correspondence of extreme violence.' Taylor, *Struggle for mastery*, 261.

¹⁸⁴ Lepsius, Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Thimme eds., *Grosse Politik III*, 52-59.

report, dated 4 September, of his conversation, William stressed that Alexander had not intended a breach with Germany with his letter of 15 August, sought to maintain good relations with Germany, whilst expressing his dissatisfaction over Europe's conduct towards Russia over matters in the Oriental question.¹⁸⁵ This report was completed and accompanied by two further letters, dated 9 and 10 September. In it, he reiterated that Alexander did not seek a breach with Germany and feared press reports would lead to a breach between the two countries. Alexander's suggestion that measures countering this should be introduced, which William believed to be 'so wahr ist, wie irgendetwas in der Welt sein kann'. William emphasized Alexander's wish that the peace in Europe could only be guaranteed by a 'Zusammenhalten à trois' of the three Imperial powers of 1872. From this, and of the remarks made by Alexander's officials, William concluded that Russia would not seek war with Germany. Exercising his Imperial authority, William wrote that

‘indessen will und darf ich Sie nicht in Ihren bereits getanen Schritten gegen Andrassy und seinen Herrn désavouieren. Sie mögen also in Wien, wohin zu gehen bereits alle Zeitungen erzählen, die Eventualitäten einer sich bis zum möglichen Bruche mit Rußland steigernden Disharmonie und dann gefahrdrohend, vorstellen, und in Pourparlers über die dann gemeinschaftlich mit Österreich zu treffenden Maßnahmen eintreten. Aber zu irgendeinem Abschluß einer Konvention oder gar Alliance autorisiere ich Sie, meinem Gewissen nach, nicht.’¹⁸⁶

Unable to overcome William's resistance, Bismarck then sought to enlist cabinet ministers, military and court officials to convince William in agreeing to the treaty. Bismarck consciously isolated William from his closest officials, a technique he had used before. Bismarck was aided by the fact that the Crown Prince did not share any romantic glorification for the Romanovs.¹⁸⁷ However, these attempts offered William one more opportunity to make his influence felt by resisting in private meetings. William continued to refuse to give Bismarck any permission to form a sort of *Schutz- und Trutz Bündniß* with Austria, especially because this suggestion came at the time of the military manoeuvres and did not want to be disturbed. As a result, Bismarck threatened to resign from office.¹⁸⁸ By 15 September, William had been strengthened in his resistance by Karl Anton von Hohenzollern, which the German ambassador in Vienna, Heinrich VII. Prinz Reuß had to diminish.¹⁸⁹ Vice-Chancellor Otto zu Stolberg-Wernigerode succeeded in convincing William to sign the treaty after a personal meeting.¹⁹⁰ But William remained reluctant and on 28 September Lucius von Ballhausen concluded that

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem, 36-39.

¹⁸⁶ Ibidem, 62-67.

¹⁸⁷ Engelberg, *Bismarck. Reich*, 294.

¹⁸⁸ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 320-321.

¹⁸⁹ Baumgart and Stone eds., *Briefwechsel*, 230-231.

¹⁹⁰ Baumgart ed. *Tagebücher*, 324.

‘die Krisis ist auf dem Kulminationspunkt’. William held fast to an alliance of Germany, Austria and Russia, so that Bismarck asked Bülow to hand William his request for resignation. Two days later Lucius concluded, based on Stolberg’s reports, that William had not rejected the treaty yet, but was refused by William to be received on account that it was the Empress’ birthday. But neither could it be ruled out that William would abdicate over the affair.¹⁹¹ What held William back, was not so much the policy itself, but rather his loyalty towards Russia. As Stolberg reported to Reuß: ‘er hielt die ihm vorgeschlagene Politik für die richtige, könne aber sich nicht dazu entschließen aus Rücksicht für den Kaiser Alexander.’¹⁹² Indeed, William remained opposed to the text, which Bismarck reported was ready to be accepted, as Russia was identified as a potential enemy and wanted to pass on all conditions to which Austria refused to give in to Russia. Because of the tensions between Bismarck and William, the former had sent Stolberg again to Baden-Baden to negotiate with William. In a heated meeting, with the Crown Prince attending, William again refused to ratify the text of the treaty when Russia would be identified as a potential enemy, whilst seeing no proof of a Franco-Russian rapprochement. In a second meeting the next day, William repeated that while he could agree with the goals of the treaty, he could not deceive the tsar and again threatened with abdication.¹⁹³ What ultimately seems to have broken William’s resistance was Bismarck’s continued threat to step down, with support of the cabinet. Already on 28 September, the cabinet had agreed to Bismarck’s policy and that Stolberg was to convince William.¹⁹⁴ Confronted with the consequences of his stubbornness, William finally gave in on 3 October, demanding only editorial changes to soothe his conscience.¹⁹⁵

According to Neugebauer, William’s attempt at implementing a dynastic element in foreign policy demonstrated that he understood increasingly less of the role of national interests and society in international affairs.¹⁹⁶ But the coming of the Dual Alliance demonstrates that William’s dynastic conception of foreign relations could weigh heavily on the decision-making process. Lucius von Ballhausen stated afterwards that ‘alle sehen die Zustimmung zu diesem Vertrag als den größten Coup an, welche Bismarck je durchgesetzt habe.’¹⁹⁷ Yet, this relief was one more indication of the effort Bismarck had to make. Even afterwards William refused to give up resistance.¹⁹⁸ Five days after agreeing to the treaty, he demanded editorial changes to Reuß’ instructions, resulting in a rebuke from Bismarck, before the affair was finally left to rest. Tellingly, Stolberg stated that ‘der gute alte Herr ist denn doch in einer Weise russophil u. identificirt sich mit

¹⁹¹ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 172-173.

¹⁹² Baumgart and Stone eds., *Briefwechsel*, 233.

¹⁹³ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 327-329.

¹⁹⁴ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle VII*, 49.

¹⁹⁵ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 330-331.

¹⁹⁶ Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Die Hohenzollern II Dynastie im säkularen Wandel. Von 1740 bis in das 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 2003) 165-166.

¹⁹⁷ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 179.

¹⁹⁸ Frederick William noted on 4 October in his diary that ‘S.M. ganz herunter erklärte mir u. Mama er sei gezwungen sich zu entehren u. Treubruch zu üben’. Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 330.

diesem östlichen Nachbarn, wie ich es niemals für möglich gehalten hätte.¹⁹⁹ The intensity of the struggle was on display even at the end of October, when Hans Lothar von Schweinitz met William and to who he told about his ‘schweren Kampf, den er innerlich und äußerlich durchzumachen hatte; er sei nahe daran gewesen zu abdizieren, als Bismarck ihn bestimmt erklärte, daß er zurücktreten werde; „und Bismarck ist notwendiger als ich“, sagte der edle Herr.’ The one unresolved issue remained what to do with the discrepancy between what William said at Alexandrowno and the Vienna treaty.²⁰⁰ On 4 November, William sent a personal letter to Alexander seeking to reconcile the differences.²⁰¹

Surprisingly, little to no information about the fall-out between William and Bismarck leaked to the press. In late October Busch reported about the frictions between William and Bismarck, which according to the Crown Prince damaged William’s standing, as the information was likely to have come from Bismarck. Around the same time Puttkamer hinted at the frictions during a banquet speech, suggesting that William only agreed to the treaty with ‘schweren Herzens’²⁰² To this, as far as the evidence suggests, William did not respond. Instead, William chose to present the alliance to smaller audiences as a renewal of conservative powers against the forces of revolution. To an unknown recipient he wrote in early 1880 that

‘Die Begegnung mit Alexander sichert von Neuen der alten Band u. alte Freundschaft und das drauffolgende ungerne Ausschließen an Österreich thut jenem kein Einbuße, wie man, von meiner Seite wenigstens wünsche – indem es nichts weiter heißt, als ein Band zwischen Deutschland und Österreich zu knüpfen, welcher früher zwischen früher zwischen Preußen, Österreich und den Deutschen Staaten in F a/M gipfelte, ein Bündnis welcher durch da nun geeinte Deutschland von 3 Participanten, auf 2 umgeformt werden mußte, obgleich die Faktoren dieselben bleiben. Verschließen dürfte man die Augen dabei nicht auf die Übermacht der französischen und russischen Revolutions Elemente, die, wenn sie die Grenzen überschreiten wollten, uns gerüstet fänden, und einig! Denn wie Krank ist Russland!!!’²⁰³

William, the Reichstag and the Prussian Diet

So far, this chapter has sought to demonstrate how William’s different forms of performativity, ideas and the contexts in which he sought to forge his role in the decision-making process. What remains unanswered is what narratives of decision-making William projected and which resources for legitimization he

¹⁹⁹ Baumgart and Stone eds., *Briefwechsel*, 236.

²⁰⁰ Hans Lothar von Schweinitz, *Denkwürdigkeiten des Botschafters General v. Schweinitz* II (Berlin 1927) 79.

²⁰¹ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 368.

²⁰² Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 336.

²⁰³ GStA PK BPH Rep. 51. E I. Politica Auswärtiges. No. 17. Wilhelm an ungenannten Empfänger: Rückblick auf das Jahr 1879, insbesondere im Hinblick auf ein Zusammengehen mit Österreich. Berlin, 1880 März 14.

drew on to this end. The way he related himself to the German Reichstag and Prussian Diet provides case studies to answers to these questions. Literature has mostly defined William's relation with either representative body in terms of contests over political symbolism. Biefang has argued that William kept his distance from the Reichstag to preserve his monarchical dignity, visiting the building only once, although partially this was caused because it did not have the facilities to receive William.²⁰⁴ William remained conscious about the proximity of the Reichstag to Berlin's centre of power. He was against Bismarck's idea of building the new Reichstag building in the garden of the foreign office.²⁰⁵ Instead, and as eventually would be the case, William insisted that the Reichstag would be built on the terrain of Kroll, a preference to which the State Ministry could not offer a competing alternative and decided to agree to.²⁰⁶ Spenkuch has argued that William supported Bismarck's anti-parliamentary strategy of the 1880s. William repeatedly refused to acknowledge the naming of a truly Imperial government in 1885 in the wake of the *Deutsche Freisinnige Partei's* call for responsible Imperial ministries.²⁰⁷ Bismarck's increasing dominance of the executive affected William's role too. Several royal messages sent to the Diet and Reichstag in which the primacy of the monarch was emphasized primarily served to counter an increased role of parliament and cover Bismarck's role. The cabinet used veneration for William to protect itself from criticism on the monarchical political order.²⁰⁸ What remains unanswered is how William forged his role vis-à-vis these parliamentary bodies and counter their emergence as a competing centre of political gravity.

That William perceived a tacit competition between himself and the Reichstag becomes clear from his sensitivity about any suggestions of diminishing his role. This was demonstrated after the two attempts on his life and the introduction of the anti-socialist laws. When the Reichstag in February 1879 refused to proceed against the evicted members Fritsche and Hasselman, William demanded that all such proceedings would be made public, while permission from the Reichstag would be demanded to commence proceedings against these two members.²⁰⁹ The Reichstag's refusal grieved William considerably. According to Lucius von Ballhausen, the decision 'soll Se. Majestät sehr verstimmt haben. Er hat dem Präsidenten Simson gesagt: Es täte ihm sehr wehe.' According to Stolberg, the decision 'hat den guten Kaiser so sehr tief gekränkt u. bekümmert; ich glaube, er faßt es beinahe so auf, als ob der Reichstag seine Mörder ausdrücklich in Schutz nehmen wolle.'²¹⁰ William's support for the anti-socialist laws remained unaltered in the years thereafter and he supported their extension in 1884. When the question of extension came up in March 1884, William wanted,

²⁰⁴ Biefang, *Andere Seite der Macht*, 290-292.

²⁰⁵ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 173.

²⁰⁶ Pateau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI/I*, 412.

²⁰⁷ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle VII*, 12.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, 22.

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 43.

²¹⁰ Stone and Baumgart eds., *Briefwechsel*, 225.

in contrast to Bismarck, that the Reichstag instantly would be dissolved should it reject renewal of the law.²¹¹ In fact, William wanted the law to be extended without any alterations.²¹² To Bismarck, he offered to stay in Berlin for the debates in the Reichstag.²¹³ William's presence in Berlin was advantageous to Bismarck, so as not to give the impression to the country that the dissolution had in fact been prepared by the government. This was a course William supported.²¹⁴ When two years later Ludwig Windthorst in a debate on the extension of the laws suggested that William had extended it solely for his personal safety, he responded deeply agitated. Lucius von Ballhausen recorded that 'bei der Erwähnung des Sozialistengesetzes brauste er förmlich auf und sagte mit erregter Stimme: „Er hätte es nicht für möglich gehalten daß ihm von einem Untertanen eine solche Beleidigung zugefügt werden könne – anzunehmen, daß er das Gesetz für eine eigene persönliche Sicherheit haben wolle: das habe er doch bewiesen, daß ihm daran gar nichts liege. Er wolle es für alle Fürsten und für die Sicherheit des Landes. Dieser kleine Bullenbeißer, der Windthorst!“²¹⁵

William's response to Windthorst's comments make clear that he deemed it imperative to give the impression that the government's measures were not only for the common good, but also stemming from him. Two examples can illustrate this. Notably, both date from the 1880s. This suggests that William still wanted to demonstrate he lead the government, even though he had stopped attending the State Ministry's deliberations. The first example is that of the *Unfallversicherung* in 1881. Primarily, presenting the legislation as an Imperial order served to generate support from the working class and lure them away from the liberal party towards conservative-monarchical authority.²¹⁶ When the issue came up for discussion in the State Ministry on 14 November 1881, it was notified that William wanted to open the Reichstag himself to read out the Imperial edict that contained the introduction of the insurance.²¹⁷ Three days later, Bismarck stated during an informal gathering of the members of the *Bundesrat* that the legislation was to be presented as the legacy and closing act of William's reign.²¹⁸ William himself seems to have taken this up as such a cause as well. Shortly before he died, William requested that Wilhelm Oncken would write an authorized biography of him.²¹⁹ Oncken eventually wrote that William's last hope was the inclusion of the working class and its commitment to the national cause, which would serve social peace, a

²¹¹ Walther Peter Fuchs ed., *Großherzog Friedrich I. von Baden und die Reichspolitik 1871-1907* II 1879-1890 (Stuttgart 1968) 243-244.

²¹² Konrad Canis, Konrad, Lothar Gall, Klaus Hildebrand and Eberhard Kolb eds., *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Neue Friedrichsruher Ausgabe. Abteilung III. 1871-1898*. Ulrich Lappenküper ed., VI *Schriften 1884-1885* (Paderborn 2011) 131.

²¹³ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 402-403.

²¹⁴ Lappenküper ed., *Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke* III/I, 153-154.

²¹⁵ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 340; cf. Fuchs ed., *Reichspolitik* II, 397-398.

²¹⁶ Canis, 'Bismarck und die Monarchen', 146-147.

²¹⁷ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle* VII, 92.

²¹⁸ Fuchs ed., *Reichspolitik* II, 165-167.

²¹⁹ Helmut Berding, 'Oncken, Wilhelm' in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* XIX (Berlin 1999) 536-537, there 536.

cause perpetuated by William II.²²⁰ William's attempt at forging a narrative resonated in conservative circles. The *Kreuzzeitung* wrote on the occasion of William's birthday in 1884 that

‘in keinem Lande der Welt ist die Initiative zu sozialpolitischen Fortschritten, die Fürsorge für die Armen und wirtschaftlich Schwachen und die Energie in Verfolgung solcher edler Ziele der Nächstenliebe so ganz und so voll ein Werk der Krone, so sehr und so lebhaft eine persönliche Herzensangelegenheit des Monarchen, als wieder bei uns. Hoch über den Getriebe der streitenden Parteien, unerschütterlich fest im wogenden Meere der politischen Agitationen steht, Gott sei es gedankt, der Kaiserthron der deutschen Nation – eine Stütze der Schwachen, ein Hort der Armen, ein Friedensherald im Streit.’²²¹

However, the following year the bill was met with considerable criticism in Saxony according to the British envoy. The opinion there was that, despite the cultish veneration for the Emperor, William did not have the constitutional prerogatives to initiate legislation and that there was no such thing as general Imperial sovereignty that effectively overruled Saxon particularism.²²²

William's determination to be seen as the figure initiating this legislation suggests that he sought to project himself as a caring *Landesvater* for his poorest subjects in a manner that drew on both older traditions and contemporary notions for his role. His involvement could build on ancient ideas of Christian charity that would have appealed in particular to more conservative Germans. Recent research has nuanced the argument that Bismarck's social policy resulted solely from power-political consideration and instead came from a longer tradition of conservative paternalism.²²³ There are good reasons to extend this argument to William as well, given his own strong religiosity. But by relating himself to this piece of social legislation, William also drew on more contemporary ideas of a ‘social kingship’ that generated popular political support. Both Sellin and Kroll have argued that the model of ‘social kingship’ offered an additional source of legitimacy for monarchs.²²⁴ At a time when the social question became more pressing, William's relating his persona with the bill suggests that he recognized the political potential of this concept. It remains questionable to what extent this was effective with the German population. Werner K. Blessing has argued that the working class in general remained indifferent to the monarchical cult in the German Empire.²²⁵ The responses in Saxony suggest that William also overstepped his Imperial authority. Moreover, it is doubtful that the aging William

²²⁰ Wilhelm Oncken, *Das Zeitalter Kaiser Wilhelms I. II* (Berlin 1890) 1005.

²²¹ *Neue Preussische Zeitung / Kreuzzeitung*, 22 March 1884, first edition.

²²² Markus Mösslang and Helen Whatmore eds., *British envoys to the Kaiserreich I 1871-1883* (Cambridge 2016) 386-387.

²²³ Nonn, *Bismarck*, 252.

²²⁴ Sellin, *Gewalt und Legitimität*, 241-261; Kroll, ‘Idee eines sozialen Königtums’, 111-140.

²²⁵ Werner K. Blessing, ‘Der monarchische Kult, politische Loyalität und die Arbeiterbewegung im Deutschen Kaiserreich’ in: Gerhard A. Ritter, *Arbeiterkultur* (Königstein 1979) 185-208, there 195.

hereafter pursued the model more systematically. Nonetheless, the fact that Oncken ended his authorized biography of William with a reference to this legislation suggests that its posthumous significance was not lost. Through his headstrong and determined manner, William tied the Hohenzollern monarchy to social legislation, a foundation on which William II could subsequently build.

William recognized that tying himself to the *Unfallversicherung* required more direct communication, such as himself reading the bill out at the speech from the throne. His presence on this occasion was by no means a frequent occurrence. Biefang has demonstrated that Bismarck often let William's presence at openings of parliamentary sessions depend on political matters at stake, whilst William let his attendance depend on whether he was satisfied with the Reichstag's proceedings.²²⁶ Although openings of these sessions were held at court, there was an inherent danger that the presence of the deputies of both houses would give too much symbolic significance to them, thus limiting the possibility of raising the significance of the court, as Biefang has argued.²²⁷ However, this argument overlooks the impression William's presence could make on the attendants. Lucius von Ballhausen saw the opening of the first German Reichstag in 1871, and afterwards wrote that 'der Kaiser – zum ersten Male als solcher den Reichstag eröffnend – in seiner ehrwürdigen, hohen, sympathischen Erscheinung war umgehen von den Prinzen und siegreichen Generalen. (...) Der Kaiser verlas die Thronrede anfangs mit bewegter, später mit fester, vernehmlicher Stimme. Die friedlichen Wünsche für die Zukunft wurden fest betont und von der Versammlung mit lebhaftem Beifall begrüßt.'²²⁸ William recognized the importance of cultivating the respect of the Reichstag through symbolic gestures. As Biefang has pointed out, and in contrast to William II, William would take off his helmet as a sign of respect.²²⁹ William's awareness of the importance of using these sessions to project his role likewise came to the fore in 1886, when he announced to the State Ministry that he wished to open the Diet in person, so as to thank the deputies for their good wishes for his silver jubilee as King of Prussia,

²²⁶ Biefang, *Andere Seite*, 302-303. When in June 1871 the consideration came up for William to close the Reichstag's session, Bismarck wrote William that 'einen politischen und so überwiegend einen rein geschäftlichen Charakter, daß ich die Eröffnung des Reichstages durch Eure Majestät Allerhöchstselbst als im politischen Interesse des Reichs geboten nicht bezeichnen kann, zumal die Weise, welche durch die feierliche Art der Eröffnung dem Beginne der Arbeiten des Reichstages ertheilt wird, in dem Bewußtsein aller Beteiligten an Bedeutung steigen muß, wenn Eure Majestät nur in solchen Fällen die Eröffnung Allerhöchstselbst vornehmen, wo eine höhere politische Bedeutung der Arbeiten des Reichstages greifbar hervorgehoben werden soll.' Hopp ed., *Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke* I, 312. In similar fashion, Bismarck in October 1876 argued that 'Die Eröffnung des Reichstags durch den Kaiser läßt sich meines Erachtens durch die Bedeutung der zu erwartenden Vorlagen nicht motiviren, zumal diese kurze Session im Grunde doch eine vom Reichstage der Regierung abgerungene ist, weil der Reichstag nicht wie der Landtag das Budget um drei Monate weiter erstrecken wollte.' Konrad Canis, Lothar Gall, Klaus Hildebrand and Eberhard Kolb eds., *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Neue Friedrichsruher Ausgabe. Abteilung III. 1871-1898*. Rainer Bendick ed., II *Schriften 1874-1876* (Paderborn 2005) 626-627.

²²⁷ Biefang, *Andere Seite der Macht*, 305.

²²⁸ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 6.

²²⁹ Biefang, *Andere Seite der Macht*, 288; cf. Vierhaus ed., *Spitzemberg*, 123.

after which Bismarck could read out the speech from the throne.²³⁰ In other words: the evidence suggests that William sufficiently recognized the importance of these openings as instruments to relate measures of the government to his persona. In so doing, William could present the *Unfallversicherung* as legislation from his personal government.

That the *Unfallversicherung* was no isolated case in William's conduct is demonstrated by his response to two messages that Bismarck sent to the Prussian Diet and German Reichstag to stress royal prerogatives over parliamentary powers: the so-called *Beamten-Erlass* of 4 January 1882, the *Kabinettsordre* on the constitutional powers of the monarch of 8 May 1884 and the message to the Reichstag of 30 November 1885. These were strongly disputed in liberal circles. The *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* argued that the edict meant a 'Staatsstreich, und der eidbrüchige Minister, der einen altersschwachen, am Rande des Grabes stehenden Monarchen bewogen hat, ihn zu fertigen, ist ein Verbrecher'.²³¹ Pflanze has argued that Bismarck essentially plotted a *Staatsstreich* with these edicts and secured William's cooperation without further consideration.²³² But already at the time the British envoy noted that the edicts served to remind deputies that Germany's constitution meant that the monarch was effectively the 'Leader of the political party in power'.²³³ Furthermore, Pflanze overlooks the evidence that William in fact gave Bismarck a free hand in these edicts. When Bismarck informed him that he deliberately contra-signed the draft-edict, so as to deny Landtag-members the refusal to debate the edict because it only bore William's signature, William replied: 'Ich sehe also daß Sie einer Besprechung meiner Botschaft nicht entgegen sein wollen. Ich hielt es gerade umgekehrt für angenommen, weil durch diese Besprechung meine Position zum Landtag doch eine schiefe werden kann, wenn meine Namens Nennung in demselben, nun nicht mehr ausgeschlossen werden kann.'²³⁴ Such support did not remain limited to the internal deliberations. That same year William had authorized Oskar Meding to write a biography about his life. At William's insistence, it detailed the 1882 edict that argued for the monarchical primacy in government, an intervention that Marcks saw as reflecting William's self-consciousness as a ruler.²³⁵ But this also reflected consciousness about how to draw on medial representation to project his monarchical political primacy.

Conclusion

In February 1871, William wrote to Augusta on Queen Victoria's stance during the Franco-Prussian War 'daß die Queen Sympathien für uns hat, habe ich keinen Moment bezweifelt. Da sie aber gar keinen Einfluß auf das Gouvernement und die

²³⁰ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle* VII, 186.

²³¹ *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 January 1882.

²³² Pflanze, *Bismarck* III, 76-78.

²³³ Mösslang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 173-174.

²³⁴ Konrad Canis, Lothar Gall, Klaus Hildebrand and Eberhard Kolb eds., *Otto von Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke. Neue Friedrichsruher Ausgabe. Abteilung III. 1871-1898*. Ulrich Lappenküper ed., V *Schriften 1882-1883* (Paderborn 2010) 13 fn 3.

²³⁵ Marcks, *Wilhelm I.*, 395.

öffentliche Meinung ausüben kann, so sehen wir sie leider in Contrast mit beiden.²³⁶ In contrasting his own political powers favourably with those of Queen Victoria, William was undoubtedly sincere, for he considered himself, not without good reason, a more politically powerful monarch. His exercising of his prerogatives in the decision-making process formed an important part of this understanding of his role. From the constitution resulted a formal mode of decision-making that made monarch and State Ministry mutually dependent on each other. William effectuated his prerogatives via two forms of performativity: his physical presence at meetings of the State Ministry, which subsequently became Crown Councils, and via memoranda to the cabinet or its members. His palace provided William with a spatial context to stage these prerogatives when he chaired Crown Councils in his palace, received government or military officials in an audience.

These features of William's role in Imperial Germany's decision-making demonstrate that William was an active and relevant centre of political gravity in the German Empire. Biefang's study on the political-symbolic contest between the Reichstag and Bismarck contained only a brief discussion of William's relation to the Reichstag and the manner in which he forged his public image.²³⁷ But this study pleads for a 'triangulation' that takes William serious as a third centre of political gravity, next to the Chancellor and Reichstag at the apex of the German Empire. Importantly, this chapter has demonstrated that no distinction can be made between William's actual or 'instrumental' (Biefang) and symbolic powers: it was exactly through symbolic representation that William's powers were put into practice. This argument moves beyond the conclusion of scholars such as Nipperdey, Kirsch and Haardt, who have sought to define the German Emperor's powers in constitutional terms.²³⁸ The manner in which William actively used his prerogatives calls into question Spenkuch's remark that William withdrew from the everyday running of the government after 1877 by he no longer chairing Crown Councils.²³⁹ This conclusion only holds true when William's activities are defined in relation to the State Ministry. But when his personnel policy in the 1880s – his continued holding of audiences and the expansion of his right to receive direct reports from the Chief of the General Staff – is taken into consideration, then William remained in fact an active centre of political gravity well thereafter.

Bismarck's appointment in 1862 created a division of labour that affected what political matters William made a subject of decision and to which his persona would (publicly) be related. Notably, here the ambiguity of William's position between national figurehead and member of a transnational dynastic network became clear. The example of the coming of the Dual Alliance in 1879 has shown to what extent these networks could persist and burden a political decision-making process. Despite his role as Emperor and German national interest in foreign

²³⁶ GSa PK. BPH Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Band 1871, Bl. 32, William to Augusta, 9 February 1871.

²³⁷ Biefang, *Andere Seite der Macht*, 277-305.

²³⁸ Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* II, 98-101; Kirsch, *Monarch und Parlament*, 299-373; Haardt, 'Kaiser in the Federal State'.

²³⁹ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle* VII, 24.

policy, William nonetheless drew on these networks as a resource to alter the outcome of the process. There is no reason to doubt that the rise of the nation state narrowed the possibilities for these dynastic networks to be effective, but, importantly, it did not rule out their coexistence either. The case of William's opposition to the Dual Alliance suggests that more research is required in exploring this problem and nuance the debate's current stance that as the nation state rose in importance in international relations, dynastic networks inversely declined. By contrast, in the domestic sphere, the division of labour enabled William to make those issues subject of decision which increasingly divided the German polity. In particular the culture wars in the 1870s have shown to what extent William was willing to intervene for this reason, whilst by contrast the social legislation of the early 1880s were meant to address the fragmentation of the young nation state out of political calculation. Personal motives must not be ruled out: in both cases a conciliatory Christianity played some degree in motivating William. Nonetheless: these examples demonstrate that William increasingly took up his Imperial role as a unifying force that transcended barriers of class and religion.

What is notable in William's willingness to pursue the social legislation and edicts on royal powers of the early 1880s is that to stress the significance of his role, he was willing to risk criticism and opposition. The response in Saxony to the proposed social legislation and the criticism in liberal circles on the royal edicts did not alter William's determination to use these issues to project a narrative of monarchical decision-making. It is striking that both these issues took place in the 1880s, after William stopped attending the meetings of the state ministry. This suggests that, next to his active use of his prerogatives in personnel policy, William also increasingly drew on public representation and media to project these narratives of monarchical decision-making. Added to this was his continued use of his study at his palace at Unter den Linden to make his role tangible, and of which its importance grew as government bureaucracy grew and became more anonymous. Thus, drawing attention to these narratives makes understandable why cabinet officials, but also some newspapers, could come to see William as the epitome of the monarchical form of government and central political figure of the German polity. Illustrative is what the *National-Zeitung* wrote in its obituary for William in March 1888: 'Bewußt der wenigen, unbewußt Allen, verkörperte sich in ihm die monarchische Idee. (...) Je schattenhafter in der demokratischen Bewegung und Stimmung der mystische Schimmer, der das Königthum umschwebte, sich zu verflüchtigen droht, um so großartiger und majestätischer ragte unter uns die Gestalt Kaiser Wilhelm's I. auf.'²⁴⁰ The question remains how these overall features of William's part-taking in decision-making processes determined his stance in other fields in which he held prerogatives, notably the military.

²⁴⁰ *National-Zeitung*, 9 March 1888, evening edition.

II. William as a military monarch

Introduction

The first time Lucius von Ballhausen met William was on the evening of 3 July 1866, after the battle of Königgrätz, when the former was still a reserve officer in the Brandenburger Curassier Regiment. According to him, William was ‘beim Vorgehen unseres Regiments gegen eine feindliche Batterie in gleicher Höhe mitgeritten, es war der Moment, wo er ins Granatfeuer kam und von seiner Umgebung nur mühsam zum Halten bestimmt worden war.’²⁴¹ That Lucius von Ballhausen saw William on the battlefield in the midst of fighting was unsurprising. Throughout the day, William had been in the heat of the battle. The painter Fritz Schulze later described to Schneider how he encountered William in the early morning during the artillery fire. A general present urged William to leave, as the enemy concentrated on firing artillery shells near their location. But according to Schulz, ‘Die Antwort des Königs habe ich nicht verstehen können; sie kann aber nur ablehnend gewesen sein, denn Seine Majestät blieb ruhig halten.’ Despite numerous artillery shells landing, ripping up the grounds and flying around of metal pieces, William did not leave his spot.²⁴² Later in the morning, he was on the right bank of the river Bystrice, rallying terrified Prussian troops back into line.²⁴³ In the afternoon, William was the one to give the order to Prince Frederick Charles to attack along the whole line. William’s presence on the battlefield increasingly made Bismarck nervous, who had been at his side throughout the day. Only after strong insistence by Bismarck, did William agree to take up a position behind the frontlines, but grumbled afterwards that he had to be at the front as supreme commander.²⁴⁴

Historians will not be surprised by this stance, for William is seen as a monarch who defined his role via the military. Birgit Aschmann has argued that it formed the main institute of his socialization, next to the monarchical principle, and one which corresponded with his own preferences. William’s baptism of fire during the Napoleonic Wars was for him adventurous and an experience of the unity between monarch and people.²⁴⁵ Angelow has likewise pointed out that from the experience of the Napoleonic Wars William learned to appreciate the role of the army in Prussia’s resurrection.²⁴⁶ Michael Howard has written that ‘Prince William was the first professional soldier to come to the throne of Prussia since the death of Frederick the Great. (...) he loved the army with a passion for which

²⁴¹ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 2.

²⁴² Louis Schneider, *Aus dem Leben Kaiser Wilhelms. 1849-1873 I* (Berlin 1888) 287-289.

²⁴³ Geoffrey Wawro, *The Austro-Prussian War. Austria’s war with Prussia and Italy in 1866* (Cambridge 1996) 229.

²⁴⁴ Gordon A. Craig, *The battle of Königgrätz. Prussia’s victory over Austria, 1866* (Philadelphia 2003) 151-152.

²⁴⁵ Aschmann, *Preußens Ruhm*, 306.

²⁴⁶ Angelow, ‘Wilhelm I.’, 245.

one must go back to his ancestor Frederick William I to find a parallel. Military efficiency was for him, as it had been for Frederick William I, an end in itself.²⁴⁷ Such assessments are correct in as far as William's persona and his socialization goes. But what role and purpose the military component had in his overall conduct as monarch remains insufficiently researched.

The state of knowledge regarding this aspect of William's role is not on equal footing with the debate on the function of the military in the transformation of monarchical rule in nineteenth-century Europe. Deneckere and Van Zanten have shown respectively that Leopold I and William II of the Netherlands not only took pride in their military record during the Napoleonic Wars, but also defended it fiercely afterwards.²⁴⁸ Sellin has seen in successful command in wartime by the monarch an important source for political legitimacy. Success was imperative, for failure to do so could lead to the loss of the throne for the dynasty or a collapse of the state.²⁴⁹ Langewiesche has likewise argued that monarchical success in wartime in the nineteenth century was imperative for the state to sustain itself. Especially in the 1860s, wars were for important for monarchs to legitimize their role in the founding of new nation states, such as Germany and Italy, in forming new monarchies or deposing or reducing the power of others.²⁵⁰ There is no need to doubt that the French Revolution and the nation state provided a new framework for using success in wartime as a new source for political legitimacy. But it should not be overlooked that the use of martial glory had its antecedents in early modern history. Johannes Kunisch has argued that war was the highest fulfilment of a monarch's life in this period.²⁵¹ But according to Martin Wrede, the rise of the Enlightenment and Frederick the Great meant that a monarch had to earn his military glory himself through deeds and communicate these to represent himself as a heroic monarch. This nullified the advantage of birth and meant that his successors would be measured against his deeds. However, military professionalization since the seventeenth century and military science since the nineteenth century limited the space a monarch had to stage himself as a *roi-conquétable*. But it nonetheless remained a cornerstone of the foundation for monarchical rule and for this reason many monarchs sought to forward the model all the same.²⁵²

These early modern and contemporary developments formed the framework in which William forged his role as a military monarch. Although

²⁴⁷ Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War. The German invasion of France, 1870-1871* (London 1979) 19.

²⁴⁸ Deneckere, *Leopold I*, 67, 69; Van Zanten, *Willem II*, 74-147, 203-236.

²⁴⁹ Sellin, *Gewalt und Legitimität*, 105-143.

²⁵⁰ Langewiesche, *Monarchie im Jahrhundert Europas*, 8-12.

²⁵¹ Johannes Kunisch, 'La guerre – c'est moi! Zum Problem der Staatskonflikte im Zeitalter des Absolutismus' in: Johannes Kunisch, *Fürst – Gesellschaft – Krieg. Studien zur bellizistischen Disposition des absoluten Fürstenstaates* (Cologne 1992) 1-42, there 29.

²⁵² Martin Wrede, 'Einleitung: Die Inszenierung der mehr oder weniger heroischen Monarchie. Zu Rittern und Feldherren, Kriegsherren und Schauspielern' in: Martin Wrede ed., *Die Inszenierung der heroischen Monarchie. Frühneuzeitliches Königtum zwischen ritterlichem Erbe und militärischer Herausforderung* (Munich 2014) 8-39.

reigning in the last third of the nineteenth century, William's birth in 1797 meant that he was sufficiently rooted in the late-early modern era to appreciate the need to display himself as a military monarch. Stamm-Kuhlmann has argued that after the death of Frederick the Great and until the Hohenzollern monarchy's demise in 1918 it never resolved the question of unified military command. Frederick William III was a negative example in this respect. He assumed that his military education did not qualify him for military command and left this during the coalition warfare of 1813-1815 to Alexander I and Schwarzenberg.²⁵³ Despite, or perhaps because of this, William was determined to project himself as a successful *König-Feldherr* who upheld the Prussian state and the German Empire in wartime. This stance helped to offset the General Staff, whose rise and consolidation as the military command centre of the Prussian army in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, emerged as a competing centre of military gravity for William.

To investigate these problems this chapter will discuss William's conduct during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. This was the last war in which William participated and during which the German Empire was proclaimed. William's role in this conflict thus provides a case study in how the problems just discussed affected his conception of his monarchical role and their subsequent effects in the German Empire. This chapter will debate three aspects of this problem: William's role in mobilizing the home front for the war effort, William's efforts at project his role as *König-Feldherr* at the front and his role in the military decision-making process over the war's strategy.

William and the home front

Scholarly literature has frequently debated whether the wars of German unification, together with the American Civil War that occurred in the same decade, must be seen as the first, or prelude to modern total war. In particular the role of nationalism and leadership, social and economic mobilization, the manner in which these wars affected the home front and how industrialization affected everyday reality for citizens and soldiers have been identified in a volume edited by Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler as indicators of this transformation of war.²⁵⁴ Alexander Seyferth has demonstrated that the war was met with less popular enthusiasm than scholarship has assumed. But German states also undertook considerable efforts to influence and penetrate their society to keep up popular support for the war. Instrumental were for example control of the press, state ceremonial, censorship and authorized press reports.²⁵⁵ Whether or not the organization of the home front alone suffices to argue that the Franco-Prussian War was a prelude to the total wars of the twentieth century is disputable. An indicator for this is the role the Hohenzollern monarchy played in this effort, an aspect that Seyferth does not systematically discuss. This is surprising, as the

²⁵³ Stamm-Kuhlmann, 'Militärische Prinzenziehung', 443-447.

²⁵⁴ Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler eds., *On the road to total war. The American Civil War and the German wars of unification, 1861-1871* (Cambridge 1997).

²⁵⁵ Alexander Seyferth, *Die Heimatfront 1870/71. Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im deutsch-französischen Krieg* (Paderborn 2007).

1870-1871 war coincided with what Jaap van Osta has called ‘the reappearance of the performing monarchy’: drawing on nationalist sentiment, monarchies across Europe sought to present the monarch as the symbol of national unity, continuity and consensus.²⁵⁶ The evidence regarding William’s role in the war with France suggests that this development can also be discerned here, albeit with the caveat that for William such ceremonial did not serve to conceal his loss of power, but was rather another display of it. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that William was more active in mobilizing the home front to elevate his role and raise popular support than previously assumed by scholars, including Seyferth. But his efforts are neither coherent nor intensive enough to consider it as a prelude to the total wars of the twentieth century.

Defining William’s role as military monarch for the German home front began with his return from Bad Ems following the outbreak of the conflict with France. As Aschmann has shown, Bismarck was determined to make William the personification of the German nation and its honour that had been insulted by France.²⁵⁷ Seyferth has argued that popular sentiment indeed converged on William, but did not automatically translate into support for the coming war. The enthusiasm that was present came from liberal middle classes, entrepreneurs and nationalist students in cities and who benefitted from the North German Confederation and would do from a German unification following a war with France.²⁵⁸ This makes it understandable why William’s return to Berlin was a whistle-stop tour via train, with stops in major cities at which he would be received by the local authorities and the population. To Augusta, William wrote that ‘Meine Reise also glich in und von Ems bis hier einem Triumphzuge, ich habe so etwas nicht gehant, nicht für möglich gehalten, Alle Bahnhöfe überfüllt, auch die, wo nicht gehalten wurde; in Cassel eine Adresse der Magistrats, in Göttingen die ganze Universitätsjugend; von Braunschweig hatte ein Extrazug Hunderte von Menschen nach meiner Station gebracht; in Magdeburg waren alle Wagen und Transportwagen mit Menschen besetzt.’²⁵⁹ Such receptions could not conceal that contemporaries described the concerned face of the monarch and large parts of the public during one of his stops.²⁶⁰ Indeed, William himself stated to Augusta the worries he had over the enthusiasm and the dangers of the upcoming war.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ Jaap van Osta, ‘The emperor’s new clothes: the reappearance of the performing monarchy in Europe ca. 1870-1914’ in: Jeroen Deploige and Gita Deneckere eds., *Mystifying the monarch: studies on discourse, power and history* (Amsterdam 2006) 181-192. Van Osta echoes here David Cannadine, who demonstrated this change for the British monarchy also at around 1870. See David Cannadine, ‘The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and the ‘invention of tradition’, c. 1820-1977’ in: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge 1999) 101-164, especially 120-132.

²⁵⁷ Aschmann, *Preußens Ruhm*, 454.

²⁵⁸ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 21-30.

²⁵⁹ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 210.

²⁶⁰ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 21-22.

²⁶¹ Aschmann, *Preußens Ruhm*, 463. After having returned from the war against France in March 1871, William was less ambiguous about his feelings during his travel from Bad Ems. The British envoy reported that ‘His Majesty dwelt on the enthusiasm and fervour displayed by the whole German Nation, and stated that on His return from Ems, He was quite astounded by the patriotic ovations He had

Bismarck had arranged that he, Moltke and Roon would accompany William from Brandenburg onwards, whilst the Prussian heir would join in Potsdam. Their presence surprised William, but he let himself be convinced about the immanence of war by Bismarck's report. According to Frederick William, the monarch at first wanted to mobilize only the army corps at the Rhine, but at his son's urging mobilized the army, *Landwehr* and navy. This he did on the spot.²⁶² At that moment, William consciously assumed the role of a military monarch.

In the following days William charged this role with further significance. The first step was at the opening of the North-German Reichstag on 19 July. As noted above, William was an irregular attendant at the opening of parliamentary sessions. Given the importance of this occasion, it might have been expected that he would open the session in person. His presence did not fail its intended effect. Frederick William recorded that 'eben eröffneten wir den Reichstag, der vollzählig wie noch nie, in begeisternd gehobener Stimmung die schöne, würdig gefaßte Rede aufnahm, die Papa mit bewegter Stimme las. Ich kann nicht genug sagen, wie der arme Papa mich rührt und dauert, und seine ruhige und wohl gottergebene Stimmung mich ergreift!'.²⁶³ William's address – composed by Bismarck – explicitly aimed at the honour of an insulted German nation and was complemented by relating the upcoming conflict to the Wars of Liberation, which served the address' unifying effect.²⁶⁴ Another act was the reintroduction of the Iron Cross that same day. Previously, William had refused to reintroduce this order during the wars of 1864 and 1866, because these struggles did not match the 'heroic era' of 1813-1815. Only another war with France would justify reintroduction, as it could be better related to this memory.²⁶⁵ This was now the case. At Bismarck's request, the proposition would be made to William that the

received. Never, said his Majesty, had the feelings of the German nation been so roused, or so strongly manifested since the War of Liberation 1813, and the result has proved that the aspirations for Unity had taken deep root in the heart of the Nation.' Mössland and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 33.

²⁶² Josef Becker, *Bismarcks spanische >>Diversion<< 1870 und der preußisch-deutsche Reichsgründungskrieg. Quellen zur Vor- und Nachgeschichte der Hohenzollernkandidatur für den Thron in Madrid 1866-1932. III >>Emser Depesche<< und Reichgründungslegende bis zum Ende der Weimarer Republik. 12. Juli 1870-1. September 1932* (Paderborn 2007) 108-109. In the 1926 edition of Frederick William's diary of the 1870-1871 war, the situation is described more detailed: 'Als wir auf dem provisorischen Bahnhof in Berlin eintrafen, raunte mir Herr von Thile sofort ins Ohr, der Krieg sei in Paris durch Ollivier bereits erklärt; zugleich ward Sr. Majestät in dem Wartezimmer der telegraphische Wortlaut der Rede Olliviers überreicht, welcher keinen Zweifel mehr ließ, daß der Krieg beschlossen wäre. Ich mußte jenes Telegramm laut vorlesen, worauf der König zu Graf Bismarck, den Generalen von Roon und von Moltke sagte, nunmehr müßte wohl das VII. und VIII. Armeekorps mobil gemacht werden, da sicherlich die Franzosen nach vierundzwanzig Stunden vor Mainz eintreffen würden. Ich drang aber in Se. Majestät, sofort die Mobilmachung der gesamten Armee, Landwehr und Marine zu befehlen, weil unter diesen Umständen keine Zeit zu verlieren sei. Der König ging denn auch darauf ein und befahl die Mobilmachung noch im Wartezimmer, welche Nachricht ich sofort dem auf dem Perron harrenden Publikum verkündete.' Heinrich Otto Meisner ed., *Kaiser Friedrich III. Das Kriegstagebuch von 1870/71* (Berlin 1926) 4.

²⁶³ Becker ed., *Bismarcks spanische >>Diversion<< III, 132.*

²⁶⁴ Aschmann, *Preußens Ruhm*, 464.

²⁶⁵ Karen Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's wars against Napoleon. History, culture and memory* (Cambridge 2015) 242.

Iron Cross would be reintroduced.²⁶⁶ A subsequent statute backdated this to 19 July. William stipulated explicitly that the decoration was revived with reference to the 1813-1815 wars against Napoleon. What was altered in comparison to the original version was the insertion of William's initial, the year 1870 and that the fatherland was now defined as Germany and not Prussia, in order to expand its integrating appeal.²⁶⁷

Another symbolic act by William was to visit his parents' mausoleum in the gardens of Charlottenburg Palace that same day, which, significantly, was also the anniversary of his mother's death. Visits to mausolea to commemorate deceased ancestors were common amongst the Hohenzollern in the nineteenth century.²⁶⁸ To this, William was no exception. His correspondence and annual schedule is scattered with commemorations and references to deceased family members, especially those of his parents and brother. Normally, these were mostly private affairs and barely mentioned in the press. Even on the fiftieth anniversary of Luise's death in 1860, the gathering was private. But the evidence demonstrates that in 1870 William sought to utilize this event by relating it to the outbreak of war with France. Birte Förster has argued that William's visit resulted in multiple analogies, such as the war as a renewal of the 1813-1815 conflict, revenge for his mother's early death, completing German unification and providing justification for the upcoming war. Importantly, and in this William's visit marked a break from previous years, William had the mausoleum opened to the public after his visit, thus also using his mother's memory to transcend social divisions and letting the population take part in this symbolic act. Subsequent reports in newspapers and illustrated magazines suggest that William's narrative was indeed perceived as such.²⁶⁹ This resonance can likewise be perceived in the visual arts. William visited the mausoleum with his son, his brother Carl and several other family members. All were depicted in early renderings of the event, as *illustration 1* from *Die Gartenlaube* demonstrates. But eventually William was the sole figure who was portrayed at his mother's tomb. The best-known example is Anton von Werner's 1881 painting '19. Juli 1870', which provided the historical legitimacy for William's upcoming conflict with France.²⁷⁰

William took specific actions that were meant to appeal to the southern German states and which served to project the Hohenzollern monarchy as Germany's unifying dynasty. Frederick William's exclusion by William from the decision-making process did not prevent the father from using his son's popular appeal. This was necessary, as enthusiasm for the war in the west and south of

²⁶⁶ Friedrich Thimme ed., *Otto von Bismarck. Die gesammelte Werke. Politische Schriften* 6b 1869-1871 (Berlin 1931) 403.

²⁶⁷ Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's wars*, 245; Aschmann, *Preußens Ruhm*, 456.

²⁶⁸ Hannah Pakula, *An uncommon woman. The Empress Frederick. Daughter of Queen Victoria, wife of the Crown Prince of Prussia, mother of Kaiser Wilhelm* (London 1997) 130-131.

²⁶⁹ Birte Förster, *Der Königin Luise-Mythos. Mediengeschichte des >>Idealbilds deutscher Weiblichkeit<<, 1860-1960* (Göttingen 2011) 87-92.

²⁷⁰ Dominik Bartmann, *Anton von Werner. Zur Kunst und Kunstpolitik im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Berlin 1985) 95-96.

Germany was limited, sometimes in the form of open sympathy towards France and antipathy towards the Prussians.²⁷¹ William appointed Frederick William commander of the III corps, which was to include units from Baden, Württemberg and Bavaria. Moreover, his reputation as sympathetic to German unification with a progressive stance made him popular with the liberal parts of the population in these areas. Upon his return to Berlin, William ordered him south to set up headquarters ahead of the mobilization. His departure on 26 July and visits to Hannover, Mainz, Stuttgart, Karlsruhe and Munich were carefully prepared, being received by the respective potentate at the train station, driven through the city and addressed by the authorities. His visits were meant to display German unity at home and abroad but could not conceal that expectations were divergent: the population in Mainz expected foremost protection from a French invasion, whilst king Karl in Stuttgart held the Prussian heir at distance during their encounter.²⁷² William himself was aware of these difficulties. On the day of Frederick William's appointment, he wrote to Augusta that his son was 'gewiß die beste Wahl um jene Elemente zu heben und zu elektrifizieren, aber es ist eine schwere Aufgabe!'²⁷³

William's staging as the personification of the nation resonated with the population, which in turn sent him hundreds of addresses and petitions following the outbreak of the war.²⁷⁴ Their origin mirrored the geographical spreading of support for the war; most petitions and addresses came from student bodies, cities and from Prussian territories. They detail the perceptions of William's persona and which elements of his self-staging resonated and in particular his reference to the Napoleonic Wars and German unification.²⁷⁵ William has seen at least a certain number of these petitions and addresses. On the petition from the citizenry of Cologne, Koblenz and Trier, he wrote in the margins 'Selbst beantwortet W.'²⁷⁶ This William likely did because he had been military governor in that region in the 1850s. It was the only personal reply William gave. But he did choose to acknowledge the receipt of these messages in a more public manner. At William's initiative, Wilmowski requested to Bismarck that he draft a proclamation to thank the population for sending these messages. Wilmowski also informed Bismarck that 'auf Allerhöchsten Anordnung ein Beamten des literarischen Bureau's von hier aus beauftragt worden ist, den besonders dazu geeignet erscheinenden Inhalt

²⁷¹ Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, 57-58.

²⁷² Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 446-447.

²⁷³ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 213.

²⁷⁴ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, I. HA Rep. 90 A, Staatsministerium, jüngere Registratur, No. 4596. Adressen an den König in Bezug auf den bevorstehenden Krieg gegen Frankreich 1870.

²⁷⁵ Representative in this sense is a petition of merchant men and students from Berlin, who stated that 'Wie 1813-15 zu Eurer Königlichen Majestät Erhabenem Vater, wird jeder Preuße mit Blut und Gut zu Seinem glorreichen Kriegsherrn stehen, und Eurer Königlichen Majestät getreues Volk bittet Eines: Nicht zu ruhen, bis dieser französische Uebermuth für alle Zukunft gedemüthigt, und Deutschland in seiner alten Größe hergestellt und gesichert ist.' Ibidem, unnumbered and undated petition to William I, signed by 594 men, mostly middle-class background: merchant men, academics, students, in the area around Dorotheenstrasse and Französische Strasse.

²⁷⁶ Ibidem, Bl. 132, 18 July 1870.

einzelner Adresse – sowohl von bis jetzt eingeweihten wie der späten noch einzusenden – durch ein passendes Blatt zu öffentlichen Kenntniß zu bringen.²⁷⁷ Bismarck drafted a statement, which he had sent to William for approval and which was subsequently be published in the *Staatsanzeiger*.²⁷⁸ The proclamation, published 25 July, stated William's thanks and emphasized how the upheaval had made all German classes and princes rise and erased social divisions, but that out of the war would come new German freedom and unity.²⁷⁹ William consciously engaged with and reproduced the messages sent to him, stirred the popular mood and demonstrated his own centrality.²⁸⁰ In this manner, William laid the foundation for a system of communication with the population for the duration of the war that followed a wider European development. According to Alexis Schwarzenbach, monarchs in Europe had established such systems since the middle of the nineteenth century with the support of state and media professionals to generate a positive affection from the population with the dynasty. This helped to create an imagined and national community.²⁸¹ With reference to Benedict Anderson, this study argues that William did exactly this by acknowledging the receipt of these petitions: he helped create the idea of a national community with himself as its figurehead.²⁸²

William's departure on 31 July was a carefully organized event, signifying the monarch's travel to the front to assume command. It withheld from the public William's own concerns over the upcoming war. Waldersee found him on the day of departure up at 6 AM, packing a large number of maps to take with him and visibly concerned.²⁸³ But to his officials William sought to uphold the posture of a monarch in charge of affairs. At his request, he received the Prussian State Ministry in his palace on the day of his departure.²⁸⁴ This was followed by a speech to the State Ministry, after which William inspected the departure of a cavalry unit from the palace. He then greeted Prince Henry of Hessen, who was an officer in the 2nd regiment Ulanen. This deference towards a house that was formerly antagonistic to Prussia was meant to signify monarchical unity across Germany.²⁸⁵ Upon leaving his palace at Unter den Linden, William was greeted

²⁷⁷ GSStA PK I. HA. Rep. 90. No. 4593. Krieg gegen Frankreich 1870/71, Bd. 1 1870-1871. Bl. 21. Wilmowski to Bismarck, 22 July 1870.

²⁷⁸ Ibidem, Bl. 23. Bismarck to William, 24 July 1870.

²⁷⁹ Ibidem, Bl. 26. Proclamation by William I, 25 July 1870, to be published in the *Staatsanzeiger*.

²⁸⁰ In reality, this strong stance hardly reflected William's mood. On the day the proclamation was published, Alfred von Waldersee noted in his diary that, 'Der König ist jetzt immer sehr spät abends noch auf und arbeitet für sich. Früh 7 Uhr ist er schon wieder sichtbar. Man findet ihn etwas angegriffen.' Heinrich Otto Meisner ed., *Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Alfred Grafen von Waldersee 1832-1888* (Berlin 1922) 84.

²⁸¹ Alexis Schwarzenbach, *Königliche Träume. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Monarchie von 1789 bis 1997* (Munich 2012) 94-96.

²⁸² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (2nd edition; London 1991).

²⁸³ Meisner ed., *Denkwürdigkeiten Waldersee I*, 86.

²⁸⁴ GSStA PK I. HA. Rep. 90A. No. 4593. Bl. 30. Count Pückler to the Staatsministerium, 30 July 1870.

Marginal comment by Wehrmann.

²⁸⁵ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 448.

by a large crowd and driven to the train station, whilst the Prussian colours were lowered to signify his absence.²⁸⁶ William's train journey included stops in Cologne, Homburg and Mainz. As such, it was primarily aimed at a North-German audience.²⁸⁷ According to the *Kölnische Zeitung* large numbers of people greeted William upon his arrival in Cologne, where he got off the train to greet the public in a calm and friendly demeanour.²⁸⁸ But according to Friedrich von Holstein, the reception in Mainz was of a different nature: 'Der alte Herr sah ernst, vornehm und imponierend aus. Mit ruhigem Blick betrachtete er das wenig zahlreiche Publikum, welches keinen Ton von sich gab, zum Teil nicht einmal grüßte.'²⁸⁹

During the war, William was adamant that the royal family stayed together to project unity and care for the home front. They had to stay in Berlin and Potsdam, rather than spread across the country. This substantiates Baumgart's argument that William sought to exercise autocratic control over the lives of his family members, by issuing instructions for their conduct and travel schedules.²⁹⁰ Partially, this may have been incentivized by Augusta's letter of 13 July, in which she promised to be on her post like in 1866, but requested to stay as long as possible in Koblenz.²⁹¹ William refused giving permission and instead wrote back on 17 July that 'die Dir zufällende Tätigkeit ist hier im Centrum wohl wichtiger als in Coblenz'.²⁹² Ten days later William ordered all princesses of the royal house to stay in their residences until a change of circumstances required otherwise.²⁹³ Not all female members of the dynasty were willing to comply with this request. As head of the Prussian ambulance and hospital services, Augusta continued touring the western parts of Germany. She was followed in this by Crown Princess Victoria. In September 1870 she took her children on a similar tour, including Wiesbaden and Homburg, amongst other cities.²⁹⁴ This displeased William, who on 17 September wrote to his wife that 'Viky [sic] mit Sack und Pack doch abgegangen ist, ist mir höchst unangenehm, um so mehr als Fritz mit kein Wort davon sagte, daß diese Familien-Wanderung projectirt werde. (...) [Aus] Deinen Brief von Viky sah ich auch die alte Tendenz sich von Berlin, Potsdam und der Familie zu trennen. Ich werde ihr daher die Rückkehr bald befehlen.'²⁹⁵ However,

²⁸⁶ *Vossische Zeitung*, 1 August 1870.

²⁸⁷ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 448.

²⁸⁸ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 2 August 1870.

²⁸⁹ Norman Rich, M.H. Fisher and Werner Frauendienst eds., *Die geheimen Papiere Friedrich von Holsteins I Erinnerungen und Denkwürdigkeiten* (Göttingen 1956) 45.

²⁹⁰ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 18.

²⁹¹ Becker ed., *Bismarcks spanische >>Diversion<< III*, 118.

²⁹² GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51J. Kaiser Wilhelm I. und Kaiserin Augusta. No. 509b. Briefe (Abschriften) Kaiser Wilhelm I. an seine Gemahlin Augusta. Band 15 – 1870, Bl. 56, William to Augusta, 17 July 1870.

²⁹³ GStA PK I. HA Rep. 100 Ministerium des Königlichen Hauses. No. 515. Aufenthalt der Prinzessinnen während des gegenwärtigen Krieges. 1870.

²⁹⁴ Pakula, *Uncommon woman*, 301-302.

²⁹⁵ GStA PK BPH Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Band 15, Bl. 114, William to Augusta, 17 September 1870.

William waited until November to order Vicky back to Berlin, an order which she duly followed and then took up inspecting hospitals.²⁹⁶

William's stance shows that he expected Augusta to play an active role in the war effort. Geisthövel has emphasized that Augusta played a role of her own during the war that drew on various forms of representation. Contrary to later literature that portrayed her as politically inactive, Augusta did indeed play a considerable role on the home front. This included charity work and visiting hospitals, cultivating notions of a social kingship. In addition, Augusta appeared on the balcony of their palace at Unter den Linden, where an officer read out dispatches, including from William. During the war of 1866 she read these out herself, but during the Franco-Prussian war an officer did so for her, whilst she waved at the assembled crowds. As such, Augusta served as the representative of her husband and the mediator of good news. Another form was Augusta being as addressee of her husband's letters that were made deliberately public. These letters made William's role as commander-in-chief tangible and included the public in the contact between husband and wife. Taken together activities these helped that a unity between monarch and population could converge.²⁹⁷ Yet, it is important to bear in mind that Augusta's activities were not an isolated affair; *pace* Geisthövel, her undertakings were done in conjunction with and at William's orders.

Another form William used to draw popular attention to the war's progress were victory salutes. These entailed the placing of cannons in an open field, which would be fired after a victory had been achieved at the front. Seyferth has demonstrated that these victory salutes were particularly used in the first stage of the war. William had ordered the first victory shooting after the twin victories at Spichern and Wörth. Victory salutes were continued regularly hereafter, but declined after the battle of Sedan. In Hamburg for example, a victory shooting was only ordered after the conquest of Strassbourg and the fall of Metz. Seyferth attributes this decline to the waning of popular enthusiasm. Hereafter, German governments used other means to uphold public support and increasingly insisted on *Durchhalteparolen*. Not until 5 February 1871 did William again order a victory shooting, after the occupation of the fortresses around Paris and the crossing of the Swiss border by the army under Bourbaki.²⁹⁸ Seyferth's argument on the correlation between the decline of victory salutes and waning of popular enthusiasm should not overlook that William's usage of victory salutes was related to victories in battle. For example, he personally had ordered victory salutes after the fall of Metz and the surrender of 173.000 soldiers, 6.000 officers and 3 French marshals.²⁹⁹

During the war, William sought to bridge social divisions to project the notion of a unified society under his aegis. At the outbreak of the war, William

²⁹⁶ Pakula, *Uncommon woman*, 303.

²⁹⁷ Alexa Geisthövel, 'Augusta-Erlebnisse: Repräsentationen der preußischen Königin 1870' in: Ute Frevert and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt eds., *Neue Politikgeschichte. Perspektiven einer historischen Politikforschung* (Frankfurt 2005) 82-114.

²⁹⁸ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 449-453.

²⁹⁹ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 90A. No. 4599. Depeschen vom Kriegsschauplatz 1870. Bl. 87.

had declared large parts of the North German confederation, the Rhine area and the coastal area, in a state of siege, which transferred the powers to keep up security from civilian authorities to military governors. Alf Lüdtkke has argued that the war provided the framework for increased police activity to act against individuals and social groups that threatened the social order.³⁰⁰ The state of siege allowed placing troops in any region where Hannoverian, Danish or Polish agitation was expected. Indeed, already on 25 July in response to possible agitation, William issued a decree that allowed the relocation of five battalions of infantry and three escadrons of cavalry to the seat of the military governor in Posen. At the same time, upon the outbreak of the war, William had issued an amnesty to prisoners who had committed political crimes. This was particularly aimed at members of the Welfs Legion to counter resistance in Hannover. William, urged by Bismarck, ordered restraint to coastal commanders in dealing with social democrats. This went in particular for Vogel von Falckenstein, a Prussian general who had several social democrats indicted and locked up. But in a demonstration of abiding to monarchical authority, Falckenstein had one social democrat and seventeen other political prisoners released. In the event, such acts were thereafter essentially nullified when Falckenstein, with Bismarck's support, still continued a campaign against the social democrats.³⁰¹ William's efforts stemmed from genuine concern over dissatisfaction at the German home front. In November 1870, after the fall of the fortress of Metz, German newspapers provided dramatic scenes over the surrender of troops and soldiers going into captivity. Augusta raised this with William. This infuriated him: 'Das alles sind Auswüchse der Sentimentalität, weil der Krieg nicht mit 4 Wochen aus war! Ich kann inständigst genug warnen, dergleichen Richtungen nicht die Überhand gewinnen zu lassen.'³⁰²

To overcome such divisions after a war that lasted longer than expected, William's return to Berlin was again a carefully orchestrated event. As early as January 1871, plans circulated in Berlin to organize a purely military ceremony in either Strasbourg or Frankfurt once William would cross the border into Germany. There, instead of an Imperial Crown, a Crowned helmet would be displayed, whilst a Catholic dedication was ruled out.³⁰³ But the plan was not taken further, though William continued to cultivate his role as military monarch. William had refused to return to Berlin until peace agreements with France had been made.³⁰⁴ Hereafter, his role was essential redundant, though William preferred to arrive back in Berlin only shortly before the opening of the Reichstag, so as to inspect as

³⁰⁰ Alf Lüdtkke, 'The permanence of internal war: the Prussian state and its opponents, 1870-71' in: Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler eds., *On the road to total war. The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861-1871* (Cambridge 1997) 377-392.

³⁰¹ Seyfert, *Heimatfront*, 141-142, 284-286, 315.

³⁰² Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 245-246.

³⁰³ Fuchs ed., *Reichspolitik I*, 1.

³⁰⁴ William had written to Augusta on 31 January that 'die Berliner schon von meine Rückkehr jubelten, ehe noch Waffenstillstand war ist recht kindisch und Deine Ansicht die völlig [sic] richtige, daß ich hier nicht fort kann ehe nicht Friede ist.' GStA PK BPH Rep. 51J. Inv. no. 509b. Band 1871. Bl. 24. William to Augusta, 31 January 1871.

many troops in France as possible.³⁰⁵ William's return was planned to occur after the armistice. The original travel schedule anticipated an arrival in Berlin on 17 March. Behind the scenes Schneider pressed for a delay, so as to arrive on the 18th. This was aimed to erase the memory of 18 March 1848, when William had fled Berlin after the outbreak of the revolution. It would thus associate this date henceforth with William's return from the successful war against France. Schneider's attempts were unsuccessful and the schedule was upheld, as was the idea that as small as possible number of officers would accompany William to prevent them stealing the limelight.³⁰⁶ Throughout the process, William was curiously left out of the planning, something he complained about to the Crown Prince.³⁰⁷

The return through Germany was again a whistle-stop tour similar to his return to Berlin in 1870. In Saarbrücken for example, William was addressed by a group of representatives of the Rhine Province, which handed him a gilded wreath of laurels. In Kreuznach popular interest also went out to Moltke. Then, in Erfurt, shortly before departure, it was announced by Grand Duke Frederick of Baden that Moltke would not accompany William to Weimar. Bronsart von Schellendorf, then an officer on Moltke's staff, suspected envy on William's side.³⁰⁸ From there, William returned to Potsdam and Berlin. At Augusta's instructions, William was received at the Wildgarten Station in Potsdam, out of sight of the public, which had to be directed to the central station in Potsdam.³⁰⁹ Following his arrival in Berlin, William returned to the Schloss in open carriage. Hildegard von Spitzemberg wrote in her diary that 'die Parallele zwischen jener Abfahrt zum Kriege und dieser ungeahnt glorreichen Heimkehr stimmte wohl aller Herzen zu tiefer Rührung und innigem Danke'³¹⁰ William's return was to mark a glorious bookend to the conflict and the ruler returning to resume his monarchical duties.

William at the front

Scholarly literature has underestimated the extent to which William wanted to be seen as the monarch who actually commanded the armies at the front ever since his experience of the Napoleonic Wars.³¹¹ Stamm-Kuhlmann has stated that because William was not the direct heir to the throne, he was designated for a military career and primarily had to preoccupy himself with organizational

³⁰⁵ Meisner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 409.

³⁰⁶ Paul Rasso ed., *Paul Bronsart von Schellendorf. Geheimes Kriegstagebuch 1870-1871* (Bonn 1954) 383. Another reason to reduce the number of officers was to save costs for breakfasts. Cf. ditto.

³⁰⁷ Meisner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 418.

³⁰⁸ Rasso ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 386-388.

³⁰⁹ GStA PK. BPH Rep. 113. Oberhofmarschallamt Bl. 302. Teilnahme der preußischen Könige und Prinzen an Feldzügen, Bd. 13. 1870-1871. Bl. 136. Court Marshal Dohme to the head of the Potsdam police, Engelcken, 15 March 1871.

³¹⁰ Vierhaus ed., *Tagebuch*, 123.

³¹¹ Angelow for example sees William's presence at the front during the wars against Austria and France as him reliving his experience of the Napoleonic Wars, whilst delegating authority. Angelow, 'Wilhelm I.', 259-259.

improvements of the army.³¹² This was not uncommon when seen in an European context. For example, Prince Frederick of the Netherlands was, like William, the second-born son and as such not direct heir to the throne and instead also steered by his father into a career in the military. Like William, Frederick too would concern himself mostly with improving and organizing the military.³¹³ What set William apart was that next to organizational activities in the military, he also wanted to command an army in the field ever since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, having expressed this as early as 1822.³¹⁴ Possibly because of this, William had taken up with great eagerness the command of the 1849 Prussian expeditionary force that defeated the revolution in Baden. However, in the 1850s it seemed that his chances waned, as he admitted to Oldwig von Natzmer: ‘für uns Soldaten die doch auch gern etwa Resultat so langer Friedensvorbereitungen sehen möchten wird die Zeit lang: man wird nicht jünger, und so werde ich mich wohl mit der Badener Episode begnügen.’³¹⁵ When in 1856 William developed a plan to support the royalist insurgents in Neuenburg, which had launched a coup against the incorporation in the Swiss confederation, he had expected to be given command of the expeditionary force. But Frederick William IV judged the political and military risks too large and passed command to Karl von der Groeben. This decision greatly grieved William.³¹⁶ This desire was undiminished by the time of the wars of German unification. William’s wish to be seen as the *König-Feldherr* is a logical outcome of this biographical background.

William’s preference for military command thus did not occur in historical isolation, but was rather a response to the development of the position of the monarchy. Paulmann has argued that the rise of monarchical nation states heightened the importance of the military as means to projecting national security and, because of the intertwining of monarch, state and military, personalizing national representation via military ceremonial.³¹⁷ This meant that the monarch could use the military to epitomize martial features as national traits, as did Nicholas I in Russia.³¹⁸ Significantly, William, whose sister was married to Nicholas I, began using authorized biographies in the 1850s to likewise present

³¹² Stamm-Kuhlmann, ‘Militärische Prinzenziehung’, 449.

³¹³ Frederik Frank Sterkenburgh, *Van bufferstaat tot neutraliteit, of: De militaire carrière van prins Frederik der Nederlanden, 1813-1840* (unpublished MA Thesis, University of Amsterdam 2012); Van der Sande, *Prins Frederik*, 99-106, 141-184.

³¹⁴ Writing to his friend and mentor Oldwig von Natzmer, William stated that ‘jajawohl ist der Krieg ein erwünschtes Ereignis in diesem Augenblick für mich. Schon lange hatte ich die Idee in mir befestigt, den König zu bitten, mir die Kampagne mitzumachen.’ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms I*, 61.

³¹⁵ Quoted in Marcks, *Kaiser Wilhelm I*, 111.

³¹⁶ Baumgart ed., *Briefwechsel*, 35-36, 536-540.

³¹⁷ Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*, 160-164.

³¹⁸ Wortman, *Scenarios of power I*, 296-332. In the same period, prince Albert had himself portrayed in uniform to present himself as national of his adopted country. See Karina Urbach, ‘Die inszenierte Idylle. Legitimationsstrategien Queen Victorias und Prinz Alberts’ in: Frank-Lothar Kroll and Dieter J. Weiß eds., *Inszenierung oder Legitimation? / Monarchy and the art of representation. Die Monarchie in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Ein deutsch-englischer Vergleich* (Berlin 2015) 23-33, there 31.

himself as the embodiment of the Prussian monarchical-military state.³¹⁹ Indeed, as Heinz Gollwitzer has pointed out, only the larger German states could adopt the model of a military monarchy, which William in the course of the nineteenth century did.³²⁰

This stance would serve as a counterweight for William against the rise of the General Staff under Moltke as the actual centre of military gravity. Moltke actively constructed the image of himself as a professional soldier. Arden Bucholz has pointed at Moltke's appearance and choice of uniform: not the bedecked dress of a court general but rather that of a professional soldier with campaign hat and simple long coat. A portrait photo showed him as 'steadfast, realistic, straightforward gaze: no heroics, no romantics.'³²¹ Lothar Burchardt has argued that Moltke's persona of intellectual brilliance and devotion to the military profession likewise raised his authority.³²² Another form with which Moltke consolidated his reputation were histories of the wars fought under his leadership. These served primarily to learn lessons for the profession, a practice that was started under Scharnhorst in the early nineteenth century. But Moltke took this further as the wars of German unification offered better models of comparison. Dierk Walter has argued that Moltke's reputation was founded on the operational histories of the wars, which avoided political controversies and uttering criticism on lower-level commanders only between the lines. Moltke supervised these writings and decisively influenced these, as not a few were based on his own studies.³²³ What further solidified Moltke's reputation was the quick advance of the German armies to the French borders in 1870, which laid a further foundation for his post-war idealization, as Seyferth has argued.³²⁴ Gall has argued that Moltke's successful leadership in the wars of German unification made the German population increasingly look at the military for the solution of political questions.³²⁵ All of this contributed to the construction of Moltke's persona in German culture as the personification of the 'scientist of war', who succeeded in winning wars with modern technical means.³²⁶ This tacit competition between monarch and the professional military was by no means a unique development. Sellin has demonstrated that a similar competition existed between Giuseppe

³¹⁹ Frederik Frank Sterkenburgh, 'Narrating prince Wilhelm of Prussia: commemorative biography as monarchical politics of memory' in: Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi Mehrkens eds., *Royal heirs and the uses of soft power in nineteenth-century Europe* (London 2016) 281-301, there 289-290.

³²⁰ Gollwitzer, *Ludwig I.*, 769. Cf. Wrede, 'Einleitung', 38, who mentions William as an example next to Francis Joseph of Austria.

³²¹ Arden Bucholz, *Moltke and the German wars, 1864-1871* (Basingstoke 2001) vi.

³²² Lothar Burchardt, 'Helmuth von Moltke, Wilhelm I. und der Aufstieg des preußischen Generalstabes' in: Roland G. Foerster ed., *Generalfeldmarschall von Moltke. Bedeutung und Wirkung* (Oldenbourg 1991) 19-38, there 34.

³²³ Dierk Walter, *Preußische Heeresreformen 1807-1870: militärische Innovationen und der Mythos der >>Roonschen Reform<<* (Paderborn 2003) 83, 520-521. Bucholz has likewise pointed out that these studies exemplified the General Staff's thorough treatment of these wars. Bucholz, *Moltke*, 146.

³²⁴ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 36.

³²⁵ Gall, *Bismarck*, 443-444.

³²⁶ Wolfram Pyta, *Hindenburg. Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler* (Munich 2007) 87-88.

Garibaldi and Vittorio Emanuele II in Italy and Michail Skobelev and Alexander III and Hindenburg and William II in Germany.³²⁷

The sources make clear that William was willing to project the monarchical primacy in military command. This nuances Burchardt's argument that both William and Moltke were respectful of each other's military roles.³²⁸ When Schneider suggested to William a comparison to Frederick William III, William responded that he now had undivided supreme command, whereas his father had to take account of the Austrian, Russian, Swedish and English opinions. By contrast, William only had to take account of German interests and had full freedom of movement.³²⁹ But public perception differed. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* commented on 23 July 1870 that 'er [William, FFS] wird den Kriegsratsitzungen präsidiren und allerdings nominell den Oberbefehl führen; die Entwerfung und Ausführung der Operationspläne wird der 73jährige Monarch jedoch anderen Händen überlassen.'³³⁰ Possibly in a response to such perceptions, William zealously defended his prerogatives vis-à-vis Moltke. In the debate over whether Moltke had to deliberate with Bismarck over his proposals before seeing William, Bronsart von Schellendorf noted that 'die würde aber jedenfalls den König sehr unangenehm berühren, welcher selbst dem General Moltke gegenüber sehr eifersüchtig auf seine Prerogative als Kriegsherr ist.'³³¹ The monarch responded with symbolic acts and gestures. Early in the war, William criticized the painter Wilhelm Bleibtreu for his sketch for a painting of the battle of Sedan. In William's opinion, Bleibtreu had put Moltke, Roon, Blumenthal and Bismarck too much in the foreground at the expense of the German princes.³³² After his return to Berlin William wrote to Moltke that he was given the Grand Cross of the Iron Cross, but only by exception. For unlike the Crown Prince, Prince Frederick Charles and the Crown Prince of Saxony, Moltke had not himself commanded an army in battle or conquered a fortress as the rules required, even though he had provided exceptional operational leadership.³³³

Defending the monarchical-military primacy was not restricted to Moltke, as the example of the dismissal of Karl Friedrich von Steinmetz, who commanded the I Army, demonstrates. Throughout the war, Steinmetz' relationships with Moltke and Prince Frederick Charles, who commanded the II army, had been poor. Part of this was caused by Steinmetz' refusal to follow Moltke's plans, which occurred several times at the opening stages of the war. Steinmetz' dismissal followed in early September. In order to support the Crown Prince's army corps in his advance towards the Marne, the II army was split into two, with units transferred to the Crown Prince and a new army formed under the command of Prince Frederick Charles. The latter was given the free hand by

³²⁷ Sellin, *Gewalt und Legitimität*, 269-283.

³²⁸ Burchardt, 'Moltke', 23-28.

³²⁹ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben II*, 186-187.

³³⁰ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 23 July 1870.

³³¹ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 361.

³³² *Ibidem*, 128.

³³³ *Ibidem*, 390.

Moltke to dismiss Steinmetz if matters went out of control. When Frederick Charles on 7 September complained that Steinmetz had withheld customary civilities to him as a superior officer, William was furious. In William's eyes, this was an insult to a Prince of the Royal House and he had Steinmetz appointed as Governor of Posen.³³⁴

William made his role as a military monarch more tangible by being present on the battlefield during the opening stages of the war and intervening in the chain of command. This occurred at the battle of Gravelotte on 18 August 1870. There, the Prussian army sought to defeat the French army further, which it had given a severe blow the day before. While the Prussian army succeeded in forcing the French army into retreat, Prussian troops had concentrated around St. Hubert, where previously Steinmetz had amassed his troops in the erroneous assumption that the collapse of the French line was imminent. Although reinforcements were sent in the late afternoon, these only added to the chaos at the scene. William, who was at Gravelotte, received the erroneous information that the heights had been conquered and at 7 PM ordered a renewal of the attacks. This was against the wishes of Moltke, who, at the height of the battle, refused to intervene. When the French succeeded in pushing back the Prussian troops, William and his staff considered attack themselves with their swords. At the same time, his staff sought a line of retreat for William. The French did not pursue the attack any further and the Prussian troops, William and his staff withdrew to Rezonville. The royal staff there concluded the German armies had been exhausted and at Moltke's insistence, William ordered that a renewed attack would not occur until the next day.³³⁵ The confrontation had ended in a tactical Prussian defeat and had clearly shaken William. Frederick William met his father on 20 August and noted that 'der König wies den Gedanken nicht unbedingt ab, aber hob immer wieder die Opfer hervor, die bereits gebracht seien; dann erzählte er mit den ganzen Hergang der Schlacht vom 18., der er wohl den Namen „Gravelotte“ beilegen wird.'³³⁶ Despite the defeat, William still sought to claim interpretative dominance of a battle which he unsuccessfully had tried to lead.

As long as the conventional phase of the war went on, William wanted to remain visible on the battlefield. Bronsart von Schellendorf noted on 30 August that 'der König war sehr ungeduldig, ebenso wie am 18. August. Es geht ihm alles zu langsam und er vergißt in seinem Eifer, daß ein wirkliches Gefecht nicht so schnell verläuft als ein Manöver'.³³⁷ But for William, being present meant being seen by the troops. On 17 August Crown Prince Frederick William noted that 'heute ist der König bereits um halb vier Uhr morgens aufgebrochen, um den Feind anzugreifen, sodaß man heute die Entscheidungsschlacht erwartet.'³³⁸ William clearly sought to associate himself with the troops at the front. Indeed, one day

³³⁴ Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, 190-191.

³³⁵ *Ibidem*, 178-180.

³³⁶ Meissner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 65.

³³⁷ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 54.

³³⁸ Meissner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 59.

later he wrote to Augusta that ‘ich werde mich morgen zum Gefecht begeben. Gestern beritt ich das Gefechtsfeld vor Metz, um, wie ich Dir telegaphirte, einen Überblick des Gefechts selbst zu gewinnen. Der Jubel der Truppen war herrlich.’³³⁹ William regretted no longer being near the troops once the war’s conventional phase had ended. On 4 October Bronsart von Schellendorf noted that ‘Der König, welcher die Nähe der Truppen hier schmerzlich entbehrt, hat schon seit längerer Zeit den Wunsch, nach Versailles überzusiedeln’, a move which the staff was against because the frontlines were still considered to be too weak.³⁴⁰

William’s determination to be visible to his soldiers, in plain uniform coat and on horseback, is important on two levels. William’s simple dress fits within a broader pattern of development in the 1860s. Martin van Creveld has argued that during this period officers changed their decorative uniforms in favour of more simple ones, so as not to be too vulnerable on the battlefield. A second factor was the spread of democracy. This saw soldiers expect to be commanded by their nominal equals, something that in turn had to be expressed in dress as well.³⁴¹ At the same time, this suggestion of vicinity and approachability of the monarch as a military commander served to confirm the existing political hierarchy. In this respect, what Müller has written about Frederick William goes for William too: this approachability implicitly confirmed the hierarchical mode of ruler and ruled, whilst also serving as a reminder of the existing image of Frederick the Great as a victorious military figure and man of the people.³⁴² This points to the second level, namely the suggestion of perpetuating Frederick the Great’s style of military leadership. Tim Blanning has pointed out that Frederick likewise sought to impress his soldiers by being one of them, sharing in their dangers, hardships and discomforts.³⁴³ This applies to William too: he consciously constructed the image of military monarch that confirmed the existing political hierarchy, whilst echoing his famous dynastic predecessor.

In order to be more effective, such images also had to be communicated to the home front. In recent years, scholars of military history have come to acknowledge the importance of the medial construction of specific events. Michael Sikora and Füssel have argued applying cultural history to military history and see battle not as given, but rather as a cultural and medial constructed, emphasizing the role of violence, structure and representation of how an event, in hindsight, is come to be seen as a battle.³⁴⁴ This approach is particular important in order to understand how William constructed his image as a military monarch and communicated this to the home front by cultivating its media landscape. Its features have been described by Seyferth. German newspapers copied a lot from each other, suggesting that many articles came from one source. Because getting

³³⁹ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 226.

³⁴⁰ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 110-111.

³⁴¹ Martin van Creveld, *The culture of war* (New York 2008).

³⁴² Müller, *Our Fritz*, 134-135.

³⁴³ Tim Blanning, *Frederick the Great. King of Prussia* (London 2015) 273.

³⁴⁴ Marian Füssel and Michael Sikora, ‘Einführung: Schlachtengeschichte als Kulturgeschichte’ in: Marian Füssel and Michael Sikora eds., *Kulturgeschichte der Schlacht* (Paderborn 2014) 11-26.

correspondents to the front was difficult, states had a lot of influence on what was reported in the media. Governments established special bureaus to issue articles to the press, which would then be forwarded to the newspapers, thus making the press often follow an official line. Upon the outbreak of the war, journalists often had to report to political circles for access, a policy that, with the little criticism that was uttered, seems to have been successful. The number of embedded journalists was limited, certainly given the growing number of newspapers in Germany. A crucial figure was Theophil von Podbielski, who edited government dispatches. The information he and other government officials provided depended on the course of the war. These dispatches were taken over by most German newspapers. It is doubtful that all Germans were reached, given the low literacy still prevailing and the costs of a newspaper subscription. To this end, governments compensated by issuing extra newspapers or dispatches. In addition, the government relied on telegraph networks to reach the home front quickly, to dominate the interpretation of the news and reach the largest part of the population possible.³⁴⁵

Within this media context William drew on two forms of medial communication to highlight his role as military monarch. The first occurred via his reader Louis Schneider. With William's consent and help he wrote newspaper articles. Schneider essentially took up a similar role he had performed for William in 1866, when he likewise wrote and published articles at William's behest and for his purpose. This role came about at the suggestion of Roon, who wanted Schneider to write pamphlets to raise morale, with Schneider taking this idea to the *Soldatenfreund*. At the same time, Schneider drafted telegrams for the press that highlighted William's commanding role and which were personally reviewed and edited by William.³⁴⁶ At the outbreak of the war against France, Schneider offered his journalistic services to the *Staatsanzeiger*, as well as writing for the *Soldatenfreund*, the latter a periodical aimed at a military audience which he had been editing and mostly authoring since the 1850s. Schneider opted for the *Staatsanzeiger*, as most newspapers took over from this one, thus guaranteeing the widest reach for his pieces. In addition, he wrote for the *Preußische Zeitung*, which gave him more freedom than the state-owned *Staatsanzeiger*.³⁴⁷ Furthermore, Schneider would provide material to foreign journalists, including those of the *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph* and the *New York Herald*.³⁴⁸ In addition, Schneider had arranged that Gerson von Bleichröder financed twenty-three issues of newssheets with songs and poems to raise soldiers' morale.³⁴⁹

Schneider's position was not officially recognized; he was not integrated into political military or court structures, but rather joined William in his capacity as reader to the monarch. This inevitably raised criticism amongst William's staff. One point of criticism was that Schneider was always early with William and this

³⁴⁵ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 359-376.

³⁴⁶ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben I*, 219, 241-242.

³⁴⁷ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben II*, 134-137.

³⁴⁸ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben III*, 64-65.

³⁴⁹ Fritz Stern, *Gold and iron. Bismarck, Bleichröder and the building of the German Empire* (New York 1977) 136.

could colour William's opinions before he received his military officials. This was an objection raised in the course of the war by for example Bronsart von Schellendorf and Frederick of Baden.³⁵⁰ In addition, Schneider's articles in the press did not necessarily correspond with the official government line, as the Crown Prince noted in October 1870: 'Graf Bismarck ist auf den Hofrat L. Schneider sehr erbost, weil letzterer häufig mit politischen Papieren und Mitteilungen seitens Sr. Majestät an den Minister geschickt wird und dann alsbald taktlose und falsche Aufsätze im Staatsanzeiger erscheinen läßt.'³⁵¹ On 29 November he noted the discontents in the headquarters about the reports in the press about German troop movements and deployments. Frederick William accused Schneider, who he believed was incapable of keeping a secret, whilst at the same time seeing nearly all in and outgoing telegrams in his position as reader to William. But: 'doch ist natürlich gegen einen Mann in solcher Stellung nichts zu tun'.³⁵² This last comment points at the essence of Schneider's position and his utility for William: Schneider's relative independence gave William the freedom to forge and influence perceptions and interpretations, without and beyond political, military and court control.

Together, William and Schneider sought to make William's role and outlook visible in print media. For example, he provided Schneider with many details of how the battle of Mars-la-Tour on 16 August, emphasizing the arrival of the XII (Saxon) army corps and the XI and II Prussian army corps that were ready to intervene, implicitly suggesting the decisive character of the battle.³⁵³ After the battle of Sedan, Schneider wrote an extensive account in which he highlighted William's role, based on information William had provided him and which he had complimented with information gathered from Prince Carl and court officials.³⁵⁴ Schneider could be utilized by William to explain his motives behind certain actions. When in October 1870 William wanted to promote the Crown Prince and Prince Frederick Charles to the rank of field marshal, he handed Schneider a concept-piece in which he justified his motives, for such a promotion was against the rules of the Prussian royal house.³⁵⁵ During that same month the castle of St. Cloud was burned down and William instructed Schneider to report in the press that this was not done by German soldiers, in order to prevent France suggesting that this was the case.³⁵⁶ Schneider was also involved in orchestrating photo shootings with the photographer Heinrich Schnäbeli at the end of December. On that occasion he ensured that two captured French colours would be clearly visible on a photo of William standing behind his desk.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁰ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 301, 347-348; Hermann Oncken ed., *Grossherzog Friedrich I von Baden und die deutsche Politik von 1854-1871* II (Stuttgart 1927) 241, 244.

³⁵¹ Meisner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 158-159.

³⁵² *Ibidem*, 245.

³⁵³ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* II, 174-175.

³⁵⁴ Louis Schneider, *Aus meinem Leben* III (Berlin 1880) 293.

³⁵⁵ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* III, 49-51.

³⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 20-21.

³⁵⁷ *Ibidem*. III, 130-131.

A second instrument in forging his image was his communication with Augusta. Two lines of communication operated between William and Augusta. First, there was their actual private correspondence, which was not published. This also served to discuss confidential matters, such as the deployment of members of the royal family for the war effort, as seen above in the case of Vicky's return to Berlin. Secondly, there was correspondence written deliberately for publication. This helped William to highlight his own role. Geisthövel has pointed out that dispatches could be printed literally, for his letters made battle tangible and his military life imaginable. They served to craft the image of the heroic king and give him as commander-in-chief his own military charisma, whilst making other commanders invisible. William's presence at decisive battles made battles more tangible. By keeping sentences short, William ensured that his language would also reach a broader public. This correspondence served to announce victory and raise public morale.³⁵⁸ The dispatches sent by William or in his name from the conventional phase of the war emphasize his, preferably victorious, military role on the battlefield and resonance with the troops. On 15 August, after visiting the battlefield of Metz, William wrote in his dispatch that 'Die Truppen sollen sich alle mit unglaublicher und bewunderungswürdiger Energie und mit Lust geschlagen haben. Ich habe viele gesehen und ihnen von Herzen gedankt. Der Jubel war ergreifend.'³⁵⁹ A dispatch on the evening of the 18 August was titled 'Großer Sieg unter Führung S. Majestät des Königs' and read in William's words to Augusta that 'Die Französische Armee in sehr starke Stellung westlich von Metz heute unter Meiner Führung angegriffen, in 9 stündiger Schlacht vollständig geschlagen, von ihren Verbindungen mit Paris abgeschnitten und gegen Metz zurückgeworfen.'³⁶⁰ On the 30 August William wrote in his dispatch that 'Ich kehre so eben auf das Schlachtfelde zurück um die Früchte des Sieges zu verfolgen.'³⁶¹ Taken together, these dispatches demonstrate how William sought to identify his personal role and popularity with the troops with the war's progress.

Of equal importance was William's editing of these messages for specific resonance. This becomes particularly clear in the examples of the battle of Sedan and William's encounter with Napoleon III. At Sedan William sent several dispatches to Augusta meant for publication. One of these stated 'Die französische Armee ist in Sedan eingeschlossen u der Kaiser Napoleon hat mir sein Degen angeboten. Ich habe sie angenommen und verlange die Kapitulation der Armees als Sieger [unreadable] Gott hat uns sichtlich gesegnet!'³⁶² The next day, William ended his dispatch to Augusta with 'welch eine Wendung des Schicksals durch Gottes Führung'.³⁶³ Notable in these two dispatches is the explicit reference to God. This reflected William's strong religiosity. But given that William knew that

³⁵⁸ Geisthövel, 'Augusta-Erlebnisse', 106-108.

³⁵⁹ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 90A. Inv. no. 4599. No. 18.

³⁶⁰ Ibidem, no. 21.

³⁶¹ Ibidem, no. 29.

³⁶² GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51J. No. 94. Telegram an Königin Augusta: Benachrichtigung von der Einschließung der französ. Armee in Sedan und der Gefangennahme Napoleons III. Faksimile.

³⁶³ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 90A. Inv. no. 4599. No. 36.

these messages would be published, they also point at his attempt to give the conflict a more religious character by invoking the supreme being's role in the war's progress. This attempt is significant because of the prominent role religion played in the war at which Seyferth has pointed. He has underlined the religious sentiments of soldiers and civilians during the war against France, despite the geographical and confessional divide becoming more accentuated after Prussia's victory in 1866 and Prussia's monarchs in the nineteenth century worked hard to make the protestant church the state religion.³⁶⁴ William's closing prayer at the end of his messages thus also served to tap into this religious breeding ground at the home front and relate this to the war's progress and his persona.

By contrast, William wanted his account of his encounter with Napoleon III to be published to demonstrate the dignity with which he treated the defeated French Emperor. Holger Afflerbach has argued that capitulation served as a regulatory mechanism for combatants to terminate the war when it was no longer in their interest to perpetuate the conflict. Capitulation provided the vanquished with a chance to save his honour and well-being in the assumption that both parties were civilized people and that war had to be restrained in order not to destroy everything for the sake of victory. This goes also for the wars of the late nineteenth century, including the Franco-Prussian War, where the large number of prisoners of is an indication of how capitulation served to regulate the terminating of the conflict in an orderly manner.³⁶⁵ Afflerbach's argument explains why William wanted his account of meeting Napoleon III published. This encounter was an emotional one for both monarchs, taking place under four eyes. Few details about what was discussed were known, but this did include William's assurance to Napoleon III that he wished to undertake nothing against the latter's dynasty.³⁶⁶ In his account to Augusta, William declared that they had discussed arrangements for Napoleon III's staff to join him and mutual praise for the other's army's performance and the causes of the war. The account emphasized the civility of the encounter: 'Die ganze Konversation schien ihm wohlzutun, und ich darf glauben, daß ich ihm seine Lage sehr erleichtert habe, und wir schieden beide tief bewegt!' But William also set out the large number of French soldiers and material that came forth because of this capitulation. He ended his account with the remark that 'Ich überlasse Dir, was Du aus diesen Erzählungen veröffentlichen willst. Jedenfalls sind die Details des Rendezvous auszuschließen und einfach zu sagen, daß der Besuch eine Viertelstunde dauerte, und daß beide Monarchen sehr bewegt über dieses Wiedersehen gewesen schienen. Auch die Details über Bismarcks erste Entrevue sind nur allgemein zu erzählen.'³⁶⁷ Bismarck's role was thus kept to a minimum in the reports, whilst the encounter between William and Napoleon III was presented as an orderly ending to the conflict.

³⁶⁴ Seyfert, *Heimatfront*, 148-152.

³⁶⁵ Holger Afflerbach, *Die Kunst der Niederlage. Eine Geschichte der Kapitulation* (Munich 2013) 172-173.

³⁶⁶ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 63-64.

³⁶⁷ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 236-238.

By presenting himself as the monarch who personally commanded his troops in battles and decided the war, William operated squarely in the prevailing military doctrine of the nineteenth century. But exactly this stance was problematic. John Lynn has argued that under the influence of military romanticism, military thought in the nineteenth century rejected rules and principles in war and instead emphasized human psychology, genius, chance and loss and glorifying Napoleon as the standard of war. As a result, battles were seen as instrumental in winning a war.³⁶⁸ This assumption was flawed. Russell F. Weigley has demonstrated for the early modern era that battles did not succeed as a means to decide war.³⁶⁹ This argument has been reinforced by Cathal J. Nolan, who has argued that throughout history wars were never decided by battles, but that in fact attrition and material and demographic factors were more decisive in a conflict. The Franco-Prussian War was no exception. Although the conventional phases of the war with its battles in August and September succeeded in defeating Napoleon III, it also destroyed the existing political order, setting revolutionary forces free that resulted in a wholly different sort of conflict. Moltke failed to provide a solution for such a protracted war. Eventually Bismarck forced a siege of Paris to break the deadlock and bring the war to an end.³⁷⁰

This ability to bring the war to a quick and decisive conclusion limited the possibility for William to make his role as military monarch tangible and forced changes in the presentations of his persona. A role for him on the front was mostly over by the time headquarters were relocated to Versailles, even if this relocation came at William's insistence in order to be closer to the front.³⁷¹ To his sister Alexandrine, William described the essence of his daily life in Versailles: 'Wir sind nun 4 Wochen hier, und Versailles hat die Allüre einer Friedensgarnison, so regelmäßig gehet der Garnisonsdienst und alle Hantierung'³⁷² To Augusta he wrote on 21 January 1871:

Um 10 Uhr ist der Kriegsrat täglich, der oft bis ½, ja bis 12 Uhr dauert. Dann täglich Militaircabinets-Vortrag, weil die Gesuche zu Beförderungen etc. täglich eingehen müssen, wegen der vielen Abgänge, was sonst nur alle Monate nur einmal geschieht. (...) Dann kommt die Zeit die Post zu öffnen oder zu schreiben für dieselbe. Promenade kann ¾ Stunden. Dann Wilmowsky und Abeken oder der Graf Bismarck. Diné um 5 Uhr bis gegen 7 Uhr. Bis 9 Uhr die eingehenden Schriften gelesen. 9 – ¾ 11 Uhr Soirée, bis ½ 12 Uhr arbeiten und ab und zu Zeitungen oder

³⁶⁸ John A. Lynn, *Battle. A history of combat and culture* (Boulder 2003) 179-217.

³⁶⁹ Russell F. Weigley, *The age of battles. The quest for decisive warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo* (Bloomington 1991).

³⁷⁰ Cathal J. Nolan, *The allure of battle. A history of how wars have been won and lost* (Oxford 2017) 288-322.

³⁷¹ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 110-111.

³⁷² Schultze ed., *Briefe an Alexandrine*, 110.

Anschriften gelesen. Meldungen und Audienzen ungerechnet – das ist mein Tageswerk.³⁷³

To counterbalance this scarcely glorious existence, William's activities and its representation had to change emphasis. Interestingly, it was William himself who admitted to his officers after Sedan that much work was still ahead of them.³⁷⁴ It is unlikely that this admission was made public. Partially, this reflected a lesson from the war of 1866, when William's life in headquarters at times had taken on a similar rhythm and William already before and during the war felt left out by his officials in official business.³⁷⁵ During the Franco-Prussian war, William took on more inspection tours and ceremonial events and reviewing the siege of Paris from afar.³⁷⁶ This also forced a change in the contents of the dispatches sent to the homefront. Seyferth has pointed out that after the initial victories the dispatches quickly changed in tone and became more reluctant, increasing the role of Podbielski in drafting and undersigning these dispatches.³⁷⁷ These now communicated William's presence at the siege of Paris or the war's overall progress.³⁷⁸ In this manner, William's persona was kept apart from the war's stagnation.

Schneider too played a role in keeping up appearances. When the siege of Paris had ended in a stalemate, he published an extensive article in the *Feld-Soldatenfreund* of 31 December 1870, detailing the organization of William's headquarters. This helped to illustrate the simplicity of his military persona, whilst combining it with his upcoming Imperial role of presiding over a dynastic federation: 'Wenn Seine Majestät der König auch persönlich noch so einfach und bescheiden in seinen Bedürfnissen ist, und unter Umständen, wie z. B. in der Nacht nach der Schlacht bei Gravelotte, im Dorf Rezonville, mit dem Geringsten vor lieb nimmt, so muß doch die ganze Hofhaltung so eingerichtet sein, daß für den Beuch eines Fürsten, für die Feier eines Sieges, für die Bewirthung der in das Hauptquartier berufenen Generale alles Nöthige vorhanden ist.'³⁷⁹

Another way to shift emphasis on William's persona was to elevate the role of the dynasty overall. In October, after the successful siege of Metz both Crown Prince Frederick William and Prince Frederick Charles were promoted to the rank of field marshal. Both French armies that had faced the German armies during the first phase of the war were now in captivity, as William stated in a

³⁷³ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Band 1871. Bl. 14. Cf. Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 137-138.

³⁷⁴ Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian war. The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871* (Cambridge 2003) 234.

³⁷⁵ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben I*, 259-260.

³⁷⁶ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51 No. 3. Tagebuch und Gedenktage S.M. des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelm I de 1797-1876. Aus dem Nachlasse des Vorlesers Seiner Majestät, Geheimen Hofrath Louis Schneider. In 12 Bändchen. 1797-1876. Bd. 9. 186-1870 and Bd. 10 1871-1872 detail these activities.

³⁷⁷ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 363-364.

³⁷⁸ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 90A. No. 4599. Bl. 104, 111, 124, 125.

³⁷⁹ 'Das große Königliche Hauptquartier', *Der Feld-Soldatenfreund*, 31 December 1870.

dispatch to his wife.³⁸⁰ What remains unclear is the extent to which William realized that he had perpetuated the rivalry between the Hohenzollern Princes that had existed between them since their military education, to which Stamm-Kuhlmann has referred.³⁸¹ Nonetheless, such conduct was by no means exceptional when seen against a European context. In the Netherlands for example, King William I actively used his heir's military service at the battle of Waterloo for propaganda to further the spread of Orangism in the new United Kingdom of the Netherlands.³⁸² Indeed, William recognized early in the war of 1870-1871 the importance of victories for the Crown Prince. After Frederick William's victory at Wörth, William stated to Waldersee that it 'ist es für ein Glück für meinen Sohn, so glänzende Erfolge gerade mit Süddeutschen Truppen zu erfechten. Es ist das für seine spätere Stellung von ungeheurem Wert.'³⁸³ The next day, 8 August, William wrote to Augusta that 'was Du über Fritz sagst, faßte ich gleich in den Worten zusammen von welcher Wichtigkeit für seine ganze Zukunft dieser selbständige Sieg sei.'³⁸⁴

Once the war had ended and peace agreements had been reached, William claimed again a more public role. He insisted on holding a military entry parade or victory parade into Paris and review of the troops. With this William sought to replicate the same entry as the allies had done in 1814. This was not without problems, as Bronsart von Schellendorf observed: 'Die Frage des Einrückens in Paris macht noch Schwierigkeiten. Hier trifft das Interesse und hohe Verständnis des Königs für dergleichen Akte mit dem überaus reizbaren Nationalgefühl der Franzosen zu einem schwer zu lösenden Konflikt zusammen. (...) Der König besinnt sich inzwischen wie es 1814 gewesen und wünscht möglichste Imitation.'³⁸⁵ Indeed, Waldersee later recalled how William went as far as wanting to have a divine service at Place de la Concorde, just as had happened in 1814.³⁸⁶ It was agreed in the peace agreements that the Germans were allowed a victory parade through Paris and the Germans duly organized their troops to be paraded down the Champs-Élysées in three successive days. But the timely ratification of the agreements on the French side meant that William would not be leading the Guard on the third day through Paris. Instead, William had to contend himself with reviewing the troops at Longchamps.³⁸⁷ Sources and literature often point at William's disappointment of not being allowed to hold his victory parade. But it this overlooks the eagerness with which he subsequently held military reviews as

³⁸⁰ GStA PK BPH Rep. 90A. No. 4599. Bl. 88.

³⁸¹ Stamm-Kuhlmann, 'Militärische Prinzenerziehung', 454.

³⁸² Jeroen Koch, 'The King as father, Orangism and the uses of a hero: King William I of the Netherlands and the Prince of Orange, 1815-1840' in: Frank Lorenz Müller and Heidi Mehrkens eds., *Royal heirs and the uses of soft power in nineteenth-century Europe* (London 2016) 263-280.

³⁸³ Waldersee, *Denkwürdigkeiten* I, 88.

³⁸⁴ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 219.

³⁸⁵ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 367-368.

³⁸⁶ Waldersee, *Denkwürdigkeiten* I, 163.

³⁸⁷ Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, 450. Cf. Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 141; Waldersee, *Denkwürdigkeiten* I, 163; Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* III, 200.

a substitute instead. Indeed, William postponed making arrangements for his official return to Berlin as long as possible to hold as many reviews as he could, according to the Crown Prince.³⁸⁸ William's presence at Longchamps was electrifying for the troops. As Frederick William recorded: 'Auf den Gesichtern der Offiziere wie auch der Mannschaften strahlte die Freude, den Kaiser zu begrüßen.'³⁸⁹ This impression was likewise noted by Bronsart von Schellendorf: 'Es war doch ein erhebender Moment, als der Kaiser und König die Fronten der jubelnder Truppen abritt.'³⁹⁰

To ensure his centrality on these occasions, William had himself dictated a speech to Schneider, which he read out on 3 March and in which he expressed his 'royal thanks' and pointed at the divine guidance during the conflict.³⁹¹ The speech emphasized his role and the cultivating of the religious connotations of the conflict. Despite the end of the parades at Longchamps, William continuously held reviews of German troops in the weeks thereafter. Already on 4 March, Bronsart von Schellendorf noted that William was eager to do so and refused to leave his headquarters in Versailles. Instead, he wanted personally to attend reviews which included troops from Bavaria, Saxony and Württemberg, before travelling back to Germany.³⁹² At Villiers, William again held a speech in which he personally thanked the troops from Saxony and the commander of the Meuse Army, Crown Prince Albert of Saxony and including also the latter's brother Georg.³⁹³ What is notable in William's eagerness to hold these reviews is his intention to review troops from all over Germany. That this appeal worked, is testified by Bronsart von Schellendorf, who stated that 'Wir waren alle bewegt und manchem nichtpreußischen Stabsoffizier standen die hellen Tränen in den Augen, als der neue deutsche Kaiser den Sachsen, Bayern und Württembergern dankte.'³⁹⁴ At no point did William refer to the outcome of the war as an all-German or national victory. Instead, the emphasis in his speeches on his personal gratitude and reference to other royal commanders foreshadowed his dynastic-federal understanding of the German Empire.

William and the military decision-making process

It would be erroneous to conclude that William's self-staging as military monarch was but the outward appearance of the Prussian high command, whilst the actual decisions were taken by his officials. This distinction cannot be upheld, for it fails to understand how symbolic practices and discursive structures add to the constitution of political institutions and claims to legitimacy.³⁹⁵ To give effect to this argument, this section will discuss William's conduct in the formulation of

³⁸⁸ Meisner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 402.

³⁸⁹ Ibidem, 404.

³⁹⁰ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 371.

³⁹¹ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 257-258.

³⁹² Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 375-376, 379.

³⁹³ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 258-259.

³⁹⁴ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 380.

³⁹⁵ Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Kulturgeschichte des Politischen', 15-17.

the Prussian high command's military strategy and in particular during the conflict between Bismarck and Moltke. This challenges Förster's argument that William formed the weakest corner in the 'Prussian triangle of leadership', the other two corners being Bismarck and Moltke.³⁹⁶ Instead, this section builds on recent work of Karina Urbach, who has nuanced the political-military divide of this triangle and pointed out that the ultimate decision-making prerogative in the dispute between Bismarck and Moltke rested with William.³⁹⁷ Urbach echoes Howard's argument that William essentially served as judge between the positions held by Bismarck and Moltke.³⁹⁸ This section draws on Stollberg-Rilinger's work on decision-making and places emphasis on the modes of decision and the performative dimension of decision-making.³⁹⁹

Two features define William's role in the military decision-making process and the formulation of strategy, especially after Sedan. First, William served as a facilitator for the process by holding and presiding over councils of war for the Prussian high command, which he was entitled to initiate in his capacity as commander-in-chief. Once the conventional phase of the war had ended and headquarters were located in Versailles, these councils were held on most days at 10 AM in William's study. This provided a spatial and temporal framework for the decision-making process within which William facilitated deliberations before making a final decision. This function was also communicated to emphasize William's role in the decision-making process. As noted above, Schneider organized William's study for photographs. Ironically, given his attempts to forward his own role and that of the General Staff, it was Moltke who afterwards denied Fedor von Köppen's assertion that that these councils had taken place as such and instead had to be seen as reports in which Moltke and his officials only offered advice and William decided.⁴⁰⁰

This facilitating role, the war's stagnating progress and the image he sought to project to the home front ruled out that William remained a passive figure during these councils. Eyewitness accounts have described William's nervousness during these meetings, in particular when the war grinded to a halt. Bronsart von Schellendorf noted after the council of war on 5 December that 'der König ist jedenfalls schwierig zu behandeln, er ist nervös aufgereggt und entschieden verstimmt über die Verzögerung der endlichen Entscheidung. Die

³⁹⁶ Stig Förster, 'The Prussian triangle of leadership in the face of a people's war: a reassessment of the conflict between Bismarck and Moltke' in: Stig Förster and Jörg Nägler eds., *On the road to total war. The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861-1871* (Cambridge 1997) 115-140, there 134-135.

³⁹⁷ Karina Urbach, 'Bismarck: ein Amateur in Uniform?' in: Brendan Simms and Karina Urbach eds., *Die Rückkehr der "großen Männer". Staatsmänner im Krieg. Ein deutsch-britischer Vergleich 1740-1945*. (Berlin 2010) 87-96, there 96.

³⁹⁸ Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, 133.

³⁹⁹ Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Einleitung'; Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Praktiken des Entscheidens'.

⁴⁰⁰ Helmuth von Moltke, *Gesammelte Schriften und Denkwürdigkeiten des General-Feldmarschalls Grafen Helmuth von Moltke. III Geschichte des deutsch-französischen Krieges von 1870-71 nebst einem Aufsatz „über den angeblichen Kriegs Rath in den Kriegen König Wilhelms I.“* (Berlin 1891) XI, 215, 427-428.

letzten Kämpfe vor Paris haben ihn sichtlich sehr beunruhigt; doch fühlt er wohl, daß er in seinen Depeschen an die Königin, deren eine begann: „Heute kein gutes Gefecht!“ zu weit gegangen ist (...).⁴⁰¹ This comment demonstrates at the same time that William’s concerns were sensitive to the reaction of the home front to the war’s progress. He had good reasons to be so. Seyferth has demonstrated that many bourgeois circles debated why the army leadership waited for so long in bombarding Paris.⁴⁰² Indeed, William himself was held sometimes responsible. As early as 27 October, the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* stated that ‘es bedarf keine erneuten Versicherung, daß wenn irgend ein Monarch, gewiß König Wilhelm die Verantwortung für jede nutzlose Fortsetzung des Krieges, für jedes weitere Blutvergießen und nicht minder für die Zerrüttung einer Stadt wie Paris weit von sich weisen würde, wenn ihm ein anderer Weg geboten wäre, den angemessenen Abschluß dieses Krieges und damit zugleich die Bürgschaften künftigen Friedens zu finden.’⁴⁰³ What added to William’s strain, but also complicated the conduct of his role in these councils were the conflicts between the Foreign Office, the War Department and the General Staff, as well as the discrepancy between the reports of Podbielski, who sought to downplay French resistance, and the actual reports from the front.⁴⁰⁴

Driven by these concerns, William often sought to forge a decision at these councils of war. Already on 2 October, William had shown himself to be sensitive to the intervention of an artillery general and an engineer general for a more formal siege of Paris.⁴⁰⁵ In the subsequent weeks however, a divergence of strategic options between Bismarck and Moltke emerged. The former wanted a speedy bombardment of Paris to hasten the city’s surrender and terminate the war. The latter delayed the shelling until sufficient military preparations were made. In the following weeks, Bismarck further sought to substantiate his position by writing two memoranda to William, dated 28 November and 14 December. He urged commencement of the siege and intensifying of the war in the provinces to terminate the conflict.⁴⁰⁶ At the council of 17 December, William sided with Bismarck and agreed to an experimental shelling of Paris. The success of these trials led to a full commencement of shelling on 5 January 1871, marking a victory for Bismarck over Moltke.⁴⁰⁷ On 26 January 1871 a council took place with Bismarck, Moltke, Roon and the Crown Prince attending. It debated Jules Favre’s report on the French accepting the peace terms after having discussed this with Bismarck. Again the assessments of Favre’s efforts diverged. Criticism was raised between the political and military figures for more mutual understanding. William went as far as criticizing Bismarck for not understanding the military point of view sufficiently. Nonetheless, Favre’s report was accepted, even if William afterwards

⁴⁰¹ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 209.

⁴⁰² Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 64.

⁴⁰³ *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 October 1870.

⁴⁰⁴ Meisner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 216-217.

⁴⁰⁵ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 108.

⁴⁰⁶ Huber ed., *Dokumente zur Verfassungsgeschichte* II, 358-359, 361-363.

⁴⁰⁷ Förster, ‘Prussian triangle’, 131-132.

admitted to Grand Duke Frederick of Baden that it had cost him great difficulty to 'alle Köpfe unter einen Hut zu bringen'.⁴⁰⁸ On 8 February a new council took place, this time attended additionally by Podbielski and the adjutants Von Boyen and Tresckow. Subject of debate was the question what was to be done if the armistice was not renewed or the French National Assembly decided for a continuation of the war. Again, the differences between Bismarck and Moltke emerged, requiring William's intervention. It was agreed – albeit reluctantly by William – that a demonstration of force was to be undertaken against the French general Chanzy, who was against the peace agreements.⁴⁰⁹ In this case, it was Moltke who prevailed, for he wanted to use troops from Paris against Chanzy.⁴¹⁰

The second feature of William's role in the decision-making process was that of him as the locus point or fulcrum in the process. Formally, this feature derived from the Prussian constitution of 1850, by which the king retained command of the military and foreign policy, whilst the heads of the army were directly responsible to the king. This resulted in a division of labour which resulted in the 'Prussian triangle of leadership'.⁴¹¹ However, exactly in this position William could exercise his prerogatives by speaking a *Machtwort* and thus be an important and active corner in this triangle of leadership. Two examples can demonstrate this. On 28 November 1870, Bismarck had written a large memorandum to plead for the commencement of the shelling of Paris so that France and the neutral powers would not see the delay of the bombardment as weakness.⁴¹² Moltke agreed in principle, though it did not prevent intense debate over the matter. William however, decided 'einfach und praktisch' according to Frederick of Baden and ordered that the shelling ought to commence as soon as sufficient artillery and ammunition were available.⁴¹³ Bismarck again wrote a memorandum to William on 5 December to demand from William that the General Staff and Moltke consult him on military reports that touched on political problems. Bismarck seemingly had convinced William, for on 17 December – when a military council had also taken place – he ordered the General Staff to act accordingly. However, because Bronsart von Schellendorf feared Moltke's unrestricted command would be affected, he threatened resignation and succeeded in William retracting the order. Consequently, Bismarck had to reiterate his demands again on 9 January 1871.⁴¹⁴ William sided emotionally more with Moltke, but ultimately came down on Bismarck's side in seeking a quick termination to the war. On 25 January William issued two royal orders to Moltke, one ordering him not to engage in direct correspondence with French authorities without royal assent and another ordering him to keep Bismarck fully informed. Although Moltke responded in turn with a memorandum in which he argued that

⁴⁰⁸ Oncken ed., *Grossherzog II*, 340-341.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 363-364.

⁴¹⁰ Howard, *Franco-Prussian War*, 445.

⁴¹¹ Förster, 'Prussian triangle', 120-121.

⁴¹² Huber ed., *Dokumente zur Verfassungsgeschichte II*, 358-359.

⁴¹³ Oncken ed., *Grossherzog II*, 216-217.

⁴¹⁴ Förster, 'Prussian triangle', 130-131.

the political and the military were two equal branches in William's government, William apparently disregarded his arguments and never wavered in his decision.⁴¹⁵

Conclusion

Projecting himself as a military monarch was done by William not just out of personal affiliation with the military; it formed an integral part of his conception of his monarchical role. Two factors form the basis for this. First, William's formative experience of participating in battle in the Napoleonic Wars was one which he shared with other members of his political generation. But where he differed was in his longevity, which meant his unceasing wish to command troops into battle could persist into the second half of the nineteenth century. Although some other members of his political generation also commanded troops in a military conflict, notably the Princes William and Frederick of the Netherlands during the Belgian Revolution of 1830-1831, neither found themselves in such circumstances again in the second third of the century. Instead, William lived long enough to experience the wars of German unification, which, as monarch, provided him with one more opportunity to command troops into battle as he desired. Secondly, William duly recognized the growing importance of the military in monarchical representation, both at home and abroad, from the mid-1850s onwards. He began developing a medial strategy to project himself as the embodiment of the Prussian military monarchy and persisted in this after ascending the throne in 1861. By the time Prussia and her allies waged war against Austria and France, these two factors converged to form part of William's conception of his role as monarch.

This basis makes it understandable why William actively pursued a role as a military monarch during the war against France. This chapter has demonstrated that William was both more active and coherent than scholarly literature has so far assumed. Against Angelow's assumption that William mostly passively participated in the conflict and relived his experience of the Napoleonic Wars, this chapter has detailed what the strategy of legitimization of William as military monarch entailed.⁴¹⁶ When William's undertakings for the home front, at the front and in the decision-making process are seen as a whole, four categories that make up this strategy of legitimization can be identified. (1.) carefully organized ceremonial, such as William departure from and return to Berlin, victory salutes during the war to mark the conflict's successful progress and reviews and parades at the end of the war; (2.) a medial strategy, organized in particular by William and Schneider, that communicated his image as a military monarch to the home front; (3.) visibility at the home front, on the actual front and at deliberations of the Prussian high command that further made William's role as military monarch and his prerogatives more tangible; (4.) an active incorporation of the dynasty in this strategy, such as via charity work for the female members of the

⁴¹⁵ Craig, *Politics*, 213-215.

⁴¹⁶ Angelow, 'Wilhelm I.', 259-260.

dynasty, Augusta reading out dispatches and being receiver of a public correspondence from William and the Crown Prince serving both to appeal to the southern German states and to add laurels for both the dynasty and his own future by leading troops with success in battle.

This strategy served distinct purposes for William to strengthen his monarchical role. It helped to make his role as military monarch and its prerogatives visible and tangible. At a time when warfare was increasingly characterized by industrialization and technological innovation, requiring military ‘technicians’ that also came with military professionalization, William projected a figurehead that made the Prussian high command concrete in human form, both for soldiers at the actual front and for the public at the home front via print media or direct visibility. This also helped to invest his persona with a certain degree of charismatic authority with which he echoed Frederick the Great.⁴¹⁷ At the same time, it enabled William to embody the monarchical political order, reaffirm the existing political hierarchy and the unity of monarchy, army and people which he, at various stages in his life, believed to have been instrumental in Prussia’s ascent.⁴¹⁸

Seen from this perspective, it becomes clear how and to what extent literature has overlooked William’s willingness to act as counterweight to Moltke and the General Staff as an emerging and competing centre of military gravity. William did not intend to delegitimize Moltke’s position, but it is clear from how he projected his military role that he sought to offer an alternative narrative of who held supreme command during the 1870-1871 war. In particular Schneider’s activities are illustrative in this respect. The manner in which William and Schneider cooperated to craft a narrative of William in command on the battlefield, providing accounts of battles as they believed to have been right, arranging William’s study for photographs that later formed the basis for depictions of the councils of war with his military officials and crafting speeches for William at the troops reviews held at the end of the war, all indicate a comprehensive and innovative approach at constructing and mediating William’s persona that cultivated the emerging mass printed media. This was by no means a static undertaking. William responded to the war’s stagnation by altering the wordings of his dispatches that put him at some distance of the war’s progress, having him appear in public only at particular moments during the siege and by publishing details of his daily life at the Headquarters in Versailles. Importantly, this chapter has argued that no distinction can be made between William’s public persona and the ‘actual’ decision-making process being carried out by his officials with exclusion of the Hohenzollern monarch. Rather, the twin characteristics of William’s role in the decision-making process of facilitator and fulcrum also helped to provide counterweight to Moltke and the General Staff. The Prussian ‘triangle of leadership’ which Förster primarily saw constituted by its bottom two

⁴¹⁷ Blanning, *Frederick the Great*, 276-277.

⁴¹⁸ Aschmann, *Preußens Ruhm*, 306 fn. 8.

corners of Bismarck and Moltke was thus very much a triangle, with an active and assertive corner at the top.⁴¹⁹

Projecting himself as a military monarch also helped William address the fragmented German polity. There is no reason to fundamentally doubt the divided nature of German society during the war against France or that William's measures overcame this fragmentation fully. Yet, this chapter has demonstrated that William took more measures, and was thus more aware of this fragmented character, than literature has acknowledged. This chapter has shown the heuristic value of looking at symbolic acts of William as a military monarch that can make clear how he sought to reach out to other German states. Three measures in particular stand out: first, his sending of the Crown Prince to the southern German states upon the outbreak of the war to take up command of troops from those states, a measure that was a tacit acknowledgment of his own Prussian stance, but one that also sought to widen the appeal of the Hohenzollern dynasty; secondly, the caution he urged with Bismarck against too excessively divisive measures at the home front during the war; and thirdly the manner in which he explicitly addressed non-Prussian troops at the review he held after the war had ended. All of this makes clear that his appealing to other non-Prussian parts of Germany was based on a pre-national, dynastic-state conception of the German polity that foreshadowed the manner in which William would forge his role as Imperial figurehead from the mid-1870s onwards.

Finally, the strategy of legitimization of William as military monarch provided him an opportunity to infuse the war with France with a particular meaning. Two elements stand out. First, his cultivation of both the religious character of the conflict and religiosity at the home front. This not only reflected William's personal conviction, but deliberately cultivated this character of the conflict and of German society and related it to the war's progress and his role as military monarch. Secondly, his explicit coupling of the war of 1870-1871 to the Napoleonic Wars by, amongst other symbolic acts, visiting his parents' mausoleum on the day war was declared on France and permitting the public to visit the mausoleum afterwards. The way the visit subsequently entered German culture and concentrated on William at his mother's sarcophagus and excluded other attending family members, demonstrates the degree to which William's symbolic act resonated. It also shows how much William conceived his role in historical terms. By no means was the Franco-Prussian War an interlude in this effort. The fact that William took Schneider with him during the war to write accounts of his undertakings, demonstrated that William wanted to craft an image that transcended the everyday-level of newspaper reporting.

One person who directly experienced William's attempts at keeping the perception of his role in accordance with his own wishes was Theodor Fontane. Having previously written accounts of the war against Denmark and Austria, Fontane set out to write a similar account of the war against France. Deviating from other popular accounts, Fontane sought to provide an even-handed and

⁴¹⁹ Förster, 'Prussian triangle'.

balanced account that did justice to both the German and the French side of the war. Although Fontane was content with the outcome, William was not. When the Minister of the Interior suggested a reward for Fontane, William refused. Fontane privately stated that William was the central figure and hero of the story, he had no choice but to accept this verdict.⁴²⁰ A monarchical politics of history was an integral part of William's conception of his role, before, during and after the war against France.

⁴²⁰ Gordon A. Craig, *Über Fontane* (Munich 1997) 127-128; Gordon A. Craig, 'Vorwort. Fontane als Historiker' in Theodor Fontane, *Der Krieg gegen Frankreich I Der Krieg gegen das Kaiserreich. Bis Gravelotte, 18. August 1870* (Zürich 1985) XIII-XXXII, there XXXI-XXXII.

III. William's monarchical politics of history

Introduction

On 26 June 1888 the Prussian State Ministry discussed the upcoming publication of the Schneider's posthumous memoirs. The meeting was attended by William II, who had ascended the throne ten days earlier upon the death of his father. Already he was determined to build a cult around his grandfather. He feared that the publication would suggest that Schneider had considerable influence in political decision-making and that this could cause attacks on William I. Bismarck disagreed and argued that the publication would quickly prove Schneider's irrelevance and wanted to instruct the press to cover the subject accordingly.⁴²¹ Before publication, Schneider's heirs had requested payment from Minister of the Royal House Otto von Stolberg for censoring the memoirs, something Stolberg refused. Finding out about this after the memoirs' publication, Albedyll set out to undermine Stolberg's position and suggested to William II that the myth of William I had been damaged. William II then forced Stolberg to resign.⁴²² But contrary to William II's fears, the publication of the memoirs did not lead to any criticism of William I.

Bismarck's criticism of Schneider and William II's fear over how Schneider's memoirs would affect his grandfather's memory reflect the inability of contemporaries to understand how William had drawn on Schneider to craft his public persona in historical terms as part of his monarchical politics of history. This misunderstanding extends to current literature as well: a politics of history is not commonly ascribed to William I. Such undertakings are mostly associated with William II, as for example his efforts to build the *Siegesallee* in Berlin.⁴²³ But Müller has convincingly traced back the origins of a Hohenzollern politics of history to Frederick III, demonstrating that as Crown Prince he sought to have a dynastic crypt to be constructed at the Berliner Dom for which he would write the inscriptions, a Hohenzollern museum in Berlin's Monbijou palace and initiating an edition of the Great Elector Frederick William's works.⁴²⁴ Yet this has not given rise to the question whether the origins of this dynastic politics of history can be traced back to William I and, more importantly, to what extent this formed a part of the manner in which he forged his role.

There are good reasons to assume that a monarchical politics of history was an integral part of how William forged his monarchical role. First, William was close enough to the centre of the Prussian monarchy throughout the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century to observe how it cultivated culture and memory

⁴²¹ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle* VII, 239.

⁴²² Rich and Fisher eds., *Geheimen Papiere* II, 425.

⁴²³ Cf. Clark, *Iron kingdom*, 566-567.

⁴²⁴ Müller, *Our Fritz*, 139-148; Frank Lorenz Müller, 'The Prince, the crypt, and the historians: Emperor Friedrich III and the continuity of monarchical *Geschichtspolitik* in Imperial Germany' in: *German Studies Review* 35 (2012), 521-540.

for political purposes. Scholars have increasingly come to recognize this as a feature of the Hohenzollern monarchy's conduct. Stamm-Kuhlmann's biography of Frederick William III primarily debated the king's conduct in psychological terms, but did include a discussion of cultural-political initiatives, including the introduction of the Iron Cross, influencing church music and a projecting Biedermeier lifestyle.⁴²⁵ The debate on the relation between Frederick William IV's reign and its relation with the arts is wide-ranging and does not need to be discussed here in full. Sufficient here is to refer to Barclay's theory that Frederick William IV utilized culture for projecting the monarchy as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a conservative alternative to revolution.⁴²⁶ Recent research has rightfully questioned older literature's assumptions that William was indifferent to the arts. Bärbel Holtz has demonstrated that both Frederick William III and William I were significant patrons of the arts and contributed to a policy on the arts by the Prussian state in the first two thirds of the nineteenth century.⁴²⁷ Seen from this scholarly context, the question then is not if William cultivated culture, but rather how he did so and how it related to his conception of his monarchical role.

A second reason for this assumption is that in crafting a public persona in historical terms, William found himself at the fulcrum of two important features of German culture after 1871. The previous two chapters have demonstrated that William crafted an image of himself as a monarchical ruler who played a central role in the political and military decision-making process. In so doing, William cultivated the preoccupation with history and heroes that Matthew Jefferies has identified as a defining feature of the Imperial culture of *Gründerzeit* Germany.⁴²⁸ The second feature was the memory of the Napoleonic Wars, to which William could weld his persona via his biography and longevity. Recently, Karen Hagemann has demonstrated the existence of a conservative-monarchical memory of the Napoleonic wars that after German unification served to legitimize a competing vision of the German nation.⁴²⁹ William could thus cultivate two strong cultural currents to help root his persona in the collective German consciousness.

This chapter will detail William's monarchical politics of history in two sections. The first discusses his use of authorized biographies, the second how his involvement in the construction of the *Siegessäule*, the *Ruhmeshalle* and the equestrian statue of Frederick William IV altered the political topography of Berlin. In order to analyse the constituting elements of these undertakings within the broader context of William's exercise of his monarchical role and to build on the arguments developed in the previous two chapters, this chapter follows key

⁴²⁵ Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann, *König in Preußens großer Zeit. Friedrich Wilhelm III. der Melancholiker auf dem Thron* (Berlin 1992) 578-580.

⁴²⁶ Barclay, *Frederick William IV*; Barclay, 'Monarchische Projekt'.

⁴²⁷ Bärbel Holtz, 'Preußens Kunstpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert und die Enttarnung des "Künstlers auf dem Thron"' in: *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen und preussischen Geschichte* Beiheft 13/1 (2016) 35-61.

⁴²⁸ Matthew Jefferies, *Imperial culture in Germany 1871-1918* (Basingstoke 2003) 99-128.

⁴²⁹ Karen Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's wars against Napoleon. History, culture and memory* (Cambridge 2015) 15-16.

features that Edgar Wolfrum has defined for politics of history. He describes this as a field with competing actors seeking to generate political legitimacy and dominant historical discourses. This is a form of political action to create specific historical consciousness, a means to forge a particular political culture and a politics that creates its own history.⁴³⁰ The examples discussed here and definition used make clear that this chapter concentrates on William's history for a larger, mostly non-academic audience. This chapter does not discuss William's cultivation of academic historians, even though William did express interest in their undertakings on several occasions.⁴³¹ Instead, this chapter concentrates on how William sought to popularize a particular understanding of the course of Prussian-German history and the decisive role of the Prussian dynasty. In this manner, William could, by using a specific interpretation of history, offer a competing understanding of the monarchical nation.

William's authorized biographies

Authorized biographies were a conspicuous feature of nineteenth-century monarchical politics of history in Europe. Surprisingly, historiography has so far failed to recognize their widespread use. Hans Renders has defined these biographies as being based on some research, but mostly serving to canonize the subject's reputation. These biographies were usually written at the request of or authorised by the subject, or are at the very least seen as reinforcing the subject's existing reputation.⁴³² They functioned as a political discourse on history which served to simplify reality, amended an existing narrative and used codifying elements to structure the discourse.⁴³³ They could assume features of a political myth by narrating certain events as exemplary and integrating contradictions through a narrative process to serve as a source of legitimacy.⁴³⁴ What made authorized biographies appealing for monarchs was that they merged the increased esteem for the historical discipline with a growing readership and book production.⁴³⁵

Across Europe, monarchs used authorized biographies to canonize their lives as epitomizing their nation's history. In the Netherlands, Johannes Bosscha stated in the introduction to his biography of the late king William II, which was commissioned by William III and the dowager-queen Anna Paulowna, that the

⁴³⁰ Edgar Wolfrum, *Geschichtspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Der Weg zur bundesrepublikanischen Erinnerung 1948-1990* (Darmstadt 1999) 22-32.

⁴³¹ Cf. Wolfgang Neugebauer, '>>Großforschung<< und Teleologie. Johann Gustav Droysen und die editorischen Projekte seit den 1860er Jahren' in: Stefan Rebenich and Hans-Ulrich Wiemer eds., *Johann Gustav Droysen. Philosophie und Politik. Historie und Philologie* (Frankfurt 2012) 261-292, there 267-268.

⁴³² Hans Renders, *De zeven hoofdzonden van de biografie. Over biografen, journalisten en historici* (Amsterdam 2008) 6.

⁴³³ Cf. Wolfrum, *Geschichtspolitik*, 269-70.

⁴³⁴ Frank Becker, 'Begriff und Bedeutung des politischen Mythos', in: Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (ed.), *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?* (Berlin 2005) 129-48, there 132, 138, 140.

⁴³⁵ Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1866. Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich 1983) 498-532.

biography was meant to convince ‘his countrymen, (...) that through God’s will the Netherlands and the Orange dynasty were related to each other through the events of the past, the needs of the time and the conditions of the happiness of both in the future.’⁴³⁶ This function was also recognized by William II’s brother Prince Frederick. In 1881 he requested that the military historian François de Bas write a biography of him to demonstrate what role of the dynasty had played in the Netherlands’ military history in the past hundred years.⁴³⁷ To what extent William modelled his authorized biographies on these books is not explicitly stated in the sources. But it cannot be ruled out either, given his dynastic ties to the Netherlands’ dynasty and close friendship with Prince Frederick. What can be established with certainty is that with the three authors of authorized biographies to be discussed in this section, Schneider, Oskar Meding and Wilhelm Oncken, William operated not only squarely in this context, but also knew how to utilize it for his political purposes.

Render’s definition makes clear that it was essential for William to employ authors who could guild his reputation and employ an effective literary style. All three authors under discussion could write with this mode in a popularizing manner, suggesting that William chose them for this reason. Schneider in particular fits this preference. The previous chapters have demonstrated how Schneider was instrumental in crafting and mediating the image of William as the prime *Entscheidungsträger* in Prussia and Germany in the political and military decision-making process. But Schneider’s role went much further: he was instrumental in forging this image into an historical narrative, often in book-length form. That William opted for Schneider is telling of the message he sought to convey. Schneider was a staunch royalist, conservative and Russophile, with a background in Berlin’s literary and theatre circles. For many years he belonged to the literary group *Der Tunnel über der Spree*, which included authors such as Theodor Fontane, Theodor Storm and Felix Dahn, as well as the military historian Max Jähns. Schneider later served as reader to Frederick William IV.⁴³⁸ Since 1848 he had drawn closer to William, and through publications in the *Wehrzeitung*, acted as his mouthpiece in military matters. He also edited and was de facto sole contributor to the *Soldatenfreund*. These were both military periodicals aimed at educating the common soldier. With regards to his own persona, William insisted that Schneider depict him with praise.⁴³⁹ What made Schneider an appealing biographer was that he already had experience with royal biography because of an extended contribution to Rulemann Eylert’s

⁴³⁶ Johannes Bosscha, *Het leven van Willem den Tweede: koning der Nederlanden en groot-hertog van Luxemburg* (Amsterdam 1852).

⁴³⁷ Van de Sande, *Prins Frederik*, 269. Perhaps the best-known example of royal authorized biographies of this period is the five-volume life of Prince Albert, written in the 1860s and 1870s by Theodore Martin and under close supervision of Queen Victoria to canonize the memory of her late husband: Theodor Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort* (five vols.; London 1875-1880).

⁴³⁸ Wippermann, ‘Schneider: Ludwig S.’ in: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie XXXII* (second edition; Berlin 1971) 134-142; Kurt Schreinert and Jutta Neuendorff-Fürstenau eds., *Theodor Fontane. Sämtliche Werke XV Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig. Autobiographisches* (Munich 1967) 233-247.

⁴³⁹ Börner, *Wilhelm I.*, 122.

biography of Frederick William III.⁴⁴⁰ Upon his accession to the throne, William retained Schneider in his position as reader and made him an instrumental, if not the most important figure to craft his image, until Schneider's death in 1878.

During these three decades the character of their corporation and codifying elements that structured Schneider's biographies were established early and deviated little thereafter. Schneider would draft the manuscript, send these to William, who would correct the text for mistakes or insert additional details, especially on his military career, after which the manuscript would be returned to Schneider.⁴⁴¹ The sources do not provide any evidence of other government of court or officials being involved, suggesting that this was William's personal undertaking. William did the correcting of these manuscripts next to his official duties, regardless of circumstances. Even at the height of the 1870 crisis with France and whilst in Ems, William was correcting the manuscripts for Schneider's memoirs.⁴⁴² The model for Schneider's authorized biographies was formed by his 1856 biographical article on William's life, written at his initiative for the fiftieth anniversary of William's officer commission in 1857.⁴⁴³ Although structured chronologically, the narrative in fact was constructed around three specific codifying elements: William as the embodiment of bourgeois virtues, illustrated by his adherence to his parents and of protestant-Christianity, William as a military reformer and military commander and William as the representative and embodiment of the Prussian state abroad. These elements served particular purposes. Depicting William as the paragon of domestic virtues appealed to the liberal bourgeoisie, whilst constructing a dyad with his parents could help to cultivate the myth surrounding his mother. The protestant-Christian emphasis helped to depict William as the epitome of the leading protestant German dynasty, whilst subtly distancing himself from Frederick William IV's romantically-inspired Christianity. Depicting William as the first soldier of the monarchy, helped likewise to juxtapose him from his brother, whose military credentials were limited. It also cultivated military success as a particular source for political legitimacy. Finally, by staging himself as the embodiment of the Prussian monarchy abroad, William acknowledged that around the mid-nineteenth century the Vienna system in international relations had given way to a system of competing monarchical nation states.⁴⁴⁴

Two works by Schneider are relevant for this study: the military biographies he wrote following the 1856 article and the memoirs on William

⁴⁴⁰ Wippermann, 'Schneider', 137; Sabine Giesbrecht ed., *Friedrich Wilhelm von Redern. Unter drei Königen. Lebenserinnerungen eines preußischen Oberstkämmerers und Generalintendanten* (Cologne 2003) 155, fn. 643.

⁴⁴¹ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben I*, 82-98, 277-278, 280-281, 314-316; Louis Schneider, *Aus dem Leben Kaiser Wilhelms. 1849-1873 II* (Berlin 1888) 15-18, 51, 110-111; Schneider, *Aus dem Leben III*, 240-242.

⁴⁴² Schneider, *Aus dem Leben II*, 123-124.

⁴⁴³ Louis Schneider, 'Der Prinz von Preußen. Zum 1. Januar 1857.' in: *Der Soldaten-Freund* 24 (December 1856) 1-136.

⁴⁴⁴ Sterkenburgh, 'Narrating prince Wilhelm', 286-293.

published after the latter's death. The decision to continue writing William's biography gained new significance and popular interest after William had assumed the role of deputy for his ailing brother in 1857. At Schneider's initiative the biography was expanded to the present time.⁴⁴⁵ This resulted in four additional volumes, each providing a narrative of William's biography that covered the most recent period and with an emphasis on military affairs. The last of these followed in 1875.⁴⁴⁶ That same year he also published an overview of all the medals and orders William had received.⁴⁴⁷ Schneider's book titles suggest an emphasis on William's military role, but its messages were in fact more sophisticated and contained commentaries on recent events. The 1866 biography quoted Luise who hoped for better times for her children, after which Schneider argues that Frederick William IV sought to bring about German unification under Prussian leadership and William succeeded in doing so, exceeding expectations.⁴⁴⁸ This dynastic dyad was complemented by an emphasis on William's military role. According to Schneider, 'König Wilhelm stand in seinem 69sten Lebensjahre, und daß er selbst seine Armee kommandiren, selbst alle ihre Gefahren und Strapazen theilen würde, wie so viele seiner Vorfahren, das verstand sich bei seinem Pflichtgefühl, seiner Denkgungsart und auch seiner Vorliebe von selbst.'⁴⁴⁹ Much of the subsequent biography was then spent on detailing William's role as *roi-connétable*, his work ethic, his simplicity at headquarters, its military organization, and presence on the battlefield of Königgrätz.⁴⁵⁰ Schneider's later and last biography re-emphasized these themes even more. It described William's piety towards his predecessors: how he would visit the church in Charlottenburg Palace, close to his parents' mausoleum on New Years' Day and his brother's tomb in the Friedenskirche in Potsdam the next day, the anniversary of Frederick William IV's death.⁴⁵¹ About the outbreak of the war with France in 1870, Schneider wrote that William compared the enthusiasm he found upon his return from Ems as similar to that he had witnessed in 1813.⁴⁵² As he had done in his previous biographies, Schneider

⁴⁴⁵ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben I*, 100.

⁴⁴⁶ Louis Schneider, *König Wilhelm im Jahre 1866* (Berlin 1866); Louis Schneider, *König Wilhelm* (Berlin 1868) [reprint of the previous]; Louis Schneider, *König Wilhelm. Militärischer Lebensbeschreibung von L. Schneider, Redakteur des Soldatenfreundes. Erstes Heft: Bis zur Schlacht von Königgrätz. Mit einem Plan, auf welchem der Ritt des Königs am Schlachttage von Königgrätz genau eingezeichnet ist.* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1869); Louis Schneider, *König Wilhelm. Militärische Lebensbeschreibung von L. Schneider, Redakteur des Soldatenfreundes. Zweites (letztes) Heft: Vom 4. Juli bis Ende 1866.* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1869); Louis Schneider, *Kaiser Wilhelm. Militärische Lebensbeschreibung. Militärische Lebensbeschreibung 1867-1871. Fortsetzung der in 1869 in demselben Verlage erschienen beiden Hefte: „König Wilhelm“, welche die Jahre 1864-1867 umfassen* (Berlin 1875).

⁴⁴⁷ Louis Schneider, *Erdient und Verdient! Die Orden, militärischen Ehrenzeichen und Kriegs-Denkünzen Seiner Majestät des Deutschen Kaisers und Königs von Preußen Wilhelm. Extra-Heft zum 42. Jahrgang des Soldaten-Freundes.* (Berlin 1875).

⁴⁴⁸ Schneider, *König Wilhelm* [1868 edition], 5-6.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 7.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 56-57, 66-70, 89-90.

⁴⁵¹ Schneider, *Kaiser Wilhelm*, 34.

⁴⁵² *Ibidem*, 40.

highlighted William's military role, describing his presence at the battle of Gravelotte and asking the reader to imagine what William had to think about in his role as king-commander, from the smallest details with regards to his army to the relations between European states.⁴⁵³ In a jab at court officials, Schneider expressed regret that William did not return to Berlin after the war's end on 18 March, which would have been a lesson for the 'injustice' that had been done to him in 1848.⁴⁵⁴

These narratives were structured by differing codifying elements that served specific purposes. All of Schneider's biographies stressed the dyad between William and his parents and the deference he exercised towards them and his brother. This is a break from the 1856 article, which to some degree left out Frederick William IV, so as to have attention more concentrated on William. But the former's death allowed William to project dynastic unity and family piety that would have appealed to both conservative and bourgeois groups. This was complemented by underlining William's active role as a military monarch. The purpose here was twofold. On the one hand, these biographies must be seen as an instrument for the *Kompetenzkonkurrenz* with the General Staff under Moltke. After the articles Schneider published in the *Soldatenfreund* and passed on to other Prussian and German newspapers, these biographies served to substantiate this narrative with a historical dimension for longer duration. At a time when the General Staff published its own five-volume history of the Franco-Prussian War, these biographies offered a competing narrative, which through their more popular style was aimed at a larger audience than the more specialized work of the General Staff. Furthermore, these biographies allowed Schneider – and thus William – the chance to emphasize the role of the king-commander who was present on the battlefield and of which Schneider's discussion of William at Gravelotte is illustrative. These works thus also served to capitalize on military glory as a resource for political legitimacy.

But Schneider's 1875 biography also offered details which were distortions. He claimed that William had visited his parents' mausoleum on 19 July all by himself and he alone had initiated the re-installment of the Iron Cross.⁴⁵⁵ But as noted above, William was accompanied by his son, Crown Prince Frederick William on this occasion.⁴⁵⁶ Indeed, even early depictions, such as in the 1870 edition of the *Gartenlaube* had William clearly standing next to his son and, presumably, his brother Carl.⁴⁵⁷ This factual alteration is revealing. It makes the visit signify the William-Luise dyad, in which William was presented as avenging his mother with the outbreak of the war in 1870. He thus foreshadowed von Werner's painting '19. Juli 1870', which the latter finished as a first sketch in 1873 and the actual painting in 1881.⁴⁵⁸ The previous chapter has shown that it was

⁴⁵³ Ibidem, 73-75, 98.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibidem, 299.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibidem, 43.

⁴⁵⁶ Meisner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 7.

⁴⁵⁷ *Die Gartenlaube* (1870) 580.

⁴⁵⁸ Bartmann, *Kunst und Kunstpolitik*, 95-96.

Bismarck who initiated the Iron Cross in 1870. But what mattered was the narrative it sought to craft: it presented central symbolic acts of the war as initiated by William and merged the conflict's meaning with his persona.

By contrast, Schneider's memoirs of his proximity to William pursued a different aim. The initiative for these memoirs came from Schneider, who had been compiling notes of his acquaintance of William since the late 1840s with the intention of publishing these as a memoir. The idea was met with approval from William, who agreed that the memoirs to be published after his and Schneider's death. William regularly reviewed the manuscripts of the latest additions to the memoirs.⁴⁵⁹ The memoirs differed from the biographies by providing an intimate account of William's daily life. By agreeing to this form, William contributed to forging his posthumous image. Geisthövel has argued that with the rise of the mass printed media, not just the reign, but the presence of monarchs in general was scrutinized by the public with criteria of dignity, proximity to the people and the degree to which insights could be gleaned from the monarch's private sphere.⁴⁶⁰ This was the case with Schneider's memoirs. Bismarck, Frederick William or Augusta are barely mentioned. Instead, the memoirs provided vivid details of William as an active, working monarch, deeply involved in the affairs of government. The memoirs gave the reading public an insight in William's private sphere and presented him as the embodiment of Prussian virtues and the military monarchy.⁴⁶¹ This was particularly beneficial by the time the memoirs were published in 1888, when the governmental bureaucracy had expanded. Neither William nor Schneider had expected for the memoirs to be published until then, but this only increased the effect of setting William apart from this anonymous entity and presented him as the humane counterweight to a growing state apparatus. This in turn also helped to foster a nostalgic interpretation of William's persona after his death.

The details to this end were manifold. Schneider described William as a tireless worker, reading dispatches over his morning coffee and who would do so again after returning from court festivities, often after 1 PM, before taking the early train next morning to Potsdam for troop inspections. Even during these train journeys, William would still listen to reports from his officials.⁴⁶² When visiting William while he was lying ill in bed in his palace at Unter den Linden, Schneider had the opportunity to view the Emperor's bedroom. He described how little light came into the room, with the bed standing in an alcove, whilst the room was sparsely decorated with simple furniture. It led Schneider to compare William with

⁴⁵⁹ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* I, 179-182; Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* III, 285-286.

⁴⁶⁰ Alexa Geisthövel, 'Den Monarchen im Blick. Wilhelm I in der illustrierten Familienpresse.' in: Habbo Knoch and Daniel Morat eds., *Kommunikation als Beobachtung. Medienwandel und Gesellschaftsbilder 1880-1960* (Munich 2003) 59-80, there 63-64.

⁴⁶¹ Sterkenburgh, 'Narrating prince Wilhelm', 295-296.

⁴⁶² Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* I, 170-171.

Frederick William I.⁴⁶³ Schneider referred to William's modesty by describing how William rejected a depiction of himself as Charlemagne.⁴⁶⁴

Schneider's death in 1878 robbed William of his long-serving biographer, but in the early 1880s he found a replacement in Oskar Meding. The initiative for his biographies came from Meding himself. He suggested writing a full biography for all walks of life that would depict William as the guarantee of peace and prosperity and the embodiment of military virtues. Because of the latter reason, a separate edition would be printed for the army. To this, William consented.⁴⁶⁵ Their cooperation was in some ways remarkable. In the 1860s Meding had established close connections to King George V of Hanover and served as his emissary when George had gone into exile in Paris, where Meding aligned himself with anti-Prussian groups. In 1870 he was resigned from service for the Welfs by the Hanoverian Crown Prince and Meding subsequently sought to enter Prussian service. Thereafter a persona non grata for the Welfs, Meding committed himself to writing his experiences in politics in fictional form, with which he achieved great commercial success.⁴⁶⁶ Exactly why William agreed to Meding's idea remains unclear. But it is likely that Meding's new allegiance to Prussia and his ability to write for a large audience with considerable success must have convinced William that Meding was a suitable figure to further forge his image.

Meding has described the way he cooperated with William on the manuscript. What gives his account credibility is the similarity of the manner in which William cooperated with Schneider. Meding would draft the manuscript of the book and send this to William. He would subsequently provide comments, requests for factual corrections or points of emphasis. In this fashion, Meding's biography was first published in 1882 and revised and published again in 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888 and 1889.⁴⁶⁷ William himself provided corrections for the

⁴⁶³ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* II, 16-17.

⁴⁶⁴ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* III, 219.

⁴⁶⁵ Oskar Meding, *Ein Vermächtniß Kaiser Wilhelms I. Ergänzung zu den Kaiserbuch „Einundneunzig Jahre in Glaube, Kampf und Sieg“ von Oskar Meding. Unter Allerhöchster Genehmigung Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelms II. herausgegeben von Carl Dallberger* (Stuttgart 1889) 1.

⁴⁶⁶ Adalbert Brauer, 'Meding, Oskar' in: *Neue Deutsche Biographie* XVI (Berlin 1990) 601-602.

⁴⁶⁷ Oskar Meding, *Fünfundachtzig Jahre in Glaube, Kampf und Sieg. Ein Menschen- und Heldenbild unseres deutschen Kaisers von O. Meding. Mit Illustrationen nach den von des Kaisers und Königs Majestät Allergnädigst zur Benutzung verstatteten Aquarellen als Festgabe für das deutsche Volk herausgegeben von Carl Hallberger* (Stuttgart 1882); Oskar Meding, *Achtundachtzig Jahre in Glaube, Kampf und Sieg. Ein Mensch und Heldenbild unseres deutschen Kaisers von O. Meding. Mit Illustrationen nach den von des Kaisers und Königs Majestät Allergnädigst zur Benutzung verstatteten Aquarellen als Festgabe für das deutsche Volk herausgegeben von Carl Hallberger* (Stuttgart 1885); Oskar Meding, *Neunzig Jahre in Glaube, Kampf und Sieg. Ein Menschen und Heldenbild unseres deutschen Kaisers von O. Meding. Als Festgabe für das deutsche Volk herausgegeben von Carl Hallberger* (Stuttgart 1887); Oskar Meding, *Einundneunzig Jahre in Glaube, Kampf und Sieg. Ein Menschen und Heldenbild unseres unvergeßlichen Kaisers Wilhelm I. von Oskar Meding. Mit Illustrationen nach den von des hochseligen Kaisers und Königs Majestät Allergnädigst zur Benutzung verstatteten Aquarellen als Erinnerungsgabe für das deutsche Volk herausgegeben von Carl Hallberger* (Stuttgart 1888); Oskar Meding, *Ein Vermächtniß Kaiser Wilhelms I. Einundneunzig Jahre in Glaube, Kampf und Sieg. Ein Menschen und Heldenbild unseres unvergeßlichen Kaisers Wilhelm I. von Oskar Meding. Erinnerungsgabe für das deutsche Volk mit Illustrationen nach den von*

editions of 1882, 1885 and 1887. The result of this was that Meding now continued the forging of William's persona in a popular historical discourse.

Because of Meding's account of his collaboration with William, it is possible to reconstruct the changes that William requested and demonstrate the emphasis he wanted to see. Four codifying elements stand out. First, William sought to stress the formative role of his father and portray himself as a loyal son. At his instructions, Meding corrected a passage that saw William listening to Frederick William III, rather than reflecting on his work. When Meding inserted a passage of William being reminded of Frederick the Great at a military parade which saw regimental colours pass by, William added that it was his father who had created the Prussian army. In a passage where Meding described how Frederick William III feared for his own persona, William altered this to fearing for his country. In a passage that saw Meding describing how Frederick William III crossed the Rhine with his two sons, William corrected this to only with him.⁴⁶⁸ The second element is that of dynastic solidarity, both before and within the German nation state. In a passage on the Frankfurter *Fürstentag* in 1863, which Bismarck stopped William from attending, William wanted to have inserted that he was in Baden Baden that day, going on long walks and having deep concerns over the state of affairs.⁴⁶⁹ For the 1885 edition of the biography, William corrected the manuscript to have it include that he also attended the manoeuvres for the IV army corps in Merseburg, drawing attention to Saxony's inclusion in the German Empire.⁴⁷⁰ William also wanted Meding to emphasize that von Werner's 1877 version of his painting of the proclamation of the German Empire was given to him by all the German princes.⁴⁷¹ In addition, William requested that the marriage between the heir-presumptive of Baden and princess Hilda of Nassau was mentioned as an indication of overcoming dynastic tensions after Prussia annexed Nassau in 1866.⁴⁷² Furthermore, William asked Meding to include the names of all German princes present at the celebration of his silver jubilee in 1886.⁴⁷³ Nonetheless, and reflective of William's increased acceptance of his Imperial role, William also wanted Meding to mention that he had completed the 'national' work of Frederick William IV with the construction of the Cologne Cathedral.⁴⁷⁴ Finally, it was at William's insistence that the strong role of the monarchy in government was emphasized. As seen above, it was at William's

des hochseligen Kaisers und Königs Majestät Allernädigst zur Benutzung verstatteten Aquarellen. Unter Allerhöchster Genehmigung Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelms II. herausgegeben von Carl Dallberger (Stuttgart 1889).

⁴⁶⁸ Meding, *Vermächtniß*, 4-5.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 9.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, 12.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 11.

⁴⁷² *Ibidem*, 14.

⁴⁷³ *Ibidem*, 15.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 10.

behest that the edict of 4 January 1882 was included in the narrative, which in unambiguous terms stated the role of the monarch in Prussian governance.⁴⁷⁵

The subsequent narrative Meding crafted reflected these codifying elements. Because William sanctioned the manuscript, it can be assumed that he agreed to their narration. This goes for example for the role Frederick William III was suggested to have played in William's formative years. Meding described how William in his youth observed his father's sense of duty towards his royal task and was committed to bourgeois virtues. In addition, Meding described how William learned steadfastness as a virtue from his father during the years Prussia battled Napoleon.⁴⁷⁶ The narrative likewise contained references to William's dynastic-federal conception of the German Empire. It included William's remark at the divine service before the proclamation that he understood his Imperial role as *primus inter pares* and would not overrule the other German princes.⁴⁷⁷ Meding deemed the period 1871-1882 as a time of consolidation of the German Empire, marked by national welfare, peace and morals and in foreign policy Germany leaned on Austria and Russia to perpetuate Frederick William III's traditions.⁴⁷⁸ This stated conservative orientation in foreign relations makes particular striking reading in the light of William's opposition to the Dual Alliance in 1879. Meding's biographies offered him another chance to make his outlook in foreign policy clear to the public.

An important feature to support Meding's narrative was the inclusion of illustrations. This reinforced the textual discourse with a visual dimension. What made Meding's biographies distinct from other biographies in this regard was that the illustrations came from William's own collection. He himself selected illustrations of moments in his life that he deemed important.⁴⁷⁹ The illustrations formed part of a collection compiled previously by Schneider and after the latter's death by William's secretary Borck. William himself annotated the collection and decided which illustrations were to be reproduced. The collection was reflective of William's preferences, in particular the closeness Russia and to his father and the depiction of them both as military and heroic monarchs, a narrative construction for which Herman Granier was receptive in his 1908 interpretation of the collection.⁴⁸⁰ This role is particularly made clear by *illustration 2* that was included in all the editions of the biography and which depicts a council of war in Versailles during the Franco-Prussian War. It shows William in his study behind his desk, giving directions to an onlooking Moltke, who is bending over a map on the other side of the desk, whilst Crown Prince Frederick William and war minister Albrecht von Roon serve as bystanders. The spatial context of William's study and the distance created between the monarch and his military officials via the desk

⁴⁷⁵ Ibidem, 11.

⁴⁷⁶ Meding, *Fünfundachtzig Jahre*, 7-8, 19.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibidem, 51.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibidem, 52.

⁴⁷⁹ Meding, *Vermächtniß*, 1.

⁴⁸⁰ Herman Granier, 'Die Aquarell-Sammlung Kaiser Wilhelms I.' in: *Hohenzollern Jahrbuch* 12 (1908) 143-182.

between them, serve to depict Moltke and others in a subordinate position and William as facilitator and fulcrum of the Prussian triangle of leadership.

The last historian to have written an authorized biography of William was Wilhelm Oncken. Why William chose Oncken is not recorded in the sources, but Oncken's biography provides a plausible indication. Oncken made an academic career and eventually became professor of history in Gießen. He was also politically active as a National-Liberal member of the Hessian diet and the Reichstag and as such supported the German unification under Prussian leadership. Oncken became more interested in Prussian-German history, especially the era of Frederick the Great, the era of Prussian reform and William I. His own work, characterized by a liberal-conservative interpretation of history, was met with criticism in scholarly circles, but found large popular resonance. He edited a 44-volume illustrated series on general history for a large audience. William himself assigned him with the task of writing the volumes on his reign.⁴⁸¹ Oncken thus fits the mould formed previously by Schneider and Meding, both of whom were conservative in outlook and strong supporters of the Hohenzollern monarchy, as well as capable of writing interpretative history that was aimed at the general public. Moreover, and in contrast to Schneider and Meding, Oncken's history would take its place in a wider series on world history. In this respect, Oncken moved beyond the biographical conception of Schneider and Meding by giving a more general account of William's reign. Given that the assignment for this work was given by William to Oncken at the end of his life, he must have known that it would serve to consolidate his posthumous image.

Oncken's conception of his history of William's reign followed some of the codifying elements that also structured the works of Meding. Four elements stand out. First, like Meding, Oncken emphasized William's role as a military figure, especially with reference to Frederick the Great and Frederick William III. William is depicted as a clearheaded figure arguing for military reform in the Frankfurt parliament and highlights William's reference to the role of the Prussian army in his speech to the State Ministry upon assuming the regency in 1858.⁴⁸² Secondly, similar to Meding, Oncken highlights the consolidation of the German Empire as a *Wehrstaat*, *Rechtstaat* and *Wohlfahrtstaat*.⁴⁸³ Oncken presents William as the initiator of social reform and legislation to address the social question. In so doing, William developed a social kingship that went beyond what the constitution expected of him.⁴⁸⁴ Above all, Oncken considers the role of the monarchy central to the formation of the German nation state. He argued that the Hohenzollern monarchy developed its national calling in the war against France and was a bulwark for freedom. In this way, the Prussian monarchy could become a national German one and the German nation could become a monarchical nation. Oncken contrasts the prerogatives of the Hohenzollern monarchy favourably with

⁴⁸¹ Berding, 'Oncken', 536-537.

⁴⁸² Oncken, *Zeitalter I*, 172-180, 420-422.

⁴⁸³ Oncken, *Zeitalter II*, 606-612.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 745-748.

England, where according to him the sovereign has been stripped of his powers.⁴⁸⁵ By upholding the constitution, the Hohenzollern monarchy could gain its national appeal beyond the need for military victories for political legitimacy.⁴⁸⁶ Oncken's enthusiasm for the strongly accentuated Imperial role of the Hohenzollern dynasty does not make him indifferent for the dynastic-federal component of William's reign. He describes the scenes at William's birthday, where the congratulations of the German princes are led by the Bavarian prince-regent, who Oncken describes as a 'brother-in-arms from the Holy War'.⁴⁸⁷ Thus, William had succeeded in having four strategies of legitimization converge in Oncken's authorized history to make his epitaph: his social kingship, his strong executive role as constitutional monarch, his national appeal and dynastic-federalism.

William and the political topography of Berlin

When William's coffin was carried out of the Berliner Dom after the funeral service, it faced the equestrian statue of Frederick William III in the Lustgarten opposite. In the background, in front of the National Gallery, stood the equestrian statue of Frederick William IV. As the funeral procession made its way across Unter den Linden, it passed the city arsenal, where a hall commemorating Prussian-German military and monarchical history was located. After passing through the Brandenburg Gate, the procession moved past the *Siegessäule* in the background at the Königsplatz. William had considerable influence in the construction of these monuments, determining their location, design and overseeing their execution. Each of these monuments served to project a monarchical interpretation of Prussian and German history and were thus examples of William's politics of history. Together, these monuments served to imprint on the urban space of Berlin a monarchical interpretation of the Prussian and German political order.

This section will discuss William's role in the construction of these monuments. No comprehensive plan was followed in altering the political narrative of Berlin's urban space in this manner. But the end result of William's involvement was that at the time of his death several historical-political markers gracing Berlin's political topography remained. In discussing these monuments as politics of history in this manner, this section seeks to substantiate further Wolfgang Hardtwig's claim that these monuments served to complement older monuments and to alter the political topography of Berlin.⁴⁸⁸ Three of the four monuments will be discussed here: the hall of the arsenal, the Victory Column and the equestrian statue for Frederick William IV. Because the equestrian statue for Frederick William III eventually formed a central feature for the victory parade in Berlin after the Franco-Prussian War it will be discussed in chapter V.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibidem, 606-612.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibidem, 1002.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibidem, 972.

⁴⁸⁸ Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Nationsbildung und politische Mentalität. Denkmal und Fest im Kaiserreich' in: Wolfgang Hardtwig, *Geschichtskultur und Wissenschaft* (Munich 1990) 264-301, there 267.

The Victory Column was arguably the most striking and also the most lasting, albeit with alterations to its location and size done in the twentieth century, of William's attempts at politics of history. It was also the only one of the large monuments of the *Denkmalskultur* of the early German Empire in which he was significantly involved. To date, scholarly literature, in particular Reinhard Alings' works, have understood the Victory Column primarily as part of attempts of the early German nation state to construct an image of the new polity. Alings has made his discussion of the Victory Column part of a comparative study of monuments that pursued, in competition with each other, this objective.⁴⁸⁹ In a separate study, Alings has demonstrated how the Victory Column's meaning altered from a particular interpretation of history to a depiction of history itself.⁴⁹⁰ Such an understanding can easily overlook to what extent the monument was in fact a conscious attempt by William, his officials and the artists selected, to offer a competing, distinctive monarchical understanding of recent Prussian-German history. Langewiesche has argued that the Victory Column was also a response to the 1872 monument of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn that was meant for the middle class and called for their incorporation in the political process. By contrast, the Victory Column offered a clear message about the hierarchy and monarchical character of the post-1871 political order.⁴⁹¹ While Langewiesche rightfully points at the *Deutungskampf* underpinning the Victory Column, this overlooks the fact that the Victory Column already originated in 1864 and was a sovereign attempt by William to project a dominating interpretation of both Prussian-German history and its political order. In order to substantiate this argument further, this part on the Victory Column will draw on Thomas Nipperdey's definition of monuments as representing the monarch and the nation that he forged and projected in a national-monarchical or national-dynastic monument. 'The nation depicted in such monuments is the state nation or, until 1871, the particularistic state nation'.⁴⁹² This definition enables us to establish the monarchical and dynastic conception of the monument that drove William's conduct. The latter part of the definition is important to understand how the monument's conception must be situated historically in the context of William's political generation and of pre-unification Germany.

Although the Victory Column eventually became a monument for German unification, it was originally intended for Prussia's victory against Denmark. From the beginning, William determined to establish a memorial culture around the conflict's outcome. Within months after the victory, William had

⁴⁸⁹ Reinhard Alings, *Monument und Nation. Das Bild vom Nationalstaat im Medium Denkmal – zum Verhältnis von Nation und Staat im deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Berlin 1996) 153-166.

⁴⁹⁰ Reinhard Alings, *Die Berliner Siegestsäule. Vom Geschichtsbild zum Bild der Geschichte* (Berlin 2000).

⁴⁹¹ Dieter Langewiesche, 'Kulturelle Nationsbildung im Deutschland des 19. Jahrhunderts', in: Dieter Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat in Deutschland und Europa* (Munich 2000) 80-102, there 96-99.

⁴⁹² Thomas Nipperdey, 'Nationalidee und Nationaldenkmal in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert' in: Thomas Nipperdey ed., *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte* (Göttingen 1976) 133-173, there 136.

decided that monuments would be built on the battlefields at Düppel and Alsen, together with a monument in Berlin. But there was to be a distinction between these monuments: the monuments at Düppel and Alsen were dedicated to the fallen soldiers on the battlefield, while the Berlin monument was to be a national monument that transcended soldiers' death on the battlefield.⁴⁹³ As a location, William opted for the grounds in front of the gates of the city that were previously used exercise terrain by the Berlin regiments under four of Prussia's kings. Hence, the name *Königsplatz* was adopted.⁴⁹⁴ Ironically, given William's attempt to politicize Berlin's urban space in a monarchical manner, his opposition to the Reichstag being built anywhere near other government buildings did eventually result in it being constructed on the side of the Königsplatz. As Hardtwig has pointed out, even National-Liberals were critical of the militaristic politicizing of the square and wanted the new Reichstag building to represent a peaceful counterweight to the column and witness to the 'great deeds' and 'popular will' of recent German history.⁴⁹⁵

From the beginning, William had involved himself closely in the design of the monument. This profoundly affected the eventual shape the column would take. What is notable about the discussions between William, his officials and the artists is the European context against which the monument's designs were debated, pointing at how this context was appropriated for the Prussian situation. Culture Minister Heinrich von Mühler was critical of Strack's original design, arguing that 'Denkmäler von der Form einer schlanken Säule sind im Allgemeinen nicht selten. Der Trajanssäule und der Antoniusssäule in Rom ist die Vendôme-Säule zu Paris nachgebildet.'⁴⁹⁶ Such discussions were not limited to the column's design. When the unveiling was near, William asked Mühler how the monument was covered until the actual ceremony. 'In Petersburg bei Enthüllung der Alexander-Säule war eine Draperie von rothem Zeuge, an Stangen mit goldenen Adlern gekrönt, in der Höhe des Piedestals der Säule angebracht, die auf die Zeichen fiel u. gleichzeitig senkten sich die Stangen gegen die Säule u. verschwanden in angebrachten Kasten in an der Grillie'.⁴⁹⁷ This refers back to the Alexandrine Column, which Nicholas I initiated to glorify Alexander I's military victories and strengths as a ruler. William was present at its dedication in 1834.⁴⁹⁸

William opted for a merging of Strack's design for a slim column with Friedrich Drake's large statue of a Victoria, which gave the Victory Column its peculiar disproportional shape, until this was altered in the twentieth century, and despite protests from Drake.⁴⁹⁹ However, throughout the summer of 1865, artists

⁴⁹³ Alings, *Berliner Siegessäule*, 31-32.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 71.

⁴⁹⁵ Hardtwig, 'Bürgertum, Staatssymbolik', 282.

⁴⁹⁶ GStA PK. I. HA Rep. 89. Geheimes Zivilkabinett. No. 20846. Siegesdenkmal auf dem Königsplatz in Berlin, Bd. 1. 1865-1873. Bl. 8. Mühler to William, 8 May 1865. Alings wrongfully assumes that the letter was written by William, whereas in fact it was written to him. Cf. Alings, *Berliner Siegessäule*, 45; Alings, *Monument und Nation*, 161-162.

⁴⁹⁷ GStA PK. I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 223, William to Adalbert Falk, 30 July 1873.

⁴⁹⁸ Wortman, *Scenarios of power I*, 317-321.

⁴⁹⁹ Alings, *Berliner Siegessäule*, 45; Alings, *Monument und Nation*, 162.

and officials sent alterations to the design to meet William's wishes. These included a preference that the top of the column was to be slimmer and the top would not be too dominant in order to distract from the Victoria statue.⁵⁰⁰ William's marginal comments in these memoranda demonstrate how difficult it was to satisfy him. He wrote that 'mit der Capital der Säule mit der Adler sehr schön ist', 'mit der Fuß ist dann der Viktoria steht, gefällig ist'. But, some regarding other decorations he wrote that 'der ganze Säulenschacht des Stracks Projekt zu schlank (...) steht'.⁵⁰¹ These changes drove Strack to despair and Mühler had the unenviable task of asking Strack if he was willing to execute them. Mühler reported back to William that Strack 'es nicht gelungen sei, den Allerhöchsten Intentionen zu genügen, es sei ihm aber nicht möglich, seine künstlerische Ansicht aufzugeben.' What Strack found particularly troubling was having to share the assignment: 'daß ein Werk nicht harmonisch sein könne, welches statt durch eine Hand durch mehrere Hände gehe'.⁵⁰² But William nonetheless opted for a large Victoria and column and was undisturbed by Strack's complaints.⁵⁰³ When in 1868, Mühler warned William that 'die Gestalt einer Columna rostrate konnte bei der veränderten Bedeutung des Denkmals nicht beibehalten werden.' Mühler suggested preparing a model in order to illustrate the consequences of these changes.⁵⁰⁴ In return, William stated that with the suggested changes 'bin ich einverstanden, daß hiernach die Ausführung des Denkmals – jedoch für jetzt unter Fortlassung der derselben nach den vorgelegten Zeichnungen umgebend von Gruppen von Kriegeren – verfolge und soll von der vorherigen Anfertigung eines plastischen Modells, welche eine weitere Verzögerung der Sache herbeiführen würde, Abstand genommen werden.'⁵⁰⁵

These interventions make clear that William served as the process' fulcrum. Throughout the subsequent construction of the Victory Column, William kept a close eye on its progress, especially when construction went too slowly according to him.⁵⁰⁶ Representative is a letter from 6 December 1869 from Albedyll to Mühler, in which the former stated that 'es Allerhöchstdenselben von Interesse sein würde, bald wieder über der zeitigen Stand der Arbeiten (...), namentlich auch über die Details des stattgehabten bezüglichen Bestellungen orientirt zu sein.'⁵⁰⁷ Whilst in Versailles during the Franco-Prussian War, William requested insight in the drawings for the reliefs for the Victory Column, as this was now to be expanded.⁵⁰⁸ When in October 1871, the preparation of the model for the Victoria statue was met with delays, William responded with a firm rebuke that the unveiling was scheduled for 1 September 1873.⁵⁰⁹ Because a date had been

⁵⁰⁰ GStA I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 10-11, Mühler to William, 8 August 1865.

⁵⁰¹ Ibidem, Bl. 12, Eulenburg to William, with marginal comments by William, 29 August 1865.

⁵⁰² Ibidem, Bl. 14, Mühler to William, 27 November 1865.

⁵⁰³ Alings, *Berliner Siegestsäule*, 45.

⁵⁰⁴ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 39, Mühler to William, 17 March 1868.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibidem, Bl. 40, William to Mühler, 6 April 1868.

⁵⁰⁶ Alings, *Berliner Siegestsäule*, 46-47.

⁵⁰⁷ GStA PK. I. HA Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 69, Albedyll to Mühler, 6 December 1869.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibidem, Bl. 85, Perponcher to Wilmowski, 28 December 1870.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibidem, Bl. 10, Mühler to William, with marginal comments by William, 12 October 1871,

set for the dedication, construction workers were forced to work simultaneously on the base and the column of the monument. This pressure led to a strike of workers in August 1872 and William consequently sending in pioneers to take up the construction works instead.⁵¹⁰ When in April 1873 a fire broke out in an iron-casting plant where the Victoria statue was prepared, William wrote the morning after on the police report in the margins: ‘Sofort H. H.! Ich erwarte einen detaillierte Brief von Strack. W’.⁵¹¹ When Strack provided such a letter, William promptly replied with a question whether or not this would lead to a delay of the unveiling by four or five days.⁵¹² Two months later, William received reports that the reliefs for the base of the column would not be ready in time for the unveiling. Promptly Wilmowski sent word to Strack that such a delay, in particular the relief depicting the entry of the troops in 1871, ‘Seine Majestät sehr bedauern wurde, wenn sich dies Bewahrheiten sollte’ and requested that Strack provided a report to William whether this was true.⁵¹³

William’s repeated interferences indicate how much he was committed to having this monument communicate a historical dimension to his reign. Alings’ argument that William was not so much interested in artistic matters, but rather political correctness, misses the point: for William art served as politics by other means.⁵¹⁴ This was clear from one of the first symbolic acts relating to the monument, the placing of an *Urkunde* in the monument. A draft text was prepared by the state ministry under Bismarck.⁵¹⁵ This text served ‘zum bleibenden Gedächtniß an die Thaten unseres Heeres’. However, the war of 1866 forced alterations and two new charters to be prepared. Alings has pointed out that Bismarck edited this charter’s text, in order to move beyond an exclusively-Prussian conception of the charter, by also appealing to other German states. Bismarck ensured that the charter stated that ‘neben den besonderen Bedeutung auf Preußen, auch die weitere Bedeutung des Jahres 1866 für ganz Deutschland und dessen Geschichte starker hervortreten. (...) Der Norddeutsche Bund (...) ist errichtet.’⁵¹⁶ But William also intervened here and edited these texts, as the sources reveal. To the sentence ending with that for the same charter ‘in denselben Grundstein des Denkmals für die Siege des Jahres 1864 die folgende neue Urkunde gelegt wurde,’ to which William added ‘welche dies Denkmal nunmehr auch als das, für die größeren Siege des Jahres 1866 errichtet bezeichnet’. To the sentence ‘aber diesem leuchtenden Morgenroth folgten’, a reference to the German states’ resistance to Napoleon, William added ‘trotz eines sonst segensreichen langen Friedens’ after which the text continued with ‘trüben Wolken’.⁵¹⁷ These changes demonstrate the divergent understandings of recent

⁵¹⁰ Alings, *Berliner Siegessäule*, 50; see William’s orders in GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 143, Wilmowski to committee for the construction of the Victory Column, 12 April 1872.

⁵¹¹ Ibidem, Bl. 190-192, Police report, with marginal comments by William, 17 April 1873.

⁵¹² Ibidem, Bl. 195-196, Strack to William, with marginal comments by William. 10 April 1873.

⁵¹³ Ibidem, Bl. 220, Wilmowski to Strack, 18 July 1873.

⁵¹⁴ Alings, *Berliner Siegessäule*, 73.

⁵¹⁵ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 2, Bismarck to William, 15 April 1865.

⁵¹⁶ Alings, *Berliner Siegessäule*, 42-44.

⁵¹⁷ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20846. Undated draft, Bl. 63, with marginal comments by William.

history between Bismarck and William. Whereas the former displayed political acumen by appealing to the other German states after the founding of the North-German Federation, William persisted in a Prussian-particularistic demonstration of history.

This attention to detail to suggest a realistic interpretation of recent Prussian-German history by William also extended to the monument's reliefs that were to be installed at its base. William's orders to expand the monument to incorporate the war against France were issued whilst still in Versailles. It forced a change to these reliefs: 'Se. Majestät wünschen namentlich, daß bei den Reliefs Darstellungen am Unterbau des Siegesdenkmals der jetzige Krieg gegen Frankreich einschließlich seine Rückwirkung auf die Einigung Deutschlands die geeignete Berücksichtigung finde.'⁵¹⁸ Strack prepared a memorandum for William. The original panels depicted on the east side a day of prayer and departure for the 1864 war; the northside would depict the battles at Düppel and Alsen; the westside the war against Austria, especially the battle of Königgrätz and the fleeing of Austrian troops from the battlefield and the southside a depiction of the peace, with the troops returning to Berlin. Strack now proposed a reordering of the themes, so that it would depict respectively the war against Denmark, against Austria, against France and, on the south- and frontside of the monument, peace and the unity of the German princes. This would, according to Strack, best depict the founding of the German Empire.⁵¹⁹

Drafts of the reliefs prepared in May 1871, not only showed deviations from these ideas, but also led to detailed requests of William for alterations. The east side's depiction of a day of prayers and blessing of the departing troops in 1864 never took place, as William noted in his marginal comments. The panel on the northside depicted the battle of Königgrätz and the jubilant troops. Yet, according to William, the horses were depicted in an ancient style, but which should be in contemporary fashion. The panel depicting scenes of the Franco-Prussian War – the departure of the troops, the handing Napoleon III's letter to William and the entry into Paris – did not escape William's scrutiny either. He criticized the display of the railroad, reducing the space devoted to the actual war. Instead, William wanted a more central role for French general Reille's handing Napoleon III's letter to William, a soldier to be placed in front of a French marshal, holding a French eagle. William also wanted the uniforms of the French and Prussian troops to be more clearly distinct, 'weil Freund und Feind nicht zu erkennen sind'. He ended with 'Nach diese Änderungen sind neue (...) Reliefs vorzustellen'.⁵²⁰ As the illustrations of the reliefs in Alings' study demonstrate, many of these suggested changes, such as a reduced role of the railroads, the handing of the letter and the display of the French eagle, found their way onto the monument.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁸ Ibidem, Bl. 81, Wilmowski to unknown, 21 October 1870.

⁵¹⁹ Ibidem, Bl. 82, Knerk, Strack and Hermann to Mühler, 31 December 1870.

⁵²⁰ Ibidem, Bl. 97, Mühler to William, with marginal comments by William, 27 May 1871.

⁵²¹ Alings, *Berliner Siegesäule*, 36-39.

William took a similarly active approach to the inscription on the base of the monument. In January 1873, Wilmowski enquired with Strack on behalf of William whether a decision had been made.⁵²² Strack proposed two versions. A three-line inscription stated ‘König Wilhelm / seinem siegreichen Volke / zur Erinnerung an die Kämpfe der Jahre 1864, 1866, 1870-1871’ and a two-line inscription that stated ‘Den Siegern / in den Kämpfen der Jahre 1864, 1866, 1870-1871’.⁵²³ To the former, William could not agree. Instead, he preferred a two-line inscription: ‘das dankbare Vaterland / dem siegreichen Heere’.⁵²⁴ This suggestion was confirmed by Falk, who believed that ‘dem Zwecke des Monuments entsprechen und die geeignetste Stelle für dieselbe am Architekten des viereckigen Theils der Vorderseite des Monuments sein’.⁵²⁵ To this place and formulation of the inscription William agreed.⁵²⁶ In its simplicity, this inscription expressed the idea of unity between monarch, army and people which William had been raised and which he sought to project with his politics of history; hence why he opted for this inscription.

This emphasis on German unification by the German states under Prussian leadership also marked William’s interventions in Anton von Werner’s mosaic on the base of the monument. That the mosaic centred on German unification was followed with the assignment that von Werner received from Strack to follow William’s motto of ‘Die Rückwirkung des Kampfes gegen Frankreich auf die Einigung Deutschlands’.⁵²⁷ Originally, this was supposed to be a painting, but von Werner succeeded in convincing William, with help of Crown Princess Victoria and William’s daughter Luise, in opting for a mosaic instead.⁵²⁸ Because this could not be finished in time, von Werner was obliged to prepare a painting of the mosaic for the unveiling in September 1873.⁵²⁹ This longer timeframe enabled an extended discussion between artist and monarch about the details of the mosaic.⁵³⁰ Bartmann has argued that the interchangeability of details in these discussions was typical for art that was subjected to the will of the monarch and that William ‘ging kaum auf künstlerische Probleme ein, ihn interessierte nur die Frage nach der Herausstellung ihm wichtiger Personen’.⁵³¹ But Bartmann fails to understand that the discussions were the expression of William’s use of the arts for his monarchical politics of history. In his ‘Erläuterungen’ added to sketches submitted to William in January 1872, Von Werner proposed above the door a *Wacht am Rhein*. Instead, William scribbled in

⁵²² GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 167, Wilmowski to Strack, 17 January 1873.

⁵²³ Ibidem, Bl. 171, Strack to Wilmowski, 6 February 1873.

⁵²⁴ Ibidem, Bl. 170, Wilmowski to Falk, 21 February 1873.

⁵²⁵ Ibidem, Bl. 189, Falk to William, 29 March 1873.

⁵²⁶ Ibidem, Bl. 190, Wilmowski to Falk, 13 April 1873.

⁵²⁷ Anton von Werner, *Erlebnisse und Eindrücke* (Berlin 1913) 64; Bartmann, *Kunst und Kunstpolitik*, 68-69.

⁵²⁸ Ibidem, 74.

⁵²⁹ Alings, *Berliner Siegestsäule*, 67.

⁵³⁰ Bartmann refers to von Werner’s memorandum of 25 February 1872 that the latter has discussed in his memoirs. See Bartmann, *Kunst und Kunstpolitik*, 74; Von Werner, *Erlebnisse*, 72.

⁵³¹ Bartmann, *Kunst und Kunstpolitik*, 86-87.

the margins ‘Borussia umgeben am Rande ~~Generäle~~ und deutsche Fürsten’, presumably preferring this instead. Where Von Werner planned a woman taking her child in protection after being attacked, William instead scribbled ‘Wacht am Rhein’. Where Von Werner wanted to depict the proclamation of the German Empire, with William surrounded by the leading princes, William instead wanted to see Germania, rather than himself, carrying Prussian colours and a herald surrounded by the German princes. In the final instance, William criticized von Werner’s use of ancient costumes and victors amidst of modern warfare. Instead, von Werner had to opt for modern, but idealized depictions of warfare.⁵³² He refused to carry out many of William’s demands, believing it would undermine his ideas of the mosaic and enlisted the help of Frederick of Baden to reach a compromise.⁵³³

Following a review of von Werner’s full painting of the mosaic on 4 January 1874, William again drafted a memorandum to suggest alterations to the mosaic. Although primarily discussing details, they nonetheless demonstrate how William wanted a precise depiction of the central role of the dynasty in German unification, albeit without his own persona. He criticized von Werner for giving Prince Frederick Charles too prominent a place compared to Frederick William. The former was not allowed to be depicted as the captor of Napoleon III. Nor was he allowed to be depicted too large, so as not to dominate the image. Of the encounter between south- and north Germany, William believed that two Bavarian corps-generals and no Prussian general and the whole image was inappropriate. This also went for the absent Field Marshal von Manteuffel, who according to William ‘2 verschiedene Armeen in Nord und Süd befehligte und zwei Siege führte muß irgendwo portraitiert erscheinen’. This emphasis on Prussia’s role balanced with the other German states was also clear from further comments. At other points William wanted the figure of Prince Frederick Charles removed in favour of that of the Crown Prince of Saxony. He also noted that other German states were not sufficiently recognizable via their shields of armour, even if he believed it to be unnecessary for them to be depicted again, as they were also depicted elsewhere.⁵³⁴ Again, von Werner refused to carry out these amendments, prompting William this time to visit the painting on display with von Werner and discuss their disagreements. This led to William accepting that Frederick Charles’ position would remain unaltered, but Manteuffel would be added.⁵³⁵

William similarly intervened with the dedication ceremony of the Victory Column in September 1873. He had suggested that 1 September 1873, the anniversary of the battle of Sedan, was among the dates to be selected for the unveiling, next to 18 April, the anniversary of the attack on Düppel and 3 July, the

⁵³² GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 165. Von Werner to William, January 1872, with marginal comments from William, 26 January 1872.

⁵³³ Von Werner, *Erlebnisse*, 70-72.

⁵³⁴ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20847 Siegesdenkmal auf dem Königsplatz in Berlin, Bd. 2. 1874-1893. Bl. 6. Memorandum with William’s comments on von Werner’s sketches, 8 January 1874.

⁵³⁵ Von Werner, *Erlebnisse*, 77-79.

anniversary of the battle of Königgrätz.⁵³⁶ Ahead of the unveiling, the committee depended on William to give permission to cover not only the column, but also von Werner's painting in the hall below.⁵³⁷ William intervened too in the drafting of the programme for the unveiling. In a version of 19 August 1873, the commandant of Berlin suggested that William attend the ceremony in a tent opposite the monument, but William wanted to sit on horseback.⁵³⁸ This projected William as a military monarch, an image that would eventually be reinforced when he led the troops onto the Königsplatz ahead of the unveiling.⁵³⁹ At William's instructions, the garrison commanders of Berlin, Spandau, Charlottenburg and Potsdam, the admirals and officers present, retired generals and deputies of the army were to be placed around the column. Veterans of the 1813-1815 wars, those decorated with the Iron Cross but not in active service and former commandants of the Invalidenhaus were to take place in front of the stand. Women decorated with the Order of Luise were to take place in the royal pavilion. The artists involved in the monument and cabinet ministers were to take up position at the base of the monument, facing outward.⁵⁴⁰ William also raised the military character of the event by ordering troops marching from the rendez vous point to the column were to do so 'mit klingendem Spiel'.⁵⁴¹ In an instruction of 24 August, William ordered that ladies wearing the *Verdienstorden* would also be given prominent places, so as not to be seen as ranking lower. William also wanted no stand on the north side of the monument, in order to give the public better access.⁵⁴² At the unveiling, William himself gave a speech in which he stated that the monument testified the 'Thaten der Armee' and served 'Künftigen Geschlechtern zur Nacheiferung'. 'In glorreichen Siegen mit unseren treuen Verbündeten im letzten glorreichen Kriege schritten wir von Siegen zu Siegen [...] bis zur Einigung Deutschlands im neuen Kaiserreiche'. At a dinner that night in the palace, William again delivered a speech, in which he compared the Victory Column with the Kreuzberg monument and that German unification was the result of the memory of the Wars of Liberation.⁵⁴³ Representative of his interest in the project was that William visited the monument again days after the unveiling with Augusta and being guided by Strack.⁵⁴⁴

This unambiguous monarchical projection contrasted with the diverging reception. As Alings has demonstrated, despite the precise planning, a well-run unfolding of the unveiling had been far from certain. The threat of a social unrest

⁵³⁶ Cf. GStA I. HA Rep. 89. No. 20846. Bl. 103, Mühler to Wilmowski, 8 July 1871.

⁵³⁷ Ibidem, Bl. 28, Wilmowski to Falk, 18 August 1873.

⁵³⁸ Ibidem, Bl. 250, commandant of Berlin to William, 19 August 1873.

⁵³⁹ Cf. *Illustrierte Zeitung*, 20 September 1873.

⁵⁴⁰ GStA I. HA. Rep. 20846. Bl. 257, 'Verzeichnis der Behörden und Deputationen bei der Enthüllungsfeier des Sieges-Denkmal auf dem Königsplatze am 2. September 1873'.

⁵⁴¹ Ibidem, Bl. 262, 'Ordnung der Enthüllungsfeier des Siegesdenkmals auf dem Königplatze am 2. September 1873'.

⁵⁴² Ibidem, Bl. 274, Wilmowski to Schwarzkappen, 24 August 1873.

⁵⁴³ Alings, *Berliner Siegesssäule*, 33-34, 73-74.

⁵⁴⁴ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 5 September 1873; *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 6 September 1873.

or a strike of working classes in response to the city's lack of housing and an outbreak of typhus and William's lack of understanding of this, led to little sympathy of these masses for the new Empire. Although the police president sent in additional security forces, no unrest took place at the event. Newspapers responded to the monument in a less than enthusiastic manner. Architectural journals, such as the *Deutsche Bauzeitung*, criticized the monument for the size and proportions of the Victoria statue and compared it unfavourable to the column on Trafalgar square and Place de Vendôme. The Victoria also resembled more a Borussia than a Germania judged the *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst*. The reception of the monument in popular press documents that it failed to serve as a monument for national integration and identification. This went in particular for the social democratic and Catholic press. This also happened on the conservative side of the political spectrum, the *Kreuz-Zeitung* demonstrated with a strict Prussian-conservative interpretation of the monument's message. By contrast, the more liberal press, such as the *Vossische Zeitung*, interpreted the monument in a more national-liberal sense.⁵⁴⁵ Müller has shown that Frederick William 'deplored the "purely Prussian" character of what he lampooned as the "Victory Asparagus" and feared it would cause bad blood.'⁵⁴⁶ Far from producing national unity through a historical narrative, at first the monument enabled interpretation according to the standpoint of the beholder.

Like the Victory Column, the *Ruhmeshalle* in Berlin's arsenal was meant as a monument for a military-monarchical and Borussian conception of history as part of William's urban politics of history. Recent scholarship has shown how Hohenzollern monarchs drew on museums for displaying collections that served to project a dynastic narrative. Jürgen Luh has argued that the Hohenzollern Museum in Berlin's Monbijou Palace was an attempt by the Hohenzollern dynasty to popularize and sentimentalize the appeal of the dynasty after having assumed its Imperial role. Especially Frederick William is often credited as having been a driving force in the coming of this museum.⁵⁴⁷ Müller has gone one step further and has argued that the Crown Prince's efforts for the museum have to be seen as part of his 'dynastic project' that sought to establish the dynasty's historical role in a mausoleum, museums and source editions.⁵⁴⁸ However, the acknowledgement of these dynastic undertakings has not been extended to William. Instead, historians have barely discussed his role. Eva Giloi has stated that William's involvement in the Hohenzollern museum varied between opposition to a dynastic museum and infusing a nostalgic-sentimental narrative, by lending personal

⁵⁴⁵ Alings, *Berliner Siegestsäule*, 34-35, 78-87.

⁵⁴⁶ Müller, *Our Fritz*, 98.

⁵⁴⁷ Jürgen Luh, 'Ruhmreiche und menschliche Monarchen. Die Hohenzollern im Museum' in: Generaldirektion der Stiftung Preußischer Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg ed., *Die Kaiser und die Macht der Medien* (Berlin 2005) 12-37, there 13-14.

⁵⁴⁸ Müller, *Our Fritz*, 141-142.

possessions to this end and approving of Schneider's role in the museum.⁵⁴⁹ Yet, this neglect is not justified, for William did possess a keen eye for museum displays. Wilhelm von Bode has testified that William felt himself to be the lesser in matters of art in comparison to his brother Frederick William IV. But after having guided William through the museum, he concluded that it had 'den überraschenden Beweis geliefert, daß der Kaiser infolge seines Mangels an jeder Übung und durch Unterordnung unter seinen älteren Brüder seinen Kunstsinn sehr unterschätzte und sehr in Unrecht auch im Publikum als Kunstbanause galt'.⁵⁵⁰ This eye for the arts and its utilization for political purposes is particularly clear in the case of the *Ruhmeshalle*.

William's plans for the reconstruction of the arsenal were no isolated affair, but typical for monarchs of his political generation. Abigail Green has demonstrated that monarchs in Hannover, Saxony and Württemberg in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century began setting up museums, not only to display their art collection as a form of cultural kingship, but also to relate these royal collections to the dynasty and conflate this with cultural achievements of the dynasty and the state and for the benefit of the people.⁵⁵¹ As seen above, William's own politics of history commenced around the same time, albeit in a limited form because of his position as heir to the throne. William obtained this freedom upon succeeding his brother in 1861. By then, his efforts for a dynastic museum differed in two ways from those of other monarchs of his generation. First, there was a delay to William's undertaking because he was the last of his generation to ascend the throne: William's undertakings in this field did not get underway until the 1860s. Secondly, William differed from other German monarchs because of his strong emphasis on the military role of the dynasty. This partially reflected his use of the military that epitomized the dynasty and his persona as a strategy of legitimization for his role. More specifically, the wars of German Unification provided William a topos to substantiate this claim further through converting a museum, putting on display his monarchical politics of history.

Like his authorized biographies and the Victory Column, William's ideas for the *Ruhmeshalle* in the arsenal were an appropriation of other, similar examples elsewhere in Europe for the Prussian-German context. Two in particular provided William with a model for what he wanted in Berlin. First, there was the painting gallery in a wing of Versailles, which Louis Philippe had built between 1833 and 1837 for the glorification of the expansion of French power and national glory and with the purpose of installing a sense of national pride with the visitors. Because William had set up his headquarters in Versailles during the Franco-Prussian War, he was able to visit the gallery frequently, especially after his daily rhythm centred

⁵⁴⁹ Eva Giloi, *Monarchy, myth and material culture in Imperial Germany 1750-1850* (Cambridge 2011) 215-229.

⁵⁵⁰ Wilhelm von Bode, *Fünfzig Jahre Museumsarbeit* (Bielefeld 1922) 2. I thank Professor Wolfgang Neugebauer of the Humboldt University Berlin for pointing me at his remark.

⁵⁵¹ Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-building and nationhood in nineteenth-century Germany* (Cambridge 2001) 111-119.

more on the palace when the war's progress had stalled.⁵⁵² The second example is often considered the trigger for William ordering the reconstruction of the arsenal. In October 1873 William visited Vienna for the world exhibition and this included a tour of the Vienna arsenal which also featured a hall dedicated to military heroes and military glory.⁵⁵³ This claim is made plausible by the fact that the visit was followed in July 1874 by William installing a commission that had to explore the possibility to transform the arsenal into a museum dedicated to glorifying the Prussian army.⁵⁵⁴ However, scholars have overlooked the fact that William already visited Vienna in September 1853. On that occasion he was personally guided through the arsenal in Vienna by Francis Joseph.⁵⁵⁵ At this time, reconstruction of the Vienna arsenal to include a military museum had just begun. In other words, the European context from which William derived the idea for a museum dedicated to glorifying the Prussian army was one of long gestation rather than coming suddenly in the 1870s.

William's decision to install a hall glorifying his dynasty's and army's deeds in the arsenal must be seen against this background. This transformation of the arsenal into a military museum was not a sudden one, but rather one that developed gradually during the nineteenth century. As early as 1815 a plan drafted by Karl Friedrich Schinkel circulated to convert the arsenal into a museum celebrating Prussia's victory over Napoleon. Between 1820 and 1827, Frederick William III agreed to install a museum to commemorate the deeds of the Prussian army and transferred part of the royal collection of arms to the arsenal. During the reign of Frederick William IV, a plaster cast of a statue of Blücher was added.⁵⁵⁶ But it was under William that the move towards a museum glorifying the role of the Prussian army and dynasty accelerated. As in the case of the Victory Column, the war of 1864 provided the catalyst. On 19 January 1867, William ordered that the so-called 'Lion of Flensburg', captured during the war against Denmark, to be placed in the courtyard of the arsenal as a trophy.⁵⁵⁷ William inspected the lion personally on 9 February 1868.⁵⁵⁸ That same year, William ordered that models of the equestrian statues of his brother Frederick William IV and himself that were placed at the bridge over the Rhine were to be displayed in the arms' hall of the arsenal.⁵⁵⁹

Not until after the Franco-Prussian War and his 1873 visit to Vienna did William accelerate his plans to convert the arsenal. His initial plans were marked by a strong Borussian stance and projecting the army and monarchy as epitomes

⁵⁵² Monika Arndt, *Die >>Ruhmeshalle<< im Berliner Zeughaus. Eine Selbstdarstellung Preussens nach der Reichsgründung* (Berlin 1985) 26-27; Regina Müller, *Das Berliner Zeughaus. Die Baugeschichte* (Berlin 1994) 166.

⁵⁵³ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 26.

⁵⁵⁴ Heinrich Müller, *Das Berliner Zeughaus. Vom Arsenal zum Museum* (Berlin 1994) 128.

⁵⁵⁵ Schneider, 'Prinz von Preußen', 132-133.

⁵⁵⁶ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 18-22.

⁵⁵⁷ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Arsenal*, 103-105.

⁵⁵⁸ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Baugeschichte*, 161.

⁵⁵⁹ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 22.

of Prussia. On 4 June 1874 William set up a committee that was to explore the possibility of converting the arsenal in a hall that would glorify the deeds of the Prussian army.⁵⁶⁰ The committee included Louis Schneider and Friedrich Hitzig, an historicist architect who through his involvement in the conversion of the Monbijou Palace into the Hohenzollern museum had established himself as a confidant in architectural matters with the Hohenzollern monarchy.⁵⁶¹ This composition suggests that William was willing to draw on the emerging Hohenzollern Museum as a variation for his own plans with the arsenal. The committee presented its plans to William on 26 September 1874, whilst he visited the arsenal. It envisaged an extensive reconstruction of the building to do full justice to William's ideas.⁵⁶² William reiterated his intention in a royal order dated 22 March 1875 and sought to exclude the Empire from this affair. The Prussian ministers of war, finance and culture supported him in this. The Prussian cabinet could in principle agree to this, as the building was owned by the Prussian state and thus expenses could not be drawn from the Empire.⁵⁶³ On 20 April 1876, he ordered these ministers, as well as the minister of trade, to submit legislation to the Prussian Diet for reconstructing the arsenal into a museum dedicated to the 'Prussian army and the Prussian nation, from which the army came'.⁵⁶⁴

Unsurprisingly, William's strong Prussian conception of the reconstruction of the arsenal conflicted with his role as German Emperor. It was met with disapproval in the Prussian Diet. In particular the extensive reconstruction, high costs in the light of the economic crisis and the elevation of the role of the Prussian army were seen as inappropriate. Ludwig Windthorst argued that five years after the establishment of a unified nation state, the glorification of a Prussian nation was not deemed proper. Ernst Ludwig von Gerlach argued celebrating the role of Prussia might not be well received in other German states who had been less than enthusiastic about Prussia's role in German unification.⁵⁶⁵ In the end, the first draft of the bill was met with opposition from parts of the Centre Party, the National Liberals and the *Fortschrittspartei*, but the bill was defeated indirectly in the Budget Committee, by returning the bill to the Prussian State Ministry to clarify ownership of the building.⁵⁶⁶ Already before, it had relayed this question to William himself, with the question whether or not the cabinet should push a speedy discussion of the bill, even at the risk of it being defeated.⁵⁶⁷ Bismarck clarified this matter before the end of the session, saving the face of the members of the committee. From the bill's failure the ministers drew the conclusion that it only required modest modifications for it to pass. These included dropping the title *Ruhmeshalle* for the building (even though it was

⁵⁶⁰ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Arsenal*, 166.

⁵⁶¹ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 27; Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Baugeschichte*, 167.

⁵⁶² Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 27.

⁵⁶³ Paetau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI/I*, 407.

⁵⁶⁴ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 29.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, 30-31.

⁵⁶⁶ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Baugeschichte*, 171-172.

⁵⁶⁷ Paetau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI/I*, 425.

subsequently used), a lowering of the sum of money involved, an alteration in the memorandum on the renovation that claimed the renovation would recognize German unification and the role of other German states with the project and only in the second instance the role of the Prussian army. This succeeded in convincing the members of the Diet and the bill was subsequently approved by them and on 22 February 1877 by the Prussian House of Lords.⁵⁶⁸ William provided royal assent for the bill on 22 March 1877, the same day he would open the Hohenzollern Museum in Monbijou Palace.⁵⁶⁹ Because the changes in the bill to the Diet were mostly cosmetic, William could now exercise a considerable degree of freedom in determining the reconstruction of the arsenal and could make the museum a full part of his own politics of history.

This freedom meant that William could play a large role in the reconstruction of the arsenal and its programme. Arndt has demonstrated that William decided which statues of rulers and military commanders were to be put on display and what themes were chosen for the paintings. He himself visited the studios of the sculptors, reviewed sketches and approved final designs.⁵⁷⁰ In all artistic matters, William had the final say, such as the display of statues and allegorical paintings.⁵⁷¹ In similar fashion, William decided on what was to be put on display, such as captured French colours and eagles.⁵⁷² Arndt has argued that the programme of paintings and sculptures on display rested on three thoughts: German unification was as the culmination of Prussian politics, the new Hohenzollern Empire was based on the Hohenstaufen Empire, giving it historical legitimacy and the fundamental importance of the military for Prussia and the Empire. These culminated in a glorification of the monarchical state and subjection to the state that was embodied by the army. This served in years of domestic division to remind the visitor of the example of the monarchy and the army.⁵⁷³

Nonetheless, Arndt's interpretation overlooks two significant changes overtime in the display at the arsenal: a shift in emphasis from the military towards historical agency of individuals and an increasingly stronger monarchical historical narrative. The gradual reduction of the underlining of the role of the army occurred since the early 1870s. Because of the large quantity of trophies captured during the Franco-Prussian War, the display of artillery material was already under pressure after 1871. In 1872, the ministry of War ordered that eleven busts were to be put on display, of elector Frederick William, the Prussian kings Frederick II, Frederick William III, Emperor William I, prince August of Prussia, General von Hindersin and Field Marshal von Moltke, as well as Roon. In a separate room busts of the Prussian kings Frederick I, Frederick William I, Frederick William II and Frederick William IV were to be put on display. Despite

⁵⁶⁸ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus*. Baugeschichte, 172-174; Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 33-35.

⁵⁶⁹ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus*. Baugeschichte, 167.

⁵⁷⁰ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 28-29.

⁵⁷¹ Regina Müller, *Das Berliner Zeughaus*. Die Baugeschichte (Berlin 1994) 118.

⁵⁷² Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus*. Arsenal, 118.

⁵⁷³ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 114.

officers' attempt to subsequently retain the artillery-display function of the arsenal, it was at William's orders that this role was ended.⁵⁷⁴ With this shift towards increased attention of individual agency William consciously tapped into Imperial Germany's growing cult of heroes.⁵⁷⁵ This foregrounding of monarchical actors indicates that William reduced attention to other military and especially political figures. Exemplary is the placing of the busts of Stein and Bismarck. These were the only two busts of politicians on display.⁵⁷⁶ In March 1878 Hitzig gave a report on the proposed display of objects and interior of the arsenal to the War Ministry. This included a proposal to make room near the windows for the display of busts of men who had not led armies in Prussian and German history, but were significant nonetheless, such as inventors, bankers and architects. But in the margins William wrote that 'Die Nicht-Militärs müßten in einen gesonderten Abtheilungs-Raum ausgestellt werden'.⁵⁷⁷

This stance enabled William to increasingly concentrate attention on the role of the monarchy. An example is provided by the painting by Wilhelm Camphausen of Frederick the Great being celebrated by the Silesian *Stände* in 1741. Of Camphausen's sketch, the artist was informed by Minister of War Kameke that the sketch 'gefällt Seiner Majestät sehr. Allerhöchst dieselben fürchten, daß, wenn extra zur größeren Charakteristik der Huldigung im Vordergrunde knieende Personen angebracht würden, diese die Figur des Königs beeinträchtigen möchten, und wünschen, daß letztere bis auf die Füße sichtbar und frei bleibe. Wer die geschichtliche Situation nicht kennt, könnte aus der Handbewegung des Königs glauben, daß dieser eben schwöre oder betheuere. Seine Majestät glauben, daß es demnach besser ein möchte, wenn der König noch den Degen in der Hand habe, und denselben, mit dem Griff nach oben eben an Schwerin übergebe.'⁵⁷⁸ This change was subsequently executed in the painting and helped to elevate Frederick the Great above the Silesian *Stände* and by including handing him the sword underlining his military role. A similar incident occurred with the painting depicting Frederick William III issuing the proclamation 'An mein Volk' in 1813. Although the committee had agreed to Georg Bleibtreu's sketch, William demanded alterations. According to William, 'ein solcher Moment, wie er dargestellt, nicht ganz historisch sei. Bei Proclamation des Aufrufs sei der Kaiser Alexander zugegen gewesen und sei ein Carree von Truppen aufgestellt gewesen. Von beidem sehe man Nichts, auch fehlen noch einige Generalsköpfe, die wichtig seien, zumal fraglich sei, ob Körner u.s.w. damals schon dagewesen seien.' William could agree that Alexander would not be included in the painting but did insist on a number of troops being depicted. The committee met such demands.⁵⁷⁹ At William's orders, dated 1 May 1882, a large part of the collection of arms and uniforms of Frederick William III was

⁵⁷⁴ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Arsenal*, 118-123.

⁵⁷⁵ Jefferies, *Imperial culture*, 126-128.

⁵⁷⁶ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 117.

⁵⁷⁷ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Arsenal*, 129.

⁵⁷⁸ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Baugeschichte*, 191-195.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 195-196.

transferred from Charlottenburg to the arsenal, including a sabre that was given to the late king on the battlefield of Belle Alliance in 1825. At William's instructions signs were added stating that they came from the personal collection of Frederick William III.⁵⁸⁰ William likewise agreed to the acquisition of the arms collection of his brother Prince Carl after the latter's death, although he refused this to be paid for from the *Kronfideikommiß*. Nonetheless, its acquisition proceeded and William demanded that the collection be displayed as one whole. The arsenal's executive however, argued that the pieces of the collection could only logically be displayed if this was done in coherence with their function and respective time-period. To this William agreed.⁵⁸¹

This elevation of the role of the dynasty also extended to his own persona, as William's response to von Werner's 1885 version of his painting of the proclamation of the German Empire reveals. The painting was to be a new version of the one that von Werner had painted for William's 80th birthday in 1877 and was given to him on behalf of the German princes. Bartmann has demonstrated that in early sketches for the *Zeughausfassung* of the painting an idealized depiction was created with William at the centre and Bismarck, Moltke and Roon in a subordinate position. The foregrounding of these figures and the reduction of the number of soldiers suggests not only a stronger military stance in the depiction, but also an overall stronger emphasis on figures as historical agents.⁵⁸² In his memoirs, von Werner has described William's inspection of the painting on 8 November 1882. William pointed out that Bismarck wore his white cavalry uniform, instead of, in accordance with the actual scene, his dark blue uniform. Contrary to Bartmann's remark, von Werner did admit that he had done this in order to foreground Bismarck more strongly. But von Werner effectively cloaked his attention by pointing out that other cuirassiers officers present also wore their white uniform, and Bismarck would have also done so, even if he had taken active part in the military campaign. To this William replied that 'Sie haben recht, er war falsch angezogen und es ist ganz richtig, daß Sie das korrigiert haben.' Then, William pointed to the helmet he was seen wearing in his right hand and asked von Werner 'was für Beschlag und Schuppenkette?' When von Werner retorted that this was of the I Guards' regiment on foot, William turned, smiling, to Stosch and Kameke and said 'Vollständig militärfromm'.⁵⁸³ According to Bartmann, this encounter reveals the underlying ideology of the German Empire, which saw the other German princes side-lined and William, Bismarck and the Crown Prince depicted as the central figures of the German Empire.⁵⁸⁴ But arguably, by consenting to von Werner's idealized form of reality, William also subscribed to this ideology, with its concentration on him, Bismarck and his son, as put on display in the arsenal.

⁵⁸⁰ Müller, *Berliner Zeughaus. Arsenal*, 142.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 161-162.

⁵⁸² Bartmann, *Kunst und Kunstpolitik*, 111-117.

⁵⁸³ Von Werner, *Erlebnisse*, 356-357.

⁵⁸⁴ Bartmann, *Kunst und Kunstpolitik*, 114-115.

The equestrian statue of Frederick William IV in front of the National Gallery was intended as a tribute to his role in establishing the National Gallery. But its proximity to the statue of Frederick William III in the nearby Lustgarten meant that it also served as a counterpart to that statue. Given this significance it could have for the political topography of Berlin's city centre, it was inevitable that William sought to steer the monument's meaning in a more monarchical direction. His efforts between 1876 and 1878 concentrated on three aspects: the costume of Frederick William IV, the monument's precise location and the inscription.

For Frederick William IV's costume, the committee considered an ancient toga. Instead, William wanted a modern uniform, which was typical of William's idealized form of reality he displayed also with the Victory Column and arsenal.⁵⁸⁵ Indeed, the actual statue did see Frederick William IV in a Prussian uniform. More contentious was the choice of location for the statue. The committee wanted it to be placed on top of the National Gallery's stairs, making it an integral part of the museum's exterior. To this William objected: 'man werde weder von der Treppe, noch beim Ersteigen derselben, noch auf dem Podest selbst der Statue anders als unter dem Bauch des Pferdes ansichtig werden'. Instead, William proposed to place the statue on the gallery's forecourt, facing the hall of columns, which might be partially torn down to enable a better view of the statue.⁵⁸⁶ Falk reiterated these opinions in February 1878. Placing the statue on the forecourt would show the independence of the monument, its monarchical dignity and appeal to popular sentiment. Placing the statue on top of the stairs would undo the 'Linien der Architektur'. To this William commented in the margins: 'Dies ist ganz richtige Auffassung. Es ist ein Denkmal zu Ehrung u nicht eine Verzierung des Gebäudes, daher ist die würdigere Aufstellung vor dem Treppe W'.⁵⁸⁷ Only a small majority of those involved favoured placing the statue on top of the stairs, whilst William himself remained doubtful. Eventually, the decision was made by the Crown Prince, who deputized for his father after the attack on the latter's life, and his wife after an audience with the statue's sculptor Alexander Calandrelli. Although William later made remarks about this outcome, Wilmowski testified that it was his impression that William was relieved not having to make this decision.⁵⁸⁸ An inscription for the statue came at William's orders, though he specified in October 1885 that it had to deviate from the one of the statue of Frederick William III.⁵⁸⁹ Culture Minister Gustav von Gossler agreed with this idea, arguing that all statues erected at his monarchical initiatives carried an inscription and were 'wertvolle Urkunden für die kommenden Geschlechter'. Gossler offered three varieties, but William opted for 'Dem Gedächtniss Königs /

⁵⁸⁵ GStA PK. I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20420. Bau der Nationalgalerie und die Herstellung eine Reiterstandbildes König Friedrich Wilhelm IV. auf ihrer Freitreppe. 1861-1888. Bl. 74. Unknown to Wilmowski, 14 September 1875.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibidem, Bl. 84. Wilmowski to Falk, 31 July 1876.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibidem, Bl. 114. Falk to William, 13 February 1878.

⁵⁸⁸ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 162.

⁵⁸⁹ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20420. Bl. 170. Wilmowski to Gossler, 13 October 1885.

Friedrich Wilhelm IV. / König Wilhelm. / :Jahreszahl:/.⁵⁹⁰ Given that the museum was explicitly dedicated to German art, William's choice to opt for an inscription referring to himself as King of Prussia was illustrative of the dynastic-federal understanding of his Imperial role he had.

William's conduct at the unveiling accentuated the monarchical-military dimension even further. The unveiling saw the lining up of the 1st Foot Guards' regiment and the Grenadier Regiment Frederick William IV No. 2, as well as the Gardes du Corps. A tent would be placed opposite the statue, where William would arrive from the Lustgarten, after which a religious service would be held.⁵⁹¹ In his sermon, Kögel referred to the four statues of Hohenzollern rulers now forming part of Berlin's city centre, thus recognizing how they constituted part of the city's political topography: the statue of the Great Elector on the nearby *Lange Brücke*, of Frederick the Great at Unter den Linden, of Frederick William III in the Lustgarten and Frederick William IV at the National Gallery.⁵⁹² Next, it was William's turn to order the actual unveiling and did so with clear reference to the military and dynastic components of the occasion. As von Werner described in his memoirs: 'es war ein rührender und zugleich erhebender Anblick, als der im neunzigsten Lebensjahre stehende Monarch in strammer militärischer Haltung vor der Front der Truppen den Degen zog, als die Hülle des Denkmals fiel, und mit lauter Stimme kommandierte: "Achtung, präsentiert das Gewehr!" das Denkmal seines Bruders durch dreimaliges Senken des Degens salutierend'.⁵⁹³ Although William had not succeeded in determining the statue's location, he had invested both details of the statue and its unveiling with a meaning that corresponded with his views.

Conclusion

When Heinrich Poschinger suggested in 1882 that dispatches from the Prussian embassy in St. Petersburg from the 1859-1862 period could be published, Bismarck rejected this with the remark that William did not want any revelations on his reign being published at that stage.⁵⁹⁴ Whether or not these were indeed William's wishes or Bismarck's remains uncertain. Bismarck often made sure these were hard to separate and certainly did so for this case as the period proposed covered his time in St Petersburg. But Bismarck went past the fact that by 1882 casting his persona and role in a historical perspective had become an integral part

⁵⁹⁰ Ibidem, Bl. 171. Gossler to William, 17 December 1885. The inscription eventually chosen carried the marginal comment 'diese Inschrift ist von Sr. M. gewählt mit dem Jahreszahl der Vollendung des Denkmal'.

⁵⁹¹ Ibidem, Bl. 189. 'Programm zur Feier der Enthüllung des Denkmals König Friedrich Wilhelm's IV. am 10. Juni 1886.'

⁵⁹² *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und Gelehrten Sachen / Vossische Zeitung*, 10 June 1886, evening edition. Newspaper clipping in GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 20420.

⁵⁹³ Von Werner, *Erlebnisse*, 466. Lucius von Ballhausen recorded a similar impression of the event: 'Die Feier auf dem monumentalen Platz war höchst wirkungsvoll. Der Kaiser zog den Degen und kommandierte selbst die Honneurs, wie damals in Potsdam bei der Enthüllung des Denkmals Friedrich Wilhelm I.' Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 350.

⁵⁹⁴ Rich and Fisher eds., *Geheimen Papiere* II, 20.

of how William forged his office. If he was less interested in having actual primary sources published, he did more to ensure that he would be seen in a historical perspective that corresponded with his ideas.

By arguing that a politics of history formed an essential part of William's reign, this chapter has challenged literature's argument that a monarchical politics of history started with William II, or, as Müller has argued, even with Frederick III.⁵⁹⁵ Instead, this chapter has demonstrated that such a politics of history was initiated by William already before assuming the deputy for his brother in 1857 and later further developed once he became King of Prussia and German Emperor. This shows that monarchical politics of history were a long-term part of how the Hohenzollern monarchs forged their monarchical role, demonstrating specific continuities in both form and content. The form goes for example for the museums, such as the arsenal for William I and the Hohenzollern Museum for Frederick III or the statues, such as William I's involvement the statues for Frederick William III and Frederick William IV and William II's subsequent initiative for the Siegesallee to affect Berlin's political topography. The content goes not just for the Borussia interpretation of Prussian and German history that William I and Frederick III projected, but also for the cultivation of their predecessors' memory, in particular that of Frederick William III and Luise. At the same time, this chapter has shown that William's politics of history was a response to Frederick William IV's failure to merge of the image of the monarchy, the army and the nation in the 1850s and carve out a public persona of his own in this direction. In doing so William consciously set about to utilize the arts. This is borne out by the informal networks with popularizing historians that William established to have biographies written about him and which he authorized, but also by serving as fulcrum for all major artistic decisions to be made for the Victory Column, the arsenal and the equestrian statue for Frederick William IV. Even though William's artistic preferences may have deviated from his brother, preferring the idealized realism of von Werner c.s. instead and thematising the dynasty and the military, this should not be a reason to dismiss his capacity to utilize the arts for his reign. Rather, and given the extent of his projects, there are good reason to argue that William's use of the arts for political purposes was but a timely adaption of his brother's approach to the monarchy as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.⁵⁹⁶ Seen in this manner, with his politics of history William was the opposite of a transitional figure or even of little importance in the history of the Hohenzollern dynasty as it made the change from Prussian kings to German Emperors; instead, he was a key figure in making politics of history a key instrument for the Hohenzollern dynasty for its monarchical role.

In addition, this chapter has demonstrated how William fits within a broader European context and that of his political generation with his politics of history. The problem William faced in the 1850s – how to represent himself as the epitome of his monarchy and nation – was one which other members of his

⁵⁹⁵ Müller, *Our Fritz*, 139-148; Müller, 'The Prince, the crypt'.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. Barclay, *Frederick William IV*; Barclay, 'Monarchische Projekt'.

political generation, such as Maximilian II of Bavaria and Nicholas I of Russia also faced. Starting in the 1850s, William formulated an answer via his politics of history, starting with his authorized biographies. But because William ascended the throne as the last of his political generation, whilst still sharing their outlook – the monarch as the epitome of their particularistic nation – could persist, even after William became German Emperor. William’s adherence to his Prussian role and his underlining of the role of the Prussian monarchy via his politics of history was as much an expression of his Borussian interpretation of Prussian-German history as it was of his particularistic outlook that became integral part of his role since the 1850s. This temporal disjunction explains why, next to William’s Borussianism, projects such as the Victory Column and the arsenal could be met with criticism from newspapers and political parties in the 1870s. William’s politics of history also demonstrated to which extent the transnational network of monarchs of which he was part, served to exchange political practices which individual rulers could appropriate for their own realm. The manner in which William drew on his memory of the Alexandrine Column for ‘his’ Victory Column and the examples of the gallery in Versailles and the arsenal in Vienna for the Berlin arsenal demonstrate this to have been an intrinsic part of how William forged his politics of history.

It is imperative to recognize that William’s efforts served distinct political purposes. Taken as a whole, the examples of William’s politics of history contained a multitude of strategies of legitimization. This argument goes against literature that has associated William’s politics of history primarily with a Borussian interpretation of Prussian-German history.⁵⁹⁷ Ironically, this association of William with a teleological interpretation of history has itself led to teleological understandings of intentions with his politics of history. Instead, this chapter has demonstrated that William’s politics of history was in fact sophisticatedly constituted by a multitude of strategies of legitimization. In particular his authorized biographies, with their careful descriptions of the bond between William and his parents, his adherence to the strong, executive constitutional role and his efforts for the social question all served to cultivate lower and middle-class values and preoccupations. Taken as a whole, the growing emphasis on historical agency evident in William’s politics of history served to cultivate Imperial Germany’s ‘cult of heroes’ (Jefferies).⁵⁹⁸ Perhaps most important of all, this helped William to offer counterweight to other, competing centres of political and military gravity by presenting himself as a strong and active political actor. The examples of Schneider’s biographies have demonstrated that these were in effect a continuation of his wartime efforts to emphasize William’s active role as a military monarch. In similar fashion, William’s attempts to alter Berlin’s political topography served to give an impressive demonstration of the monarchical-military political order.

The critical reception of the Borussian character of the Victory Column and the arsenal in the 1870s seems to suggest that William’s politics of history did

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 113-119.

⁵⁹⁸ Jefferies, *Imperial culture*, 89-90.

little to address the fragmented German polity. Indeed, as Bismarck's corrections to the *Urkunde* for the Victory Column make clear, there were good reasons to be critical about William's explicit Borussianism. However, the biographies he authorized in the 1870s and 1880s indicate that a change did take place in the manner in which he carried out his Imperial role from the late 1870s onwards. His insistence to Meding that he write that von Werner's 1877 painting of the proclamation of the German Empire was given to him by the other German princes and that it be mentioned that they visited him for his silver jubilee in 1886, suggests that from the late 1870s onwards William departed the solely Borussian perspective and instead began to forward a more dynastic-federal approach to his Imperial role.

IV. William and the German Empire

Introduction

Between 7 and 11 December 1886 William received the Bavarian regent Prince Luitpold for an official visit to Berlin. The visit was part of several visits to German courts by Luitpold after becoming regent and would be followed by a trip to Dresden. The Berlin court had done its best to receive Luitpold with ‘allen königlichen Ehren’ according to Lucius von Ballhausen.⁵⁹⁹ Despite the bad weather, the 89 years old Emperor received Luitpold personally at the train station, dressed in Bavarian uniform and wearing a *Raupenhelm*.⁶⁰⁰ Luitpold’s visit included a visit to the *Ruhmeshalle*, despite the arsenal serving to glorify the role of the Prussian monarchy and army in Prussian and German history.⁶⁰¹ On the day of his departure, Luitpold was received by William and Augusta at the Crown Prince’s palace, from where the Emperor escorted Luitpold to the *Anhalter Bahnhof* for his departure to Dresden. Those present at the platform included the Crown Prince, the Bavarian envoy count von Lerchenfeld, numerous Bavarian officers and members of the Reichstag and the governor and police president of Berlin.⁶⁰² The Berlin-based *Vossische Zeitung* noted that the visit signalled the closer union between northern and southern Germany after personal tensions between the two dynasties had been overcome.⁶⁰³ The Bavarian *Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote that the warm reception of Luitpold by William demonstrated to the world the solidarity between the two dynasties which would live together in the German nation.⁶⁰⁴

The encounter between William and Luitpold suggests that William’s adherence to his Prussian role was compatible with his function of German Emperor, if a dynastic federalism complemented this. Unfortunately, historians have paid little attention to William’s conception of the Empire and his role and how he put it into practice. One reason is that both contemporaries and historians have judged that William’s Prussian-particularistic stance was incongruent with his role as head of the German nation-state. Grand Duke Frederick of Baden wrote as late as 23 January 1887 that ‘ich fasse das, was ich meine, in die kurzen Worte zusammen: - nach 16 Jahren feiert der deutsche Kaiser am 18. Januar nur das preußische Ordensfest des Schwarzen Adler!’⁶⁰⁵ Clark has argued that Bismarck ‘retard[ed] the expansion of the Prussian throne into its Imperial role’ and that William ‘essentially remained a Prussian king until his death.’⁶⁰⁶ What

⁵⁹⁹ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 359.

⁶⁰⁰ *Allgemeine Zeitung / Augsburgs Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 December 1886.

⁶⁰¹ Arndt, *Ruhmeshalle*, 21-37; Müller, *Zeughaus. Arsenal zum Museum*, 127-136.; Müller, *Zeughaus. Baugeschichte*, 161-206.

⁶⁰² *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 10 December 1886, evening edition.

⁶⁰³ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 7 December 1886, evening edition.

⁶⁰⁴ *Allgemeine Zeitung / Augsburgs Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12 December 1886.

⁶⁰⁵ Fuchs ed., *Reichspolitik II*, 459.

⁶⁰⁶ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 588.

contemporaries and historians thus struggled with, sometimes in a normative rather than historical sense, was what Theodor Schieder has called the discrepancy between the national-democratic and the national-monarchical characteristics of the German Empire under William I.⁶⁰⁷ This argument was aggravated when William I was compared in retrospective with William II, who upon his accession developed more actively an Imperial, national-German persona.⁶⁰⁸ However, historians often overlook that the exact form the Imperial role had to take was, before 1871, highly disputed and several varieties circulated, as Elisabeth Fehrenbach has demonstrated.⁶⁰⁹ The question then is not so much how William should have fulfilled his role, but rather why and how he constructed his Imperial office in accordance with his understanding of his office and the state of German nationhood in the 1870s and 1880s.

To answer this question, this chapter argues for a paradox: William's particularistic Prussian conception served him well as German Emperor given the composite state of German nationhood after 1871. This was the result of state-building efforts by German monarchs in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. As Hanisch and Green have demonstrated for the monarchs of Bavaria and Hannover, Saxony and Württemberg respectively, state-building in the form of museums, the fostering of a particularistic *Geschichtskultur* and a monarchical representation of the dynasties as embodiments of their states meant that German nationhood became highly composite.⁶¹⁰ William fitted temporally and generationally in this model: since the 1850s William likewise used a monarchical politics of history to present himself as military-monarchical embodiment of the Prussian state. Hence, William's Prussian conception was less incongruent with his Imperial role when the state of German nationhood in 1871 and William's own generational belonging are considered. What it required was the complementary form of dynastic federalism that recognized the 'monarchical-federalism' of the German Empire.⁶¹¹ Engelberg has rightfully characterized William as 'preußisch-Hohenzollersches Staatsbewußtsein, das sich in legitimistischer Solidarität mit anderen Dynastien zu verbinden suchte, erfüllte ihn'.⁶¹² Indeed, William had written to Augusta on 12 December 1870 that 'so lange die Fürsten Deutschlands als Souveraine existieren, kann es ja nur ein Föderationstaat sein also nur eine

⁶⁰⁷ Theodor Schieder, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat* (Göttingen 1992) 86.

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 589.

⁶⁰⁹ Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen des deutschen Kaisergedankens 1871-1918* (Munich 1969) 14-88, 221-230.

⁶¹⁰ Hanisch, *Für Fürst und Vaterland*; Hanisch, 'Nationalisierung der Dynastien'; Green, *Fatherlands*.

⁶¹¹ Frank Lorenz Müller, 'The German monarchies' in: Matthew Jefferies ed., *The Ashgate research companion to Imperial Germany* (Farnham 2015) 55-73, there 56-58. Hagen Schulze has made a similar argument with regards to Anton von Werner's depiction of the proclamation of the German Empire. According to Schulze, this showed that 'it was not Wilhelm I who was the ruler of the German Empire, but the 18 governing princes embodied in the Federal Council. It was an oligarchy not a monarchy, a victory for the principle of federalism over the idea of a united state.' Hagen Schulze, 'Foreword' in: Maiken Umbach ed., *German federalism. Past, present, future* (Basingstoke 2002) vii-xii, there x.

⁶¹² Engelberg, *Bismarck. Reich*, 509.

föderative Verfassung geben.⁶¹³ This realistic recognition meant that William's conception of his Imperial role could build upon the persistence the dynastic-federal and federal-national tradition of the Holy Roman Empire that Langewiesche pointed at.⁶¹⁴ William's conception was thus in accordance with the nature of the German Empire that was both 'föderalistisch und preußisch-hegemonial'.⁶¹⁵ Importantly, this conception permitted William to offer a competing understanding of the political nation, allowing him to nationalize the monarchy by presenting it as the apex of a dynastic-federal and monarchical nation.

To put this conception into practice, William drew on two practices of representation: travel in different forms and large-scale events, which could be reinterpreted by him to befit his understanding of his role and the German Empire. Both can be understood as more or less elaborate forms of political ceremonial, when political ceremonial is defined as a performative act that reduces political power structures into consumable symbolic acts and is communicated as such.⁶¹⁶ Chapter V will look at how political ceremonial was used to communicate William's understanding of his role and the German Empire in the new capital Berlin. This chapter will look at how William drew on travel and large-scale events in parts of the German Empire beyond the Prussian heartland, such as the Rhineland, Saxony, Bavaria, Alsace-Lorraine and Baden. These offer case studies to see how William addressed some of the regional, confessional, gender and urban-rural divide that are seen characteristic of Imperial Germany.⁶¹⁷ William's conduct in this sense has received little scholarly attention. Geithövel has demonstrated how William's annual visits to spas made him an 'approachable ruler'.⁶¹⁸ Jakob Vogel has offered indications how William aligned his Imperial role with the annual military manoeuvres.⁶¹⁹ Gaby Huch has provided an important edition of sources of the travel practices of Hohenzollern monarchs in the 1797-1871 period, demonstrating the different forms used and political order that it sought to convey.⁶²⁰ This chapter builds on these works by demonstrating how these various forms of travel and events were used after 1871 as part of William's monarchical political agency. The chapter proceeds in two steps: the first section

⁶¹³ GSStA PK. BPH. Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Band 15 – 1870. Bl. 222-223, William to Augusta, 12 December 1870.

⁶¹⁴ Dieter Langewiesche, 'Föderativer Nationalismus als Erbe der deutschen Reichsnation. Über Föderalismus und Zentralismus in der deutschen Nationalgeschichte', in: Dieter Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat in Deutschland und Europa* (Munich 2000) 55-79.

⁶¹⁵ Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* II, 97.

⁶¹⁶ Andreas Biefang, Michael Epkenhans and Klaus Tenfelde, 'Das politische Zeremoniell im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1870-1918. Zur Einführung' in: Andreas Biefang, Michael Epkenhans and Klaus Tenfelde, eds., *Das politische Zeremoniell im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Düsseldorf 2008) 11-28, there 18.

⁶¹⁷ Jefferies, *Imperial culture*, 12-25.

⁶¹⁸ Geithövel, 'Nahbare Herrscher'.

⁶¹⁹ Jakob Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt. Der Kult der >Nation im Waffen< in Deutschland Frankreich 1871-1914* (Göttingen 1997).

⁶²⁰ Gaby Huch ed., *Zwischen Ehrenpforte und Inkognito: Preußische Könige auf Reisen. Quellen zur Repräsentation der Monarchie zwischen 1797 und 1871* (two vols.; Berlin 2016).

discusses William's various forms of travel. The second section discusses how William used large-scale events for his own political purposes.

William's travels

Travelling offered William the chance to present his Imperial persona to other parts of the German Empire and make this practice part of his political toolkit. Historians have been reluctant to recognize William's travel practices. Clark has claimed that William 'seldom journeyed outside the territory of his kingdom'.⁶²¹ Angelow has suggested that William's rhythm was only interrupted by the autumn manoeuvres and the 'obligatory spas'.⁶²² These claims don't hold up when scrutinized by the sources. When William became German Emperor, he had long since established an annual rhythm of travelling that changed little at first. In May he held troop inspections in Berlin, followed by a spa of three weeks in Bad Ems and a stay of several days in Koblenz, after which he travelled to Wiesbaden or Homburg. Next, he would travel to Mainau, seeing his daughter, Grand Duchess Luise of Baden. Hereafter came a spa in Bad Gastein, where William frequently met Francis Joseph of Austria. After an August stay in his Babelsberg residence, William used September for the annual military manoeuvres, which from 1876 onwards included the inspection of one or two army corps outside Prussia and in a different region each year. Until mid-October, the Emperor resided in Baden with his daughter Luise, after which the return to Berlin followed. November was used for hunting parties, while the winter was spent in Berlin. From the mid-1870s a stay of two weeks in April in Wiesbaden was made part of the annual rhythm.⁶²³ William took officials from his civil and military cabinet with him during these travels, allowing him to remain part of the governmental decision-making process. In this manner, his annual travel rhythm provided a spatial and temporal framework with which William could visit a considerable range of non-Prussian parts of the German Empire.

This rhythm served a purpose: through regular or incidental appearances across the German Empire, William increased his visibility to the new polity and projected himself as its political figurehead. After 1871, these travels served essentially to, as Clifford Geertz has argued, 'take symbolic possession of [his] realm', 'locating society's centre' and becoming the 'point (...) in a society where its leading ideas come together with its leading institutions'.⁶²⁴ This was important given the composite state of the German Empire, but also because of the rapid political, social and cultural changes in the 1870s and 1880s. According to Nipperdey the experience of an acceleration of time, individualization, a

⁶²¹ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 588.

⁶²² Angelow, 'Wilhelm I.', 262.

⁶²³ Börner, *Wilhelm I.*, 236-237; Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 168-169; Karl Hammer, 'Die preußischen Könige und Königinnen im 19. Jahrhundert und ihr Hof' in: Karl Ferdinand Werner ed., *Hof, Kultur und Politik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn 1985) 87-98, there 94-95; Bogdan Graf von Hutten-Czapski, *Sechzig Jahre Politik und Gesellschaft I* (Berlin 1936) 37.

⁶²⁴ Clifford Geertz, 'Centers, kings, and charisma: reflections on the symbolics of power' in: Sean Wilentz ed., *Rites of power: symbolism, ritual, and politics since the middle ages* (Philadelphia 1985) 13-39, there 14, 16.

multiplying of private of private and public roles for the individual German and an increasing number of collectives to which he or she belonged. This resulted in a pluralisation of social relations, roles and milieus. Nipperdey sees in this partly the reason why Germany never developed a cultural *Gesamthabitus*, notwithstanding that the political sphere was the one sphere which transcended all other private and public spheres and provided meaning, regardless of class, to everyday life.⁶²⁵ William's annual rhythm worked as a counterpoint to these developments. It made him a stabilizing and stable figure with which all parts of the German Empire could identify and enabling him in turn to elevate his authority. This in part explains his gradually growing popularity, but also how he differed from his grandson William II, whose restlessness prevented exactly such an identification.⁶²⁶

The German nation state was essentially an Empire of monarchies, functioning as a framework in which inner-German monarchical encounters were staged. Paulmann has described how as monarchical nation states became the dominant actors in international relations, the encounters between monarchs required symbolic acts and ceremonial to recognize the other's sovereignty.⁶²⁷ Paulmann's arguments can be extended to inner-German state and monarchical encounters as well because of the Empire's dynastic-federal nature and William's conception of his Imperial role. This can be illustrated by William's 1872 visit to Dresden for the golden wedding anniversary of the Saxon King and Queen. The anniversary offered the Saxon royal couple the opportunity to balance particularistic sovereignty with dynastic-federal solidarity, as had been King Johann's policy of deference towards Prussia since 1866.⁶²⁸

William's travel to Dresden was organized in such a manner that it clearly signalled the recognition of Saxon sovereignty within the framework of the German Empire through a series of symbolic acts. Arrangements for the travel came with specific instructions. No train stops for William would be made during the train travel on Prussian territory.⁶²⁹ At Röderau, the first station on Saxon territory, the train would stop to take on board the Prussian envoy to the Saxon court, von Eichmann, who would accompany William to Dresden.⁶³⁰ The stop also allowed officers who would perform the *Ehrendienst* for William to come on board the train. For William, the officers to perform the *Ehrendienst* included a Saxon cavalry general who was decorated with the Prussian Order of the Red Eagle and a colonel from the 2nd Saxon Grenadier regiment No. 101 'Kaiser

⁶²⁵ Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918* I, 188-191.

⁶²⁶ Cf. Pyta, *Hindenburg*, 84.

⁶²⁷ Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*.

⁶²⁸ James Retallack, 'King Johann of Saxony and the German Civil War of 1866' in: James Retallack, *Germany's second Reich. Portraits and pathways* (Toronto 2015) 107-137, there 127-128.

⁶²⁹ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. Oberhofmarschallamt. No. 637. Einzelne Reisen der Könige und der Königliche Familie, Bd. 54. 1872-1873. Bl. 287 'Reise Ihrer Kaiserlichen und Königlichen Majestäten nach Dresden 1872'.

⁶³⁰ Ibidem, Bl. 272. Von Eichmann to von Pückler, 5 November 1872; Bl. 275. Von Pückler to von Eichmann, 6 November 1872.

Wilhelm, König von Preußen'.⁶³¹ Paulmann has argued that the crossing of the border by a visiting monarch and its subsequent ceremonial worked as a ritual that transformed the situation of the 'intruding' ruler into one of friendship.⁶³² The protocol surrounding William's crossing of the Prussian-Saxon border served this purpose. By abstaining from any ceremonial before crossing the border, William deferred to Saxony as the receiving party, whilst the assignment of officers performing the *Ehrendienst* served as a mutual recognition of the dynastic-federal nature of the German Empire. As such, they must be understood as genuine, inner-German political gestures and differ in this sense from officers performing the *Ehrendienst* on the international stage, who mainly served for providing company and arranging practical matters.⁶³³

These symbolic welcoming acts were perpetuated for William's arrival in Dresden. Accompanied by Augusta and Frederick William, William was received at Dresden's *Leipziger Bahnhof* by King Johann, members of the Saxon dynasty, Saxon cabinet ministers and the Prussian envoy. Both monarchs wore uniforms of regiments of each other's state. William wore the uniform of his Saxon guard grenadier-regiment 'Kaiser Wilhelm' with the Saxon Heinrich-Order, while King Johann wore the uniform of his East-Prussian Grenadier-regiment with the order of the Black Eagle.⁶³⁴ Following the greetings, William and Johann passed through the station's royal salon to the station's forecourt, where William inspected the troops of the same regiment. Hereafter followed the tour through the decorated city to the palace.⁶³⁵

William's understanding of his role as presiding over a monarchical-federal Empire influenced both these receptions as well as his place in the celebrations for the Saxon royal couple. At William's insistence, no grand reception was organized by the city. Initially, plans had existed to this extent, including the construction of triumphal arches and stands for local officials.⁶³⁶ But the Berlin court informed Dresden mayor Pfotenhauer that such a reception was rejected by William, who was of the opinion that – it quoted him in the letter – 'da bei dem gedachten festlichen Anlass sich alles um das goldene Jubelpaar gruppieren wurde.'⁶³⁷ William wrote to Augusta that 'Der König von Sachsen findet es ganz natürlich daß wir nicht zum Ball bleiben wollen. Die Stadt wollte uns kaiserlich empfangen, was ich bestimmt wegen dieser Veranlassung ablehnte.'⁶³⁸ This stance was reiterated at the church service for King Johann and his wife. The Saxon royal couple took place in front of an altar under a specially constructed Baldachin. Behind them sat William, Augusta and Frederick William and the protestant princes of the German Empire, while the Catholic Princes sat to

⁶³¹ Ibidem, 255. Von Eichmann to unknown, 2 November 1872.

⁶³² Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik*, 221.

⁶³³ Ibidem, 222-223.

⁶³⁴ *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 10 November 1872.

⁶³⁵ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 10 November 1872.

⁶³⁶ Stadtarchiv Dresden 2.1-G.XXVIII.39. Die Anwesenheit Seiner Majestät des Deutschen Kaisers in Dresden. Vol. I. 1872 und 1882. Bl. 3. Unknown to the Stadtbauamt, 15 October 1872.

⁶³⁷ Ibidem, Bl. 9. Kammeritz to Pfatenhauer, 25 October 1872.

⁶³⁸ GStA PK BPH Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Band 17 – 1872. Bl. 129, William to Augusta, 25 October 1872.

the left of the altar. Only at the procession did the two confessional sides merge, headed by William, who symbolically lead the procession of German princes behind the Saxon royal couple. Although closed off to the public, the court did appeal to it by the detailed reports in the press and illustrations in the illustrated press.⁶³⁹

This form would be repeated ten years later, when William visited Dresden ahead of attending the manoeuvres in Saxony. As in 1872, particular attention was paid to the *Ehrendienst*, with officers again being selected from the 2nd Grenadier regiment No. 101 'Kaiser William, König von Preussen'.⁶⁴⁰ William ensured that the time of his arrival would correspond with the Saxon King.⁶⁴¹ He was received by the Saxon King and Queen, the ministers, diplomatic corps, heads of the military, the Prussian envoy and heads of the civil services. Parliamentary representatives were not present. Hereafter William, together with King Albert, inspected the 1. Grenadier regiment.⁶⁴² Unlike during his 1872 visit, William was prepared in 1882 to let the city of Dresden stage a grand reception ceremony for him as German Emperor. When Dresden mayor Stübel discussed his proposals with the Saxon court, he was informed that 'zwar das Programm denselben der Genehmigung des Kaisers noch zu unterstellen sei, daß aber den bereits gemachten Vorschlägen kein Bedenken entgegensetze'.⁶⁴³ Decorations in the city included Saxon and German coats of arms, as well as a large W and A at the façade of the local Hotel Bellevue.⁶⁴⁴ Next to such expressions of dynastic-federalism, William's agreement to a grand reception at Dresden's Albert Square made his changing attitude towards his Imperial role tangible. Consequently, at the square stands were constructed for the chosen groups to attend the ceremony and men and women were kept separate. Carefully placed at the stands and the approach road were societies that considered as the supporting groups of the political order, such as *Militärvereine* and teachers. Upon William's approach a choir of 3.000 children would sing 'So sei begrüßt viel tausendmal unseres Reiches Krone'. Stübel would give an address, after which followed three cheers for William as Emperor.⁶⁴⁵ The visit was a great success. The British envoy in Saxony, George Strachey, wrote back to London that 'the reception of the Emperor William by all classes, was from first to last, of a nature to satisfy any sovereign, however exorbitant of popularity, testifying, on the part of the people of Saxony, to a profound attachment to the venerable head of the Empire'.⁶⁴⁶

⁶³⁹ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 12 November 1872; *Illustrirte Zeitung*, 30 November 1872.

⁶⁴⁰ Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden. 10006 Oberhofmarschallamt. No. Nachtrag 37. Bl. 122. Von Frabrice to the Royal General Command, 9 September 1882; Bl. 127. Von Fabrice to the Court Marshal, 8 September 1882; Bl. 128. List.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibidem*, Bl. 73. Von Pückler to von Kommeritz, 17 August 1882; Bl. 74r. Von Kommeritz to von Pückler, 21 August 1882.

⁶⁴² *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 15 September 1882.

⁶⁴³ Stadtarchiv Dresden 2.1-G.XXVIII.39. Bl. 8. Stübel to unknown, 31 July 1882.

⁶⁴⁴ *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 18 September 1882.

⁶⁴⁵ Stadtarchiv Dresden. Inv. No. 2.1-G.XXVIII.39. Bl. 43. Programm bei Empfang Sr. Majestät des Kaisers Wilhelm Seitens der Stadt Dresden am 14. September 1882.

⁶⁴⁶ Mösslang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 384.

William's 1882 visit was the result of the practice that since 1876 one or two army corps outside Prussia would be made part of the annual military manoeuvres. William developed these manoeuvres in the 1860s and continued them unaltered after the founding of the German Empire. Because of the geographical spreading of the army corps eventually all regions of Germany would be visited.⁶⁴⁷ William's attendance at these manoeuvres did not come from his Imperial office, but from his role as supreme warlord. This gave him the right to inspect the federal troops as part of his exercise of the *Bundespräsidium*. Vogel has argued that this did not prevent a cult emerging around William, given that he was the central figure of the event who inspected the troops, oversaw their parade and addressed them afterwards. He embodied the unity of the German Empire and the press designated the manoeuvres as Imperial manoeuvres. However, this should not obscure the fact that from William's perspective, the manoeuvres were also an exercise in dynastic federalism and monarchical order. Vogel has acknowledged this, by pointing out that as the practical use of the manoeuvres faded, its purpose became more ritual for legitimizing the political and social order and stimulate the national integration of society.⁶⁴⁸ In particular as Sedan Day never developed into a proper holiday – William refused to stimulate a top-down approach and left it to the individual states instead – and because of William's personal interest in the event, the military manoeuvres evolved into a more important celebration of the nation.⁶⁴⁹ Vogel has detailed that regional differences remained visible during the manoeuvres, but the Prussian element remained dominant. Its ceremonial was based on Prussian regulations, while the Emperor was Prussian king. Normally, William would wear a Prussian uniform upon arrival in a German state. But to acknowledge the state he would visit, he would also wear the respective orders and medals of this state.⁶⁵⁰

Why the manoeuvres were held outside Prussia from 1876 onwards remains unclear from Vogel's account. But Baumgart's recent edition of Frederick William's diaries provides an explanation. On 19 February 1876, Frederick

⁶⁴⁷ See for a listing of the army corps Curt Jany, *Geschichte der Preußischen Armee vom 15. Jahrhundert bis 1914 IV Die Königliche Preußische Armee und das Deutsche Reichsheer 1807 bis 1914* (Reprint; Osnabrück 1967) 268-269.

⁶⁴⁸ Interestingly, William's court was aware too of this development. Writing from Stuttgart during the 1885 manoeuvres back to Berlin, Kanzki, a court official stated that 'Der Kaiser ist prächtig frisch u. sah ein schönes Manöverbild, freilich auch ein solches, wie es in der Wirklichkeit nicht vorkommen kann.' GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 402. Manöver des III., XIV. und XIII. Armeekorps. 1885. Bl. 229. Kanzki to unknown, 23 September 1885.

⁶⁴⁹ Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt*, 29-47. See for William's refusal to instate a Sedan Day: Schieder, *Kaiserreich als Nationalstaat*, 85; Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 455; Alon Confino, *The nation as a local metaphor. Württemberg, Imperial Germany and national memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill 1997) 30-31; Simone Dannenfeld, 'Die Institutionalisierung des Sedantags. Symbolisierung eines auf Dauer gestellten Differenzbewusstseins' in: Winfried Müller ed., *Das historische Jubiläum. Genese, Ordnungsleistung und Inszenierungsgeschichte eines institutionellen Mechanismus* (Münster 2004) 269-289, there 271-272; Ute Schneider, 'Nationalfeste ohne politisches Zeremoniell? Der Sedantag (2. September) und die Erinnerung an die Befreiungskriege (18. Oktober) im Kaiserreich' in: Andreas Biefang, Michael Epkenhans and Klaus Tenfelde, eds., *Das politische Zeremoniell im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Düsseldorf 2008) 163-187, there 167.

⁶⁵⁰ Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt*, 49-56.

William had spoken with Albedyll, on Saxony's relation with William and both expressed concern over the little consideration William paid to the other German princes.⁶⁵¹ These concerns came at a time when the Victory Column in Berlin had recently been completed and the reconstruction of the arsenal was about to get underway. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, both these projects were marked by a Borussian stance that would not have necessarily met with approval from the other German states. Notably then, the decision was made to hold part of the manoeuvres in other German states in turn. Opting for Saxony was not done just for dynastic-federal considerations. By holding the manoeuvres near Leipzig, it could refer to the memory of the Napoleonic Wars and thus have an integrating appeal, as Fehrenbach has suggested.⁶⁵² William's further conduct at the manoeuvres makes clear that he accepted this alteration and integrated it into his Imperial role.

This study confirms Vogel's arguments that the manoeuvres also served as an exercise in dynastic federalism. This is illustrated by the manoeuvres held in Saxony and visits to Leipzig and Dresden in 1876 and 1882. Ahead of the 1876 manoeuvres William had announced that as a guest of the King of Saxony, he would accept with a military entourage consisting mostly of Saxon officers.⁶⁵³ In addition, William left it to the Saxon host to invite other German princes.⁶⁵⁴ William also had enquired whether or not he and King Albert of Saxony would arrive on the same day in Merseburg for the manoeuvres.⁶⁵⁵ Beyond practical implications, such gestures also served to suggest an equality between the two monarchs within the framework of the German Empire. Ahead of his arrival in Merseburg, William requested that members of the *Provinzialausschuss* and heads of the civil service would be present, whereas members of the provincial diet would be greeted by William two days later.⁶⁵⁶ During the manoeuvres, William wore a Prussian uniform, but with the Saxon military order of St. Heinrich, to which was added a star and green wreath in enamel, given to him by King Johann in 1870 and which, at the latter's request, was never to be issued again.⁶⁵⁷ At the manoeuvres, William would ride past the troops and then position himself in front of the stands, after which the parade commenced. King Albert opened by leading the entire Saxon army corps in front of William. In return, William led, accompanied by Frederick William, the 2nd grenadier regiment No. 101. 'Kaiser William' in front of King Albert, with drawn swords.⁶⁵⁸ Holding the manoeuvres

⁶⁵¹ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 225.

⁶⁵² Elisabeth Fehrenbach, 'Otto von Bismarck und die politische Kultur im Deutschen Reich' in: Lothar Gall ed., *Otto von Bismarck und die Parteien* (Paderborn 2001) 1-16, there 3.

⁶⁵³ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 367. Manöver des IV. und XII. Armeekorps, Bd. 1. 1876. Bl. 1, Pückler to Albedyll, 21 August 1876.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibidem, Bl. 42. Perponcher to Egcoffstein, 22 June 1876.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibidem, Bl. 117. Pückler to Konnitz, 26 August 1876.

⁶⁵⁶ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. Oberhofmarschallamt. No. 368. Manöver des IV. und XII. Armeekorps, Bd. 2. 1876. Bl. 55. Pückler to 30 August 1876.

⁶⁵⁷ *Neue Preußische Zeitung – Kreuzzeitung*, 8 September 1876. Cf. *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 16 September 1882.

⁶⁵⁸ *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 8 September 1876.

near Leipzig allowed for referring to the battle there in 1813. Upon his arrival there, and in reply to a speech by the mayor Georgi, he spoke: 'Ich freue mich, in einer Stadt zu verweilen, die so reich an großen Erinnerungen ist und diese Erinnerungen stets an Ereignisse knüpfen kann, die für Deutschland entscheidend wurden.'⁶⁵⁹ This conception of his Imperial role had success for William. Strachey wrote back to London that 'they noticed that the Emperor, if I may say, did not bring the Empire with him to Leipsic. Not a word or a movement suggested the existence of any relation between himself and his royal host but that of equal sovereignty.'⁶⁶⁰

Military manoeuvres could also be used for oblique political expediency. Because of the geographical spread of the army corps, the regions visited were usually large areas and manoeuvres were held near large cities. These could then be visited to raise the profile of these events and generate support for William and the political order he represented. The 1884 manoeuvres demonstrate this. Up for inspection were the VII and VIII army corps, located in Westphalia and the Rhineland respectively. On 11 May 1884, the commanding general in Münster had written to the Minister of War, pointing out that a visit by William to Münster would be met with great enthusiasm.⁶⁶¹ Bismarck requested the following day that William reroute his travel to visit Münster. A visit to the capital of Westphalia would be politically expedient as the elections for the Reichstag were ahead. William's presence in Münster would raise support among the rural population which had been in the army or had been in touch with it and identified William with the army. This would also help any notions of dissatisfaction among the Catholic nobility and bourgeoisie with William. In any case, the support of the rural population through William's presence would overrule any discord.⁶⁶² Such dissonance and Bismarck's wish to have William visit Münster ahead of the elections is likely to have been caused by the return of Bishop Johann Bernhard Brinkmann of Münster. Brinkmann had been deposed from his position in Münster during the Culture Wars and had gone into exile. Upon the winding down of the Culture Wars, Brinkmann was permitted to return, with his pardon approved by Bismarck on 12 January 1884.⁶⁶³ The State Ministry ordered the local authorities to ignore the festivities for the return of Brinkmann.⁶⁶⁴ For Bismarck, and by implication William, there was political utility of having William visit Münster; he could counter support for the Catholic church and Brinkmann, generate support for the conservative cause in the upcoming elections and have William represent the monarchical political nation.

William and his court agreed with this course and accordingly organized the stop in Münster. William agreed to participate in any festive ceremonial for

⁶⁵⁹ *Dresdner Nachrichten*, 8 September 1876.

⁶⁶⁰ Mösslang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 312.

⁶⁶¹ Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde. R43 Reichskanzlei. 1469. Reisen des Kaisers. Bd. 1. Mai 1880 – Nov. 1887. Bl. 102. Witzendorff to unspecified [Minister of War], 11 May 1884.

⁶⁶² Lappenküper ed., *Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke* III/VI, 158.

⁶⁶³ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle* VII, 143.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, 146-147.

his visit, though not without having seen the programme, whilst Court Marshal Perponcher urged that a dinner be organized, so that William would not be fatigued.⁶⁶⁵ To this William subsequently agreed.⁶⁶⁶ When the Catholic nobility of Westphalia, led by the Duke of Croy, requested an audience in order to offer an address and thank him for the return of Brinkmann, it was met by rejection from William and the court after consultation with Bismarck.⁶⁶⁷ This effectively excluded the deputies of the Catholic nobility and ensured that during the actual visit popular attention would be direct to William and his officials as the representatives of the monarchical nation. The dinner would subsequently take place on the 24 September, after William was received at the train station by the commanding general, the mayor and the governor of Westphalia.⁶⁶⁸ Upon his departure, he expressed to the governor of Westphalia that he was deeply moved by the warm reception, a message that the governor had relayed to the local and regional newspapers *Westphälischen Merkurs*, *Münsterschen Anzeiger*, *Rheinisch-westphälischen Zeitung*, *Bielefelder Tageblatt* and the *Kölnische Zeitung*.⁶⁶⁹ This ensured that William's visit and comments would be communicated beyond those directly present, such as readers in rural areas.

William's visit to Münster suggests that travels as a means for projecting political order came with a considerable degree of adaptability. Given the composite state of the German Empire, this was imperative, in particular towards those parts of the Empire which were less cooperative with the Hohenzollern Imperial role. A case in point is Bavaria. Both Werner Blessing and Siegfried Weichlein have demonstrated how through a regional cult of jubilees, celebrations of rites of passage and festivals for the Bavarian monarchy, it was able to sustain itself especially in the early years of the German Empire, building also on the Bavarian monarchical nationalism previously fostered by Maximilian II.⁶⁷⁰ This meant that in presenting himself in Bavaria, William had to acknowledge the Bavarian *Sonderstellung* in the Empire actively.

William did so with varying symbolic and personal gestures during his reign as German Emperor. On 5 June 1871, the Prussian cabinet debated William's proposal to hand out four million *Thaler* to generals from southern Germany. The State Ministry deemed this politically useful and to express the gratitude of the nation.⁶⁷¹ Shortly thereafter, William sent Frederick William south to serve as his

⁶⁶⁵ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 113. Oberhofmarschallamt. No. 401. Manöver des VII. und VIII. Armeekorps, Bd. 5. 1884. Bl. 26. Perponcher to Bodelschwingh, 22 May 1884.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibidem, Bl. 31. Perponcher to Bodelschwingh, undated.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibidem, Bl. 89. Duke of Croy to Pückler, 1 September 1884; Ibidem Bl. 90. Text of the address; ibidem, Bl. 93. Perponcher to the Duke of Croy, 3. September 1884; ibidem, Bl. 94. Wilmowski to Perponcher, 12 September 1884.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibidem, Bl. 67. Programm der Reisen Ihrer Kaiserlichen und Königlichen Majestäten im September 1884.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibidem, Bl. 102. *Bekanntmachung*, 22 September 1884.

⁶⁷⁰ Blessing, 'Monarchische Kult'; Siegfried Weichlein, *Nation und Region. Integrationsprozesse im Bismarckreich* (Düsseldorf 2004) 355-363; Hanisch, *Für Fürst und Vaterland*; Hanisch, 'Nationalisierung der Dynastien'.

⁶⁷¹ Paetau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI/I*, 240. The proposal was turned into law. Cf. ditto fn. 2.

personal representative at the victory parade in Munich next to king Ludwig II.⁶⁷² When military manoeuvres were held in Bavaria, William relinquished his role and ordered Frederick William to be his representative instead, who stood next to the Bavarian King.⁶⁷³ In this manner, Frederick William served as a substitute for his Imperial father, without necessarily compromising Ludwig II's position through William's presence. However, such encounters could not be avoided at every occasion. Upon William's first return from Bad Gastein to Berlin after becoming German Emperor, William stopped, as was custom well before 1871, in Munich to be received by King Ludwig II for a dinner at the train station. Though William organized a dinner in subsequent years, Ludwig no longer appeared, so that a stop in Rosenheim was organized instead. Such strained relations were not limited to the Bavarian King. The later prince regent Luitpold's son, prince Ludwig, a vehement critic of German unification and Prussia, refused for many years to meet William upon his travel through Lindau.⁶⁷⁴ In later years, Ludwig sent for his personal carriage, to prevent William having to walk long ends at the stop. Only through Ludwig's attendance at the military manoeuvres in 1886 in Alsace Lorraine was he fully captivated by William's persona, who subsequently gave him an infantry regiment and invited him to hunting parties, an invitation that Ludwig duly accepted.⁶⁷⁵

The problem became more pressing when William's presence in Bavaria was actively sought for. This happened in 1876, when William was invited to attend the first performance of Richard Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen*. Wagner had conceived the event as, and was seen as, a profound national cultural event and the largest of its kind in the 1870s.⁶⁷⁶ This was also made clear by the list of attendees. Next to William, the Brazilian Emperor Dom Pedro II attended, as did two kings, the Grand Duke of Schwerin, Prussian princesses and Minister of the Prussian Royal House von Schleinitz, the Austrian foreign minister Julius Andrassy, the painters Anton von Werner, Hans Makart, Franz Lenbach, Heinrich von Angeli and Adolph von Menzel and the composers Anton Bruckner, Edvard Grieg, Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Franz Liszt. Martin Gregor-Dellin has described the event as a 'Fürstentag' because of the attending monarchs and princes.⁶⁷⁷ However, William and his court doubted until shortly before the performance that

⁶⁷² Müller, *Our Fritz*, 133; Blessing, 'Monarchische Kult', 189.

⁶⁷³ Vogel, *Nationen im Gleichschritt*, 47; Jakob Vogel, 'Nations in arms: military and commemorative festivals in Germany and France, 1871-1914' in: Karin Frederick ed., *Festive culture in Germany and Europe from the sixteenth to the twentieth century* (Lewiston 2000) 245-264, there 249.

⁶⁷⁴ The strained relationship between Ludwig and the Hohenzollern dynasty has also been recorded by the British envoy in Bavaria, Hugh Guion MacDonell, who reported on 17 December 1883 to Granville that 'Prince Ludwig is noted here for his strong ultramontane proclivities, and has moreover taken a prominent part as an autonomist, as such he has since 1871 studiously avoided meeting any member of The Imperial Family, and has made it a point to quit Munich whenever The Emperor or The Crown Prince have had occasion to visit, or pass through, this Capital.' Mösßlang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 528.

⁶⁷⁵ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 171-172.

⁶⁷⁶ Jefferies, *Imperial culture*, 123.

⁶⁷⁷ Martin Gregor-Dellin, *Richard Wagner. Sein Leben, sein Werk, sein Jahrhundert* (Munich 1980) 716-717.

he would be attending. At this early stage of the new German nation state, they were cautious not to trespass on Bavarian sovereignty by a high-profile attendance of William in Bayreuth. Eventually, a solution was found by having William arrive in his own train and dressed in civilian with frock coat and top hat, as were his courtiers, including officers such as the chief of his military cabinet, Emil von Albedyll. He was met by Wagner and his wife, a representative of King Ludwig and the mayor. A torch light parade was held in his honour in front of his residence. But William attended only *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, before travelling back to Potsdam.⁶⁷⁸ William's appearance at *Rheingold*, accompanied by the Grand Duke and Duchess of Baden and the Grand Duke of Saxony-Weimar was met by 'thunderous applause' according to von Werner.⁶⁷⁹ His appearance in civilian dress came as a surprise however, as did his departure during *Walküre*.⁶⁸⁰ Yet, this decision did help to temper the significance of his attendance and prevent trespassing Bavaria sovereignty.

The form and adaptability of William's visits discussed so far are not meant to suggest that these were of unambiguous nature; rather, this study argues that a polyfunctionality in these visits was the defining characteristic of these travels. This is shown by the visits William made to Konstanz and Mainau in the 1870s and 1880s. The stay in Konstanz and Mainau in July was introduced in 1874, serving as a pause for William on his way from Gastein to Ems.⁶⁸¹ At first sight, these travels were meant as a stay with his daughter. In practice, these travels served several purposes.

The reunion with his daughter in Konstanz and Mainau provided a chance to demonstrate bourgeois values of family happiness and time for recuperating. The former was especially important for William, whose unhappy marriage with Augusta was a public secret. Although Frederick William was often present at his father's official travels, especially at the manoeuvres, this could not conceal their strained relationship.⁶⁸² This left Luise, with whom a father-daughter dyad suggesting family bliss could be presented and her Baden family. This is shown by the public, but not necessarily formal, receptions of her father at either the Konstanz train station or at Mainau, even if Augusta joined William there in September.⁶⁸³ The latter form of bourgeois values was put on display by William appearing on several occasions in civilian dress, rather than uniform. This helped

⁶⁷⁸ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 16 August 1876.

⁶⁷⁹ Von Werner, *Erlebnisse*, 167.

⁶⁸⁰ Gregor-Dellin, *Wagner*, 718-720.

⁶⁸¹ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 171.

⁶⁸² Wilmowski has recorded a conversation with the Crown Prince in which he pointed this out with 'eine Szene nach der Tafel beim letzten Manöver, wo der Kaiser mit ihm [Crown Prince Frederick William, FFS] und einigen Generalen freundlich gesprochen; während letztere in derselben Weise darauf eingegangen, habe er stumm und in einer Haltung dabei gestanden, als wenn ein Gemeiner eine dienstliche Meldung zu machen hat.' Ibidem, 156.

⁶⁸³ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 12 September 1871; *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 11 July 1874; *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 13 July 1877; *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 12 July 1880; *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 18 July 1885; *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 15 July 1887.

to show the supposedly private character of the travel. Thus, the *Konstanzer Zeitung* described this in 1876 as such: ‘Der Kaiser sowohl als der Großherzog und die Herren des Gefolges waren in Zivil und trug der Empfang einen durchaus privaten Character’.⁶⁸⁴ This appearance helped to suggest that the visit was meant for the monarch as a means to recovering from his labour, a suggestion strengthened by the fact that the travel to Konstanz and Mainau was often but a stop between his spas in Ems and Gastein. From this should not be deduced that William indeed wanted to be a bourgeois monarch. Geisthövel has argued, by using William’s stays in spas as an example, that these forms of monarchical representation served to make it possible for the emerging middle class to identify with the monarch, by suggesting that he shared their values of simplicity and work ethos, but that this did not necessarily mean that they were actually *Bürgerkönige*.⁶⁸⁵ This argument can be extended for William’s visits to Konstanz and Mainau as well: the projecting of bourgeois values of family happiness and recovery from the work of government helped the bourgeoisie to identify with the monarch, without him in practice becoming one.⁶⁸⁶

This conclusion is strengthened by William’s visits to Konstanz and Mainau that offered him another opportunity for his dynastic-federal conception of his Imperial role to be put on display. His reception by his daughter and son-in-law was a public demonstration of the Baden dynasty’s support for the Hohenzollern role in German unification and the Empire. That Grand Duke Frederick was a strong supporter of German unification is repeatedly stressed by literature and borne out by the sources. But these visits to Konstanz and Mainau gave this support a public dimension. Gollwitzer has with regards Napoleon’s establishment of new kingdoms for his siblings spoken of the ‘perpetuation of the dynastic family cartel’.⁶⁸⁷ This phrase can likewise be extended to the conception William put on display in Konstanz and Mainau. Demonstrating this conception was not limited to the Baden dynasty. Wilmowski has testified that the afternoon outings were used for a journey across the Bodensee to visit the King and Queen of Württemberg Friedrichshafen.⁶⁸⁸ These visits were public knowledge and recorded for example by the *Konstanzer Zeitung* on 16 July 1876.⁶⁸⁹ Given the Württemberg dynasty’s reluctance towards German unification, these public visits served as a charm-offensive for dynastic solidarity within the framework of the German Empire.

It should be noted that William never entirely suppressed the Imperial element. In 1871, William was led through the building of the Konstanz Council, where he was shown the newly completed frescos. These included a depiction of the Pope being led on horseback, whilst Emperor Sigismund and the Duke of

⁶⁸⁴ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 19 July 1876.

⁶⁸⁵ Geisthövel, ‘Nahbare Herrscher’, 34.

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann, ‘War Friedrich Wilhelm III. von Preussen ein Bürgerkönig?’ in: *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 16 (1989) 441-460.

⁶⁸⁷ Gollwitzer, *Ludwig I.*, 22.

⁶⁸⁸ Besier ed., ‘Wilmowski’, 171.

⁶⁸⁹ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 16 July 1876.

Bavaria held the reins. Turning to the mayor, William said ‘das tat also der Sigismund – Na, die Erbschaft habe ich wohl angetreten aber die Zügel halte ich nicht...’.⁶⁹⁰ In 1876, William arrived in Konstanz and was received at the train station by the Grand Duke and Duchess of Baden. Thereafter they travelled to the nearby harbour, where they boarded the small steamship ‘Kaiser Wilhelm’. This ship carried the Imperial standard, with the Imperial Crown, Iron Cross and the decorations of the Order of the Black Eagle, at the top of its mast.⁶⁹¹

The visits to Konstanz and Mainau allowed William to accommodate the reception and celebrations local authorities organized for him. As Huch has demonstrated for the travels of the Hohenzollern monarchs before 1871, these became an increasingly important feature of monarchical travel. Cities sought to demonstrate their local customs and economic achievements, as well display arts history and science and a city decorated with flowers, flags and illumination. This marked an increasing self-consciousness of cities and regions.⁶⁹² This study confirms this development for the post-1871 period by pointing at the example of William’s presence in Konstanz and Mainau. Ahead of his arrival in September 1871, the city council announced that inhabitants were requested to decorate their houses with flowers, signs and flags.⁶⁹³ At his arrival, William was asked to take an honorary drink from a new cup, which thereafter would be donated to the city archive as a memory of his visit. He received a basket with products from the region, which was custom for Emperors entering the city.⁶⁹⁴ When William travelled by train from Konstanz to Mainau in July 1879, the surrounding buildings and ships in the harbour carried flags.⁶⁹⁵ Two days later, a serenade was sung for him in the city, fireworks were put on display as well as an address by a local merchant man. All this pleased William, who had heard every word of the address and had asked for the orator’s name, according to the *Konstanzer Zeitung*.⁶⁹⁶

An important feature of these local customs and culture was the annual festive evening organized for William at Mainau. These consisted mostly of the performance of historical theatre pieces. As such, they were demonstrations of the preoccupation with history that Jefferies has defined as a typical feature of Imperial Germany’s culture. This found its expression in, amongst other forms, the historical theatre and the historical pageant, the latter with historical outfits and subtle political hierarchies at work.⁶⁹⁷ In 1880 the officers of the 114th regiment stationed in Konstanz dressed up and re-enacted a scene from an army camp from the Thirty Years’ War, to honour William as military monarch.⁶⁹⁸ Yet, the most notable example of such historical pageants came in 1882, when these officers

⁶⁹⁰ Friedrich Meichle, ‘Kaiser Wilhelm I. in Konstanz’ in: *Bodensee Hefte* 3 (1965) 17.

⁶⁹¹ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 19 July 1876.

⁶⁹² Huch ed., *Ehrenpforte und Inkognito*, 54, 60, 72.

⁶⁹³ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 8 September 1871.

⁶⁹⁴ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 10 September 1879.

⁶⁹⁵ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 19 July 1879.

⁶⁹⁶ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 22 July 1879.

⁶⁹⁷ Jefferies, *Imperial culture*, 99-114, esp. 107-114.

⁶⁹⁸ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 25 July 1880.

recreated six images of Meding's biography of William, which had been published earlier that year. The first image saw William depicted in 1803, performing military exercises together with the princes Frederick William and Frederick Louis. The second image depicted the suffering from the Napoleonic Wars and saw a mother ordering her children to kiss the busts of Frederick William III and Louise after the father had written home that he had entered Paris and received the Iron Cross from William. The third image depicted officers and ordinary people attending the baptism of William's son and his entry into Berlin in 1831. The fourth image depicted veterans attending William's coronation in 1861. The fifth image showed the return of an infantry soldier to his family at the end of the Franco-Prussian War. The final image represented the figure of Genius over the cradle of Prince William of Prussia, who had been born several weeks earlier and which pointed at the secured future of the dynasty.⁶⁹⁹ As such, these images reinforced the significance of war for William's life and that of the German soldiers and population and the unifying experience of this. Above all, this pageant was a demonstration that the images and narratives William had authorized with Meding's biography resonated with the army ranks, who had been given a copy of the book.

The examples discussed so far demonstrate that from the mid-1870s onwards William not only accepted the gradual expansion of his Imperial role through travels, but also actively projected it and appealed even to those parts of the German Empire where support for unification was lukewarm. This raises the question how William conducted himself in those regions where support for the German nation state was low, but also how William defended the political capital generated through the active exercise and reception of his role. A case study for this is offered by his opposition to Bismarck's proposed reorganization of Alsace-Lorraine in 1886. Günter Riederer has demonstrated that William's earlier travels to the Reichsland had been problematic. Because it had been annexed during the Franco-Prussian War, during which William had presented himself ostentatiously as military monarch, his role as integrating figure in the Reichsland was problematic. He thus showed reluctance towards the province. However, during his first visit in September 1876, William did visit some of the monuments for the fallen Prussian soldiers in the war. During this visit he deliberately presented himself as a battlefield tourist, whilst avoiding large cities and instead reaching out to the rural population. Local authorities appeared in traditional dress or formal attire and put societies on display to suggest a popular reception, even though part of the population, presumably out of curiosity, showed up for the visit. Part of this form was repeated during William's visit in May 1877, when national and local symbols were used in unison, such as in flags. Parts of the population appeared in local dress and a parade by farmers. The program also included a formal rededication of the university of Strasbourg as the *Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität*. In Metz triumphal arches were constructed for William's reception and a torch

⁶⁹⁹ *Konstanzer Zeitung*, 18 July 1882.

parade and of military veterans were held. But as Riederer has demonstrated, local authorities had issued a considerable amount of regulations to orchestrate popular interest.⁷⁰⁰

William's subsequent visits to Alsace-Lorraine for the military manoeuvres in 1879 and 1886 served to generate more support from the local population. The latter visit will be discussed here. Ahead of the manoeuvres, William instructed that the officers were to appear in full uniforms, with shoulder straps and sabres, even if during the actual manoeuvres the officers of the divisions involved could appear in simple dress uniform.⁷⁰¹ William personally approved the holding of a large parade near Strasbourg on 12 September, corps and division manoeuvres in the following days and the retreat of the troops after the exercise at Metz.⁷⁰² The court also considered undertaking a tour of the battlefield of Metz and St. Privat by William.⁷⁰³ However, the commanding general of the XV army corps was informed beforehand that William would oversee the manoeuvres from his carriage, so as to save his strength for other festivities.⁷⁰⁴ This concession points at how William and his court sought to balance his role as monarch and supreme warlord with his task as integrating figure. Court marshal Perponcher actively intervened in the program offered by the city council of Metz to save William's strengths so that he would be able to undertake more daytime activities visible to the crowd. He ruled out William taking a tour through cities, dinners or attending theatre performances in the evening, but did agree to a parade of the *Bürgerschaft* and a torch light parade.⁷⁰⁵ The mayor of Metz was requested not to submit any further requests and make do with the 'all-highest' orders.⁷⁰⁶ In addition, William wanted to receive the *Landesausschuß* of Alsace-Lorraine.⁷⁰⁷ The mayor of Metz offered a lunch to William as a reconciliation for his visits in 1877 and 1879, when part of the city council was openly hostile to William's presence. The mayor sought to ensure that the council was now differently made up and the population also had taken offence by the members' behaviour.⁷⁰⁸ William himself insisted in attending a church service in Strasbourg's Neue Kirche, To the church's priest LeBlois, Perponcher wrote that 'daß derselbe um 10½ Uhr beginnt, nicht länger als eine Stunde höchstens dauert und daß in der Predigt Alles vermieden möchte, was auf Seines Majestät Allerhöchste Person oder politischer Verhältnisse etwa bezüglich wäre. Nur das Evangelium, wie es

⁷⁰⁰ Günter Riederer, *Feiern im Reichsland. Politische Symbolik, öffentliche Festkultur und die Erfindung kollektiver Zugehörigkeiten in Elsaß-Lothringen (1871-1918)* (Trier 2004) 80-90.

⁷⁰¹ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 403. Manöver des XV. Armeekorps. Bd. 1. 1886. Bl. 10. Lehndorff to the Office of the Court Marshal, 2 September 1886.

⁷⁰² Ibidem, Bl. 13. Von Albedyll to the Office of the Court Marshal, 14 June 1886.

⁷⁰³ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 405. Manöver des XV. Armeekorps. Bd. 3. 1886. Bl. 268. 'Tour zum Besuch der Schlachtfelder für Seine Majestät den Kaiser und König.'

⁷⁰⁴ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 403. Bl. 17. Unknown to the command of the XV Army Corps, 24 July 1886.

⁷⁰⁵ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 405. Bl. 259. 'Gehorsamste Vorschläge der städtischen Verwaltung und des Gemeinderathes der Stadt Metz für die Tage der Anwesenheit Seiner Majestät des Kaisers'.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibidem, Bl. 261. Halm to Perponcher, 4 September 1886.

⁷⁰⁷ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 403. Bl. 16. Wilmowski to Perponcher, undated.

⁷⁰⁸ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 405. Bl. 249. Halm to Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, 24 August 1886.

fest geschehen würde, möchte die Grundlage der Predigt bilden.⁷⁰⁹ William's eventual program entailed attending this church service in Strasbourg, as well as a reception of civil and military officials and a *Zapfenstreich* on 19 September. The next day a visit to the cathedral and garrison church of Metz was scheduled, as well as a reception by civilian officials and a torch light parade. On 21 September the city council would be received and William would undertake a battlefield tour.⁷¹⁰

William's age and health eventually limited the visit to primarily a stay in Strasbourg. Because of William being unwell, the journey to Metz was cancelled and Frederick William sent instead.⁷¹¹ The popular reception had notably changed in comparison to William's 1879 visit, which bore well for the Hohenzollern monarchy. According to Albrecht von Stosch 'der Kaiser ist nun mit Jubel in Strassbg eingezogen; es ist ein Abschnitt in der Eroberung von Elsaß. (...) jedenfalls trägt s. Alter u.s.w. zum Glanz des Tages bei.'⁷¹² The *Vossische Zeitung* noted that in comparison to 1879 more houses had been decorated. From the cathedral German flags were flown and illuminations were put on display. Popular interest was considerable, both in the city itself and when William travelled out of Strasbourg for the start of the manoeuvres.⁷¹³ Before doing so, he had attended a service in the cathedral. According to Frederick William he was 'recht angegriffen, dennoch in den Dom mit Mama'.⁷¹⁴ Nonetheless, he was stable enough to attend a reception in the palace of the governor of the Reichsland, Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, which included members of the city council. Afterwards, a parade of the rural population and communities was held for William and Augusta. Hereafter several deputies were received by the Imperial couple and given flowers and regional products.⁷¹⁵

His popular reception made William willing to challenge Bismarck on the latter's attempts to Prussianize the Alsace-Lorraine bureaucracy. Because of the upcoming 1887 Reichstag elections and continued presence of Danish and French protesters in the body, Bismarck sought to Germanize these areas, by combatting those groups and individuals that fostered ideas of ties with the homeland, such as with Denmark in Schleswig. Upon becoming governor in Alsace-Lorraine, Hohenlohe sought to apply a different approach and relied on the bureaucracy rather than the notables. Local elections in Strasbourg and Metz returned favourable majorities. Hohenlohe was positively impressed by the

⁷⁰⁹ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 404. Manöver des XV. Armeekorps. Bd. 2. 1886. Bl. 36. Perponcher to LeBlois, 18 September 1886.

⁷¹⁰ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 405. Bl. 209. 'Projectirtes Reiseprogramm Reis Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs nach Elsass-Lothringen zu den Manövern des 15. Armeekorps im September 1886.'

⁷¹¹ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 405. Bl. 269. Perponcher to Augusta, undated.

⁷¹² Baumgart ed., *Albrecht von Stosch*, 376.

⁷¹³ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 14 September 1886, morning edition. Cf. Volker Stalman, *Fürst Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst 1819-1901: ein deutscher Reichskanzler* (Paderborn 2009) 174.

⁷¹⁴ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 514.

⁷¹⁵ *Vossische Zeitung*, 15 September 1886, morning edition.

reception William had been given during his visit in September 1886. But when the elections returned protest candidates, Bismarck planned to either divide the Reichsland between Bavaria, Baden and Prussia or make the territory a Prussian province.⁷¹⁶ Caution caused him not to turn his anger against Hohenlohe, who judicially should have done more to prevent the agitation. Bismarck was well aware that Hohenlohe was personally close to William and the Emperor was unwilling to agree to a change in personnel in Alsace-Lorraine. In order to convince William of his plans, Hohenlohe consciously opted to be in Berlin around 22 March, knowing that he could be certain of William's goodwill on his 90th birthday. Although Bismarck contemplated installing a dictatorship in Alsace-Lorraine, he was more moderate in a conversation with Hohenlohe on 19 March, agreeing to uphold the existing political structures in the Reichsland. During his audience with William the following day, Hohenlohe heard from him that 'das hat ja gar keinen Namen, jetzt auf einmal alles wieder umzustürzen, bloß weil die Wahlen schlecht ausgefallen sind.' Stalman points out too that William's reception in Strasbourg in 1886 might have contributed to his resistance and indeed it was this resistance that prevented Bismarck from taking more radical measures in reorganizing the Reichsland.⁷¹⁷ Furthermore, Hohenlohe, and thus per consequence William, was supported in a moderate solution by Frederick of Baden.⁷¹⁸ On 27 March, Bismarck announced in the State Ministry his plans, but also made the opposition of William to these known.⁷¹⁹

However, neither the role of Hohenlohe or Frederick of Baden should be overestimated, for it was indeed, as Stalman correctly assumes, William's memory of his popularity that determined his resistance against Bismarck. Already during his visit to Strasbourg, William had sent a telegram to his sister Alexandrine, writing that 'der hiesige Empfang ist über alle Erwartungen herzlich und brillant. Man sieht, daß das deutsche Regierungssystem Wurzel faßt'.⁷²⁰ Hohenlohe would have thus only strengthened William in an opinion he already had. Indeed, Lucius von Ballhausen recorded on 28 March, the day after the debate on Bismarck's plans in the State Ministry, William's comments about the 'ausgezeichneten Aufnahme, welche er dort gefunden habe. Das sei nichts Gemachtes gewesen, wie er seinen Erfahrungen nach auf diesem Gebiet wohl sagen könne. Diese Eindrücke wollte er mit ins Grab nehmen! Wieder ein hübscher und bezeichnender Fall, wo Se. Majestät, seiner natürlichen, richtigen Auffassung folgend, eine bestimmte Willensmeinung hat und aufrecht erhält – selbst Bismarcks Rat gegenüber.'⁷²¹ Bismarck indeed gave in to William's opposition and, against Hohenlohe's will, 'purified' the bureaucracy, transferred legislative powers from the Reichsland to the Reichstag and installed a new system

⁷¹⁶ Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 234-236.

⁷¹⁷ Stalman, *Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst*, 179-180.

⁷¹⁸ Fuchs ed., *Reichspolitik II*, 475-476.

⁷¹⁹ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle VII*, 212-213.

⁷²⁰ Schultze ed., *Briefe an Alexandrine*, 239.

⁷²¹ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 379-380.

of passport controls.⁷²² The basic constellation in the Reichsland that resulted in William's reception in 1886 remained unchanged.

William's use of large events

William's appeal to the individual parts of the Empire occasionally had to be converged to project the Empire as a whole with William as its figurehead. For this, William utilized large-scale events to project his conception of the German political order. By their nature, these individual and ad-hoc events came on a less regular basis than his travels. But because of their scale and since they were held outside Berlin, they could draw significant attention. Such events did not need to be organized by William himself. Rather, he could take existing events which had national potential, forge the event's dominant message and make his understanding of the German polity tangible. This section discusses William's involvement in the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral in 1880 and the Niederwald monument in 1883. These two events suggest a willingness by William to project his understanding of his Imperial role and the German polity more actively via grand ceremonial events. In this, as Cannadine and Van Osta have shown, the developments in Germany followed a wider European context, which also saw the British and Netherlands monarchy draw increasingly on ritual and ceremonial to present themselves as the symbolic head of the nation.⁷²³ Pace Spenkuch's assertion that after William's withdrawal from the State Ministry's deliberations in the 1870s he only concerned himself with 'kleine Fragen' such as the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral, these must be considered important ways in which he asserted his Imperial authority.⁷²⁴

William's involvement in the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral was the outcome of a longer-running Hohenzollern involvement in its completion. Already in the 1810s, then Crown Prince Frederick took an interest in the project. Upon his accession he organized the resumption of its construction. Barclay has argued that Frederick William IV saw in the cathedral a model of his idea of the monarchy as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.⁷²⁵ Nipperdey has pointed out that the cathedral's approaching completion in the 1840s benefitted from a balance between confessional tension, the idea of a common heritage and a national consciousness. It performed an 'omnibus-function' which could carry both conservative-federalist and liberal-democratic ideas of the national movement. By the 1880s this situation was no more and the cathedral had ceased to serve as a national symbol.⁷²⁶ In addition, William's own relationship with the cathedral's reconstruction had also been problematic since the early 1860s. In 1863, William had been invited to attend the *Dombaufest*, but several members of the city council objected, fearing that the conservative press would suggest that the Cologne population supported

⁷²² Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 236-237.

⁷²³ Cannadine, 'Context, performance and meaning'; Van Osta, 'Emperor's new clothes'.

⁷²⁴ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle VII*, 23.

⁷²⁵ Barclay, *Frederick William IV*, 32-33, 49, 286.

⁷²⁶ Thomas Nipperdey, 'Der Kölner Dom als Nationaldenkmal' in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 233 (1981) 595-613, there 599, 613.

the king in his conflict with the Prussian Diet. In addition, the organizers had invited all the German princes, which was problematic, given that William shortly before cancelled his presence at the Frankfurter *Fürstentag* at Bismarck's insistence. The Court Marshal then informed the organizers that William wanted only those German princes present who had contributed to the cathedral's reconstruction. Then, four days before the festivities, William cancelled his presence.⁷²⁷

Both William and the State Ministry recognized the national potential of the cathedral's dedication and the significance of William's presence, even if they had opposing views on this. At the cabinet's meeting of 26 February 1880, culture minister Albert von Puttkamer acknowledged the national and monumental dimension of the cathedral and its completion, but given the conflict with the Catholic church deemed William's attendance undesirable.⁷²⁸ William disagreed and wanted to attend, as was the wish of the Cathedral's chapter, and participate in a church service, the cabinet was told on 8 March.⁷²⁹ Puttkamer agreed to this suggestion in the cabinet's meeting of 22 May, but a number of ministers did not follow his opinion and wanted to await the outcomes of deliberations over the reduction of the culture wars in the Prussian diet.⁷³⁰ The overarching argument against William's attendance of the ministers was that his presence would be seen as a concession to the Catholic church at a time when the conflict with the curia was being wound down. It likewise feared the unexpected showing up of the former archbishop of Cologne, Paul Melchers, who had gone into exile after having refused to acknowledge Prussia's state laws. Nonetheless, William had repeatedly stated personally to Puttkamer that he wished to attend.⁷³¹ William's motives to do so were no secret. Strachey wrote to the Foreign Office in London that the introduction of a new act dismantling some of the harshest parts of the Culture Wars was a concession of Bismarck to William. The Emperor 'was exceedingly anxious that a religious peace should be arranged before he died. The Emperor was an old man, and he had set his heart on a ceremonial of combined architectural inauguration and religious revival, to be transacted in the autumn in Cologne Cathedral (which is now verging on completion).'⁷³²

In the subsequent decision-making process the octogenarian monarch asserted his authority in the manner as argued in chapter I. Despite being absent from Berlin, William intervened in the cabinet's deliberations by writing lengthy memoranda. From Bad Gastein on 22 July, William argued that his attendance was not about glorifying the Catholic Church but celebrating the completion of a building whose meaning transcended Germany. Displaying a sense of devotion to his brother's memory and a sympathy for dynastic federalism, William stressed

⁷²⁷ Huch ed., *Ehrenforste und Inkognito*, 168.

⁷²⁸ Spenkuch, ed., *Protokolle VII*, 58.

⁷²⁹ *Ibidem*, 59.

⁷³⁰ *Ibidem*, 63-64.

⁷³¹ Puttkamer ed., *Staatsminister*, 116-117.

⁷³² Mösslang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 362-363; James Retallack, 'British views of Germany, 1815-1914' in: James Retallack, *Germany's Second Reich. Portraits and pathways* (Toronto 2015) 44-85, there 62-63.

that the cathedral's completion had been taken up by Frederick William IV, with the support of the German monarchs and population. Seeking to deny a confessional dimension to the building and the ceremony, William stated that the event was not about the Catholic religion, but about the completion of a national monument in the same manner its construction was resumed in 1842. To prevent the cathedral chapter withdrawing from the event, William argued for drafting a programme, to which the chapter would agree. This included being received by the local civilian and military heads, a reception at the governmental residence, travel to the cathedral where a Te Deum would be held, followed by a programme in front of the *Krönungsstein*, speeches and a reply by himself.⁷³³

Eventually, William decided to attend against the wishes of the cabinet. The State Ministry then formulated six conditions to be met. These included that William was to be the formal organizer of the event, that the dedication was to be held on a day of national significance such as 15 October, Frederick William IV's day of birth, invitations would be reviewed by Bismarck and Puttkamer, a programme was to be carefully planned and that the cathedral's chapter was to agree to attending the Te Deum.⁷³⁴ By then in Babelsberg, William responded on 25 August with a new memorandum in which he reinforced these demands. Regarding the choice of date for the dedication, William agreed to the 15 October: 'Hierdurch wird mit der sichtlichen Vollendung des Riesenwerks das Andenken und der Dank an den Königlichen Herrn geehrt, der den Gedanken dies Werk zu unternehmen mit Vorliebe begleitete bis an seinen zu frühen Hintritt! und die wahre Weihe verliehen'. William was of the opinion that 'es versteht sich von selbst, daß die ganze Feier als von mir ausgehend betrachtet wird'. Seeking to add a dynastic-federal component to the dedication, William also wanted to invite the other German princes: 'Ich glaube es muß eine Formel gefunden werden, die den Fürsten, unter Danksagung für deren Interesse an dem nunmehr vollendeten Bau, angezeigt wird, daß an dem bestimmten Tage eine Feier in Cöln stattfinden werde, so daß, ohne specielle Einladung, es Jedem der Fürstlichkeiten überlassen bleibt, dabei zu erscheinen oder nicht'. He agreed to the Te Deum, but believed it best that the clergy would not receive him outside the church.⁷³⁵

William took a similar interventionist approach in the drafting of the programme. In its early versions, William requested that an Evangelical service would take place in front of the cathedral. Initially, William considered having the other German princes present at this stage, but replaced this with the heads of the military and civil services and the Evangelical church. Furthermore, he asked that the hymn 'Nun danket alle Gott' would be sung instead of the national anthem when the final stone would be placed. The national anthem was not to be sung until at the end of the service and not until the mayor had provided the *Hoch* for William.⁷³⁶ Such alterations indicate the emphasis placed on the importance of the state and military officials, the protestant denomination and only to a lesser extent

⁷³³ Puttkamer, *Staatsminister*, 117-119.

⁷³⁴ Spenkuch, *Protokolle*, 66.

⁷³⁵ Puttkamer, *Staatsminister*, 120-122.

⁷³⁶ *Ibidem*, 122.

the national element in form of the anthem. Many of these alterations were subsequently followed in the eventual programme. The day began with an Evangelical church service, attended by William, Augusta and the Prussian royal family and the officials just mentioned. This would be followed by a Te Deum at the cathedral. When ahead of the dedication protests were voiced among the Catholic community over the singing of ‘Nun danket alle Gott’, William was willing to accommodate their grievances and select another hymn instead.⁷³⁷ Then William and Augusta would take their place in a specially constructed stand. A charter was signed by William, Augusta and other persons designated by William and then placed in the southern tower. Hereafter William would give an address, followed by the governor of the Rhineland and of the president of the organization for the reconstruction of the cathedral.⁷³⁸

William attached great importance to the address. A draft was composed by Puttkamer, but was returned with subtle, but significant corrections by William. These indicate that he wished no reference to periods of strife and division in German history. A passage that ominously started with ‘die Befürchtung daß’ and ended with ‘Dankgefühl verwandelt’ was ruled out by William with the argument that ‘die Réméniscenz an diese Umstände, die glücklich überwunden sind, scheint mit nicht angenehm, bei dem Fest zu reproducieren.’ There Puttkamer apparently had written that the cathedral had come about because of ‘Wohltäter’, William requested that this be followed up by the phrase ‘an deren Spitze die erlauchten Fürsten und freien Städte’. The phrase ‘aus langem schweren Schlafe’ was to be scrapped, because William deemed these as ‘unangenehme Réméniscenzen’.⁷³⁹ At the eventual event William spoke, according to the *Kölnische Zeitung*, ‘mit deutlicher, weithin hörbarer Stimme, der man die tiefe innere Bewegung anmerkte’.⁷⁴⁰ Partially as a result of the changes William wanted, the address eventually emphasized more the Hohenzollern-dynastic and dynastic-federal component, rather than the religious nature of the building. He opened by proclaiming ‘Wer gedenket nicht jenes 4. September 1842, an welchem Mein in Gott ruhender Königliche Bruder an dieser Stelle öffentlich und feierlich es verkündete, daß er beschlossen habe, den seit Jahrhunderten seiner Vollendung harrenden Kölner Dom dieser Vollendung entgegenzuführen!’ To this was added an emphasis on the role of his father: ‘schon im Jahre 1825 hatte König Friedrich Wilhelm III. den Gedanken gefaßt, den Dom zu erhalten; auch seiner haben wir mit dankbaren Gefühlen zu gedenken.’ Finally, he wanted to express to the ‘Allerhöchsten und Höchsten Regierenden und freien Städten im geeinten deutschen Vaterlande den tiefgefühlten Dank ausspreche für Wort und That, durch welche dieselben an der Spitze ihrer Staaten diesen mächtigen Bau durchführen halfen.’⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁷ GStA PK BPH 113 No. 1074. Reisen des Königs nach Köln und Brühl zur Dombaubeier, Bd 1. 1880. Bl. 59. Von Pückler to von Puttkammer, 9th October 1880.

⁷³⁸ Ibidem, 15. ‘Programm zur Feier der Vollendung des Kölner Domes am 15^{ten} October 1880.’

⁷³⁹ Puttkamer, *Staatsminister*, 125.

⁷⁴⁰ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 15 October 1880.

⁷⁴¹ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 16 October 1880.

Instrumental in projecting the legitimate political order was the question of who was in- and excluded of the ceremony. William could do so as the formal organizer of the event. What remained a source of concern was the question whether the exiled archbishop Paul Melchers would show up. Though this eventually turned out not to be the case, William and the cabinet had given this consideration. Were he to show up, William had agreed with the cabinet, Melchers was to be allowed to perform his bishop's functions and then be guided to the sacristy, from where he would be led away from Prussian territory, out of sight of the public in order to prevent popular uproar over this.⁷⁴² In a similar attempt at restraining the church and preventing demonstrations, William ruled out the possibility of the attendance of Joseph Reinkens, who had founded the Old Catholic movement in a split from the Catholic Church.⁷⁴³ More important for William was the attendance of the other German monarchs and the military. At his personal request, the commanding officers and staff officers of the 8th army corps and 14th division were invited, as were the regimental commanders and staff officers of the garrison of Cologne, which were to take their seat at the royal stands. In addition, William requested that as many staff and non-commissioned officers of the garrison would likewise be encouraged to come and take up their seats at other stands. All officers were ordered to wear parade uniform without sword.⁷⁴⁴ But because the number of German monarchs and princes invited was so large, many of the lower ranking officers were forced to take stands further away.⁷⁴⁵ William had formal invitations sent out to all German princes, including the kings of Saxony, Württemberg and Bavaria, as well as the six Grand Dukes and five dukes of the German Empire.⁷⁴⁶ Eventually, and apart from the members of the Hohenzollern dynasty, the King and Queen of Saxony, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Baden and other lower ranking German princes attended.⁷⁴⁷

By and large, the dedication went much to William's liking. A few days after the cathedral's dedication, he met with Lothar von Schweinitz, the German ambassador to St. Petersburg. According to Schweinitz, William looked back with satisfaction and added with regards to the dispute between him and the State Ministry over his attendance that 'alle seien gegen ihn gewesen, sagte er, außer den Ministern des Krieges und des Kultus, Kameke und Puttkammer; er habe auf seinem Willen bestehen müssen. Bismarck habe ihn gefragt, was denn geschehen sollte, wenn der ausgewiesene Fürstbischof plötzlich am Hochaltar erscheine; er habe geantwortet: „Ich würde ihn ruhig bis zu Ende officieren, dann aber in Gewahrsam nehmen lassen“; hiermit sei Bismarck einverstanden gewesen.'⁷⁴⁸ Popular interest in the event had been considerable. The *Kölnische Zeitung* described several times the huge numbers of people that had come to see

⁷⁴² Puttkamer, *Staatsminister*, 123.

⁷⁴³ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 113. No. 1074. Bl. 33. Von Puttkammer to von Pückler, 27 September 1880.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibidem, Bl. 42. Von Brauchitsch to the office of the court marshal, 28 September 1880.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibidem, Bl. 63. Banecke, to von Pückler, 4 October 1880.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibidem, Bl. 82. 'Von Seiner Majestät dem Kaiser und Königin sind Allerhöchste Handschreiben gerichtet worden'.

⁷⁴⁷ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 15 October 1880.

⁷⁴⁸ Von Schweinitz, *Denkwürdigkeiten* II, 131.

William.⁷⁴⁹ Frederick William wrote afterwards in his diary that though the event had been festive, it was likewise ‘peinlich auch der Zwist mit der römisch katholischen Kirche gerade angesichts einer so schönen Begebenheit, fühlbar hervortritt.’⁷⁵⁰ But the *Frankfurter Zeitung* had best comprehended the ceremony’s intention: ‘Dieser Feier, die ein kirchliche sein soll, wohnte der Klerus nicht bei. Im Dom waren heute die zelebrierenden Priester zugegen und ein Weihbischof, welcher Kaiser William empfing, im Uebrigen, zeigte sich weder in den Straßen, noch auf dem Festplatze ein Geistlicher. Zog man die große Menge aufgebotenen Militärs und die in Uniform erschienen Fürstlichkeiten in Betracht, so konnte man eher an ein militärisches Fest glauben...’⁷⁵¹

That the dedication of the Cologne cathedral was no one-off event in which William sought to alter the interpretation of a national event is demonstrated by the dedication of the Niederwald monument in 1883. As Wolfgang Hardtwig has demonstrated, the Niederwald monument was, like many other monuments in Imperial Germany, a local initiative that was taken up by middle-class civil servants and the national-liberal bourgeoisie. In this case, it was governor Botho zu Eulenburg who promised that the initiative would also meet William’s approval.⁷⁵² Indeed, the sources suggest that William had a long-running interest in the project. Schneider’s diary records that he visited the Academy on 7 May 1874 to inspect the model of the monument and travelled to Wiesbaden on 22 May 1874 to view the planned site of the monument.⁷⁵³ William was also present at the laying of the first stone on 16 September 1877. When William visited Dresden as part of the military manoeuvres taking place in Saxony that year, he visited the studio of Johannes Schilling, the sculptor of the monument.⁷⁵⁴ However, William’s enthusiasm in the project was a highly personal one and not shared by the Crown Prince. Following the monument’s dedication, Frederick William noted in his diary about the monument ‘dessen Gegner ich von dem ersten Tage war, weil eine Zeit wie 1870/71 keines solchen bedarf, vielmehr ein solcher Krieg und die Wiederherstellung von Kaiser u. Reich an sich schon ein unverwüstlicher Denkstein bleiben, also das Geld bessere Verwendung finden konnte!’⁷⁵⁵

Once the monument neared completion, William seized the opportunity to determine the event’s meaning. A first way of doing so was choosing the date for the dedication. Originally, this was planned for 27 September 1883. However,

⁷⁴⁹ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 15 October 1880.

⁷⁵⁰ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 367.

⁷⁵¹ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 17 October 1880.

⁷⁵² Wolfgang Hardtwig, ‘Erinnerung, Wissenschaft, Mythos. Nationale Geschichtsbilder und politische Symbole in der Reichsgründungsära und im Kaiserreich’ in: Wolfgang Hardtwig, *Geschichtskultur und Wissenschaft* (Munich 1990) 224-263, there 245; Hardtwig, ‘Nationsbildung’, there 274.

⁷⁵³ GStA PK BPH Rep. 51. FIIIb. No. 3. Bd. 11. 1873-1874.

⁷⁵⁴ *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 September 1882, evening edition.

⁷⁵⁵ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 444-445. In 1883, Frederick William had stated to Herbert von Bismarck that ‘Ich liebe nicht, auf diese Art den Nachbarn zu reizen. Die Franzosen werden dadurch noch mehr daran gemahnt, was sie verloren haben, und die übrigen Nationen werden an unsere Stärke erinnert, die ihren Neid unablässig herausfordert’. Winfried Baumgart ed., *Bismarck und der deutsche Kolonialerwerb 1883-1885* (Berlin 2011) 106, fn. 91.

William wanted this to be changed to the 28th, so to accommodate the return of the troops after the annual manoeuvres.⁷⁵⁶ But as Alings has pointed out, this date was also the anniversary of the surrender of Strasbourg in 1870.⁷⁵⁷ At William's insistence, the members of the committee had to wear the grand uniform in as far they were permitted.⁷⁵⁸ Eventually, at William's orders the invitation prescribed attendees had to wear dark uniform or suit.⁷⁵⁹

As in Cologne, William likewise attached great importance to his speech. Indeed, among the corrections he wanted from the committee in the programme was the timing of his speech. At his insistence, William's address would follow that of Eulenburg, but before the playing of the national anthem.⁷⁶⁰ How much importance William attached to his speech, is shown by the fact that he wrote this himself, as *illustration 3* demonstrates. The similarities between this draft and the text printed in the newspapers suggest that little or no corrections by Bismarck or the State Ministry occurred. His speech related the Franco-Prussian War implicitly to the Napoleonic Wars as the integrating historical conception and projected a conservative-monarchical order. 'Das bedrohte Deutschland erhob sich in [1870-71 in] Vaterlandsliebe wie ein Mann und das Werkzeug was das deutsche Volk in Waffen, seine Fürsten an der Spitze', stated William. The monument was meant as a call to its spectators. Repeating the words of Frederick William III, which he also stated at the laying of the first stone, William stated that the monument served 'Den Gefallenen zum Gedächtniß, den Lebenden zu Anerkennung, den kommenden Geschlechtern zur Nacheiferung.'⁷⁶¹ Lucius von Ballhausen spoke in his diary of the 'prächtige schlichte Rede des alten Kaisers'. The speech made a considerable impression: 'Gerade wie der Kaiser anfang zu sprechen, brach ein Sonnenstrahl durch die Wolken und auch die zu früh vom anderen Rheinufer abgefeuerten Kanonensalven bildeten ein würdiges Akkompagnement, gewissermaßen die Interpunktion der kaiserlichen Rede!'.⁷⁶² The speech was subsequently included in Oncken's authorized history of William's reign.⁷⁶³

A main source of contention between William and the State Ministry, and in particular Bismarck, was the question which and how many of the German princes were to be invited. On this depended whether the ceremony was to be seen as a national-Imperial celebration because of solely William's attendance, or a dynastic-federal demonstration through the presence of other German potentates. In the debate, in which Bismarck had the former opinion and William the latter,

⁷⁵⁶ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. Oberhofmarschallamt. No. 1070. Reise des Königs nach dem Rhein zur Einweihung des Niederwalddenkmals. 1883. Bl. 5. Von Wilmowski to von Pückler, 3 July 1883.

⁷⁵⁷ Alings, *Monument und Nation*, 168.

⁷⁵⁸ GStA PK BPH Rep. 89. No. 20850. Errichtung eines Nationaldenkmals auf dem Niederwald bei Ringen am Rhein. 1874-1908. Bl. 89. Wilmowski to Eulenburg, 25 July 1883.

⁷⁵⁹ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 1070. Reise des Königs nach dem Rhein zur Einweihung des Niederwalddenkmals. 1883. Unnumbered, formal invitation of the committee for the unveiling of the monument, 20 August 1883.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, Bl. 14. Wilmowski to Eulenburg, 18 September 1883.

⁷⁶¹ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und Gelehrten Sachen. Vossische Zeitung*, 29 September 1883.

⁷⁶² Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 272.

⁷⁶³ Oncken, *Zeitalter Kaiser Wilhelms I.* II, 909.

the 86-year old monarch again sought to reassert his authority in the decision-making process by making his views known in writing. Six months before its dedication, Wilmowski informed Bismarck that William intended to invite the other German princes and ‘daß deren Einladung nicht durch das Comité zu bewirken sei, sondern von Sr. M. selbst, als dem Höchsten Vertreter des Deutschen Reiches, zu bewirken sei.’⁷⁶⁴ Bismarck disagreed and at a meeting of the State Ministry stated that he was against inviting too many other German monarchs and a large participation of the army, recommending to William to keep the ceremony within limits.⁷⁶⁵ But William refused to give in. From Bad Ems, William had Wilmowski write to Bismarck and Minister of War Paul Bronsart von Schellendorf that he also intended to invite the princes Luitpold of Bavaria and Georg of Saxony, as they too were depicted on the base of the monument.⁷⁶⁶ Less than three weeks later, this was followed by William’s decision to also invite all the commanding generals and field marshals.⁷⁶⁷ On 27 July Wilmowski informed Pückler that William had decided to invite Prince August of Württemberg, whose portrait was also on the monument.⁷⁶⁸ Because of the limited space, William refused to send out formal invitations, hoping instead on the voluntary attendance of the German princes.⁷⁶⁹ Ultimately, the event was attended by William, Crown Prince Frederick William, the Grand Duke of Baden, King Albert of Saxony, Prince Frederick Karl of Prussia, King Karl of Württemberg, Prince Luitpold of Bavaria and the Grand Duke of Hessen. After his speech, William took off his helmet and shook the hands of the attending German princes, before leading them around an inspection of the monument.⁷⁷⁰ However, Bismarck was not present at the dedication. Citing health concerns, he cancelled his presence at the dedication ceremony in a letter to William.⁷⁷¹ In reality, it was his anger over William’s decision to invite a large number of German princes that made Bismarck stay away from the ceremony.⁷⁷²

An important feature of the dedication was William’s permitting of making of photographs of the event. This demonstrates his recognition of this medial innovation and its utility in communicating his preferred image. Indeed, the sources with regards to the Niederwald monument confirm Franziska Windt’s argument that William was quick to take up the practice of photography in communicating his image. He gradually used a variety of settings and dressings, such as in coronation robes, civilian attire or military uniform. During his reign,

⁷⁶⁴ GStA PK I. HA Rep. 89. No. 20850. Bl. 80. Wilmowski to Bismarck, 30 May 1883.

⁷⁶⁵ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle* VII, 129.

⁷⁶⁶ GStA PK I. HA Rep. 89. No. 20850. Bl. 85. Wilmowski to Bismarck and Bronsart von Schellendorf, 3 July 1883.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, Eulenburg to unknown recipient, 21 July 1883.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, Bl. 90. Wilmowski to von Pückler, 27 July 1883.

⁷⁶⁹ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 1070. Unnumbered. Von Hatzfeldt to the embassies in Munich, Dessau, Stuttgart, Weimar, Darmstadt, Karlsruhe, Oldenburg, Hamburg and the director of Arolsen, Bl. 6 July 1883.

⁷⁷⁰ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und Gelehrten Sachen. Vossische Zeitung*, 28 September 1883.

⁷⁷¹ Lappenküper ed., *Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke* III/V, 538-539.

⁷⁷² Alings, *Monument und Nation*, 168.

some 120 photographers were given the royal patent. Among them was Ottomar Anschütz who in 1882 took photos of the annual manoeuvres and was subsequently allowed to take photos of the unveiling of the Niederwald monument.⁷⁷³ As Windt correctly points out, such photos determine what the Hohenzollern deemed worthy for posterity. From this can be derived that William held a certain degree of influence over what was to be photographed. Indeed, the surviving photos of Anschütz in the collection of the *Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz* show William amidst the German princes, inspecting the monument and departing the scene of the event.⁷⁷⁴ The primary sources strengthen this argument. When Erwin Hanfstaengl requested permission to take photographs, he was in return informed that William permitted him to take one or two photographs of the festivities and the reproduction of which could not be done without his permission.⁷⁷⁵ Thus, rather than the monument, the focus remained on the attending monarchs and military officials.

William's response to the reception of the dedication unveil his intention for the event. To his sister Alexandrine William spoke in a telegram of the 'vollkommen geglückten ergreifenden, herrlichen Feier. (...) Die Menschenmasse, der Jubel unbeschreiblich.'⁷⁷⁶ However, at the ceremony Eulenburg had given a speech in which he praised the German *Volksggeist*. To this William had responded 'Meine Vorfahren haben erst eine Nation machen müssen, denn wir Preußen sind keine geborene, sondern eine gemachte Nation. Nun aber macht eine Nation mich!'.⁷⁷⁷ Although intended as a quip, the remark did demonstrate the discrepancy between the cult emerging around William's persona and his own intention of projecting a monarchical-military order. When William dined with the ambassador to Russia von Schweinitz in Baden on 14 October, he remarked that the revolutionary elements were as strong in Germany as they were in Russia. In return, Schweinitz pointed at the enthusiastic reception of William at the Niederwald monument and all the other forms of affection William had received over the year. To this William responded that 'wer hätte es im Jahre 1848 für möglich gehalten, daß solche Dinge geschehen könnten, wie sie im März eintraten; Ähnliches kann wieder kommen.'⁷⁷⁸ The dedication of the Cologne Cathedral and the unveiling of the Niederwald monument served for William foremost as means to project the monarchical order as a bulwark against political revolution.

⁷⁷³ Franziska Windt, 'Majestätische Bilderflut. Die Kaiser in der Photographie' in: Generaldirektion der Stiftung Preußischer Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg ed., *Die Kaiser und die Macht der Medien* (Berlin 2005) 66-97, there 68, 72.

⁷⁷⁴ See images nos. 40004428, 40004432, 40004433, 40011469, 40019035 at <http://www.bpk-images.de>, last accessed 22 September 2017.

⁷⁷⁵ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 1070. Bl. 161. Pückler to Erwin Hanfstaengl, 1 August 1883.

⁷⁷⁶ Schultze ed., *Briefe an Alexandrine*, 207. Augusta stated on 1 January 1884 to Lucius von Ballhausen that 'Der Kaiser sei das Niederwaldfest ein große Freude gewesen – und innere Genugtuung.' Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 278.

⁷⁷⁷ Herre, *Kaiser Wilhelm I.*, 489.

⁷⁷⁸ Von Schweinitz, *Denkwürdigkeiten II*, 248-249.

Conclusion

Clark has argued that the title of German Emperor, as opposed to that of Emperor of Germany which William would have preferred, echoed the limited sovereignty of the eighteenth-century title 'King in Prussia', for 'allowance had to be made for the other sovereigns whose sphere of authority overlapped with that of the new office'.⁷⁷⁹ From this argument it could be concluded that William had but limited interest in his Imperial role and gave little effect to turning it into practice. This conclusion was aggravated by the cult that developed around William's persona and the more explicit Imperial representation that William II later developed. In retrospect, it became more difficult to understand William's conception of his role from the outlook in 1871 and one model among several other that were debated. Partially for this reason perhaps, Fehrenbach did not include William's conception of the role among those she discussed.⁷⁸⁰ However, as this chapter has sought to argue, William's conception of his Imperial role not only befitted the initial outlook in 1871 but was also one which he increasingly and actively forged as he became accustomed to his role and the German nation state consolidated.

Arguing that William's understanding of his Imperial role and German nationhood was reflective of his political generation makes a more historical approach to his conduct possible, rather than comparing him in a normative sense to his successors. This chapter has demonstrated that William was part of a political generation of monarchs who in the second third of the nineteenth century sought to forge their state's particularistic identity that subsequently gave German nationhood its specific composite character. Wherein William differed from his generation was that he eventually became German Emperor and through his longevity could make this outlook part of his Imperial role. Moreover, William's experience of the Napoleonic Wars and the political revolutions during the first half of the nineteenth century made him a legitimist whose understanding of his Imperial role was always to be based on respecting dynastic sovereignty. This makes clear how William differed from Frederick III, who wanted to forge a far stronger Imperial role that diminished the other German princes' sovereignty.⁷⁸¹ And although William wholeheartedly supported German unification under decisive Prussian leadership, this stance makes clear how his Borussianism, as displayed for example in his politics of history in his own Prussian realm, could be welded with a dynastic federalism for his Imperial role. In all of this, William's conception of his office was thus well attuned to the state of German nationhood after 1871.

That William's outlook was formed in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century also makes understandable why he further developed the two main categories identified in this chapter as instrumental for projecting his Imperial role, namely travels and large events. In this respect, this chapter has shown that these forms that Huch identified as political instruments in generating popular support during the 1797-1871 period, can also be established for the post-

⁷⁷⁹ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 587-588.

⁷⁸⁰ Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen*.

⁷⁸¹ Müller, *Our Fritz*, 94-99.

1871 phase.⁷⁸² Although certain continuities can be perceived, such as William's German-wide annual travel rhythm and the military manoeuvres as a spectacle to project the monarchical political order, the more striking feature is how travels and events were changed to befit William's Imperial role. In so doing, distinct strategies of legitimization became part of William's conduct towards the non-Prussian parts of the German Empire. These included an accommodation of growing local self-consciousness and acknowledgment of dynastic and particularistic identities and sovereignties. William's adherence to dynastic federalism made him well-equipped to deal with the latter, as his conduct towards the Saxon and Bavarian monarchies, at the 1876 and 1882 military manoeuvres and his attendance in Bayreuth respectively, have demonstrated. Moreover, given William's penchant for idealized depictions of the past, he was particularly well suited to accommodate the 'preoccupation with history' (Jefferies) that characterized many of the receptions he received across Germany. Thus, as German Emperor, William's strategy of legitimization for his Imperial role was founded on a Prussian stance, but, importantly, combined with a dynastic federalism that recognized the early German nation state's nationhood. Given this state of affairs, William's refusal to develop an imposing Imperial authority to the non-Prussian parts of the Empire contributed significantly to making his role and persona accepted in these parts of the German Empire. Paradoxically, by refusing to explicitly project the Imperial order, William could become its very embodiment, acceptable even to those parts where particularistic state identities and loyalties were strongly developed.

Angelow has argued that William primarily carried out his Imperial role from a sense of duty.⁷⁸³ Such an argument tends, deliberately or not, to draw on the notion of William as the epitome of Prussian virtues, which included an adherence to duty. Angelow has argued that William eventually simply accustomed himself to his Imperial title and even showed off with it.⁷⁸⁴ These arguments all overlook, as this chapter has demonstrated, that William in fact, and especially during the 1880s, wilfully forged his Imperial role. In so doing, he essentially pursued two objectives. First, his strategy of legitimization of his Prussian particularism combined with dynastic federalism served to weld the fragmented German polity together. The way he appealed to even unwilling figures like the Bavarian Prince Ludwig during the military manoeuvres or by visiting the Württemberg dynasty whilst in Konstanz shows William's willingness to reconcile inner-German relations after the polarizing wars of German Unification. Eventually, William became acutely aware of the political capital that came from these efforts. To what extent he was willing to defend these was shown by his determined opposition of Bismarck's plan to Germanize Alsace Lorraine, which would have undone his personal popularity.

These reconciliatory efforts should not lead one to overlook William's second purpose: the projecting of a monarchical-military political order of which

⁷⁸² Huch ed., *Ehrenpforte und Inkognito*.

⁷⁸³ Cf. Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 188; Neugebauer, 'Funktion und Deutung', 89.

⁷⁸⁴ Angelow, 'Wilhelm I.', 261.

the Prussian monarchy was both the apex and the prime centre of political gravity. How William sought to alter the meaning of the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral and the unveiling of the Niederwald monument not only shows his considerable skill in recognizing the political potential of these events, but also for projecting the political order as he understood it. Illustrative is the former event, at which the Catholic community was made clear it was subjected to the authority of the Prussian monarchy, as was the large number of officers William sought to invite, next to political and civilian officials. That the political order was above all personified by its monarchs William made clear via the large number of princes invited by him for these two events. How strongly he adhered to this idea is demonstrated by his disregarding of Bismarck's explicit stated fear that William's dynastic federalism would undercut his Imperial role. Yet, this willingness to incorporate monarchical representatives from across the Empire shows that William was determined to make them part of his projection of his Imperial role at these events. It raises the question how this stance affected his monarchical representation in the capital of the new German nation state.

V. William's monarchical representation in Berlin

Introduction

On 17 and 18 January 1861 a large military ceremony took place in Berlin. In the presence of the royal family, the Prussian generals and representative troop units, William inaugurated 132 new standards for Guards and troops of the line by hitting nails in their pole. The dedication of these colours took place the following day and was part of a large military parade at Unter den Linden. The troops marched past the statue of Frederick the Great and then to the arsenal, where the colours were packed and handed to the representatives of the troop units.⁷⁸⁵ After the dedication, William addressed the generals present. On that day, the 160th anniversary of the coronation of Frederick I, their thoughts should not stop at the death of Frederick William IV sixteen days earlier. Rather, they were to reflect on the Prussian kings who, next to their duties to the country, led the Prussian army to glory. The generals were commanded that upon their return to their troops, they were to report that William as 'ihr nunmehriger Kriegsherr fest und zuversichtlich auf die Treue und Hingebung meiner Armee zähle, wie meine Vorfahren es taten; dann werden wir allen Gefahren mit Mut und Entschlossenheit entgegen gehen'. Because William held the address behind closed doors, it caused rumours and criticism. To counter this, William ordered minister Rudolf von Auerswald to publish the text of the address.⁷⁸⁶

Seen within the context of William's conflict with the Prussian diet over the expansion of the Prussian army, William's message with this military ceremonial was hard to miss. Using the anniversary of Prussia's elevation to a kingdom, a military parade past Prussia's most successful *König-Feldherr*, culminating in the city's arsenal, the ceremonial was a clear demonstration of the Hohenzollern monarchy as a military monarchy, reminding the Prussian Diet it alone had the prerogative in military matters.⁷⁸⁷ William's usage of ceremonial for political purposes was no isolated case in his reign. As Walter Bussmann, Matthias Schwengelbeck and Huch have demonstrated, William used his coronation that year as a challenge to the *Verfassungsstaat* and demonstrate the divine source of his royal power.⁷⁸⁸ During both occasions William utilized these ceremonies as

⁷⁸⁵ Müller, *Zeughaus. Arsenal zum Museum*, 102.

⁷⁸⁶ Schultze ed., *Wilhelms I. Briefe an Politiker und Staatsmänner* II, 157-159.

⁷⁸⁷ Cf. Pflanze, *Bismarck* I, 173.

⁷⁸⁸ Walter Bussmann, 'Die Krönung Wilhelms I. am 18 Oktober 1861. Eine Demonstration des Gottesgnadentums im preußischen Verfassungsstaat' in: Dieter Albrecht, Hans Günter Hockerts, Paul Mikat and Rudolf Morsey eds., *Politik und Konfession* (Berlin 1983) 189-212; Matthias Schwengelbeck, 'Monarchische Herrschaftsrepräsentationen zwischen Konsens und Konflikt: Zum Wandel des Huldigungs- und Inthronisationszeremoniells im 19. Jahrhundert' in: Jan Andreas, Alexa Geisthövel and Matthias Schwengelbeck eds., *Die Sinnlichkeit der Macht. Herrschaft und Repräsentation der Frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main 2005) 123-162, there 143-160; Matthias Schwengelbeck, *Die Politik des Zeremoniells. Huldigungsfeiern im langen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main 2007) 247-281; Huch ed., *Ehrenforste und Inkognito*, 94-101.

forms of political ceremonial which demonstrated a particular political order as he conceived it, when political ceremonial is defined as a performative act that projects political power structures in a consumable manner and which can be communicated in a medial form.⁷⁸⁹ This raises the question whether or not this practice was continued as German Emperor. After all, the problem of political primacy became no less acute after 1871, with the establishment of the Reichstag, German-wide political parties and the consolidation of Bismarck as Chancellor. In addition, the founding of the Empire meant that Berlin's role as a capital now extended to the German nation state as a whole, which, in theory, required forms of monarchical representation that reflected this new function.

Both contemporaries and historians have judged that William failed to develop a truly Imperial representation in the capital and point to his court as indicative for this failure. Von Hutten-Czapski wrote in his memoirs that William 'gewissermaßen nur „nebenbei“ betrachtete er sich als deutscher Kaiser. Er hätte es nie verstanden, daß der Kaisertitel von ihm eine besondere „kaiserliche“ Repräsentation verlange. Sein Hof blieb königlich preußisch'.⁷⁹⁰ Neugebauer has demonstrated that sometime between 1883 and 1888, court officials contemplated critically the patriarchal relations and organization of William's court and how these should be adapted to the political and social changes in society and reflect the increased political significance of the House of Hohenzollern. These considerations included relocating the centre of court life from William's palace to the Berliner *Schloß*, pointing to the development of an Imperial court. However, 'engrained habits' prevented the changes materializing during William's lifetime.⁷⁹¹ Court life under William remained constituted by weekly suppers, court balls, new year's reception and *Ordensfest*.⁷⁹² As has been demonstrated by Röhl, the renewal of the Berlin court subsequently occurred under William II.⁷⁹³ Hans Philippi has, not without good reasons, concluded that such changes were unthinkable under William I.⁷⁹⁴

A concentration on William's court does not suffice to give the final judgment on his monarchical representation in Berlin. That William held on to a Prussian court, rather than develop an Imperial one, was reflective of his dynastic-federal conception of his Imperial role and the Empire. There is no reason to assume that because of this, William's presence in the capital was of diminished importance to either his role or Berlin as, if only on occasion, the centre of the political and social life of the new German nation state. In fact, William was well aware of the importance of demonstrating Berlin as the capital. When in March 1877 the decision was made to retain the new supreme court in Leipzig, Lucius

⁷⁸⁹ Biefang, Epkenhans and Tenfelde, 'Politische Zeremoniell', 18.

⁷⁹⁰ Hutten-Czapski, *Sechzig Jahre* I, 41.

⁷⁹¹ Neugebauer, 'Funktion und Deutung', 92-94.

⁷⁹² Hammer, 'Preußischen Könige', 93-97.

⁷⁹³ John C.G. Röhl, 'Hof und Hofgesellschaft unter Wilhelm II.' in: Karl Ferdinand Werner ed., *Hof, Kultur und Politik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn 1985) 237-289.

⁷⁹⁴ Hans Philippi, 'Der Hof Kaiser Wilhelms II' in: Karl Möckl ed., *Hof und Hofgesellschaft in den deutschen Staaten im 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert* (Boppard am Rhein 1990) 361-394, there 361.

von Ballhausen noted in his diary that ‘Se. Majestät und der Kronprinz sollen sehr verletzt durch jenen Beschluß sein, das man das Reichsgericht nicht nach Berlin legen wolle.’⁷⁹⁵ As seen above, William himself did as much as he could to steer the city’s political topography in a monarchical-military direction with his politics of history. Moreover, William’s interferences in the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral and unveiling of the Niederwald Monument suggest that he recognized the potential of altering the political message that was projected at large events. This conduct determined his monarchical representation in Berlin as well. Next to the regular events held at William’s court, his monarchical representation in Berlin centred on occasional, but large events that he made instrumental to project his understanding of his role.

To demonstrate how William did this in practice, this chapter will discuss three categories of political ceremonial beyond court life. The first category are entry parades, being the 1871 victory parade and William’s return to Berlin in 1878 after the attempts on his life earlier that year. The second category are dynastic jubilees, being the 1879 golden wedding anniversary of William and Augusta, William’s silver jubilee as King of Prussia in 1886 and his 90th birthday in 1887. The third category is formed by William’s death and funeral. Because these were one-off events, they allow for analysing how William at given moments in his reign sought to project a political order that reflected his understanding of his Imperial role and his relation to other German states and groups he deemed essential for political and popular support. This chapter thus considers how and which political hierarchy was projected by William, paying attention to the symbolic acts and inclusion and exclusion of individuals and groups that reflected this understanding.

William’s entry parades

William did not invent the tradition of entry parades into Berlin, but he did know how to utilize them. The grand ceremonial entry of a monarch into a city, such as his own capital, was an instrument that was already used in the early modern era.⁷⁹⁶ It allowed the monarch to take symbolically possession of the city, either on a visit or a return from war. Its performative form served to reiterate the existing political structure. In the century following the French Revolution, this practice gained new importance to increase the visibility of the monarch and generate popular support for his role. Especially after a military conflict, an entry parade could to the monarch as a successful military commander and project the unity between monarchy, army and population. William’s entry parades had a precedent, albeit a limited one, in Prussian history. In 1814 Frederick William III circumvented the entry parade into Berlin by passing the Brandenburg Gate at the head of his troops several hours earlier than planned, refused any decorations that referred to him other than the army and then ordered the decorations to be taken down and placed

⁷⁹⁵ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 102.

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Geertz, ‘Centres, kings and charisma’, 16.

in the arsenal.⁷⁹⁷ Unlike his father, William seems to have recognized the utility of entry parades, especially in the wake of the 1848 revolution. On 12 October 1849, William was received with a 'Hosianna' by the city of Berlin after his military campaign that defeated insurrectionists in Baden. The parade saw him being received by the city's deputies and his palace decorated.⁷⁹⁸ After the war against Austria, a large victory parade was held in Berlin. William thus recognized the importance of victory parades both in Berlin and for emphasizing his own military and monarchical role. The 1871 victory parade could follow a precedent William himself had created.

Planning for the victory parade began whilst William was still in Versailles. The question of a parade was related with organizing a nation-wide commemoration service for the war dead. On 28 February 1871, William wrote to Augusta that he deemed it more appropriate that 'wenn die Truppen erst wieder im Lande sind, die doch den größten Eindruck desselben empfinden werden und zugleich ihrem Dank zu spenden berufen sind für eigene Erhaltung.'⁷⁹⁹ William ordered the State Ministry to organize such a service, but the cabinet judged that one could not be undertaken until peace with France was definitive.⁸⁰⁰ Important for William was that the date for the parade would be a symbolic one. Initially, he wanted 2 May, the anniversary of the battle of Groß-Görschen, and was supported in this by the General Staff. Bismarck blocked this option, refusing to withdraw the necessary army corps from France. Then, William opted for 3 August, the anniversary of his father's birth, so that the parade coincided with the unveiling of the equestrian statue for Frederick William III.⁸⁰¹ Augusta supported this idea, since it allowed her to stay in the Rhineland without interruption. Moltke, Roon, Podbielski and Tresckow sought to convince William to opt for 3 June, an idea that originated with Bismarck. In the end, it was agreed that 16 June would be the date for the victory parade.⁸⁰² This was the anniversary of the battle of Ligny in 1815, in which William had fought. It was also closest to the nationwide commemorations for the victory over France, 18 June, a date selected by William to satisfy national-liberal demands for a national celebration and for its associations in Prussia with the battles of Fehrbellin and Waterloo. However, because 16 June coincided with the 25th anniversary of Pius IX's election to the

⁷⁹⁷ Thomas Biskup, *Friedrichs Größe. Inszenierungen des Preußenkönigs in Fest und Zeremoniell 1740-1815* (Frankfurt 2012) 222-223; Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's wars*, 163-164. Hagemann relies on contemporary periodical accounts, rather than the eyewitness reports that Biskup draws on, and thus describes a popular reception that in reality was not there.

⁷⁹⁸ Herre, *Kaiser Wilhelm I.*, 225. To the mayor of Berlin William stated that 'Unsre Institutionen haben sich bewährt, vor allem auf militärischem Felde. Darum empfehle ich die Armee der steten und besonderen Sorgfalt der Kammern.'

⁷⁹⁹ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Bd. 16. 1871. Bl. 38-40, William to Augusta, 18 February 1871.

⁸⁰⁰ GStA PK. I. HA Rep. 90A. Staatsministerium, jüngere Registratur. No. 4594. Krieg gegen Frankreich 1870/71, Bd. 2 1871. Bl. 175, the State Ministry to William, 8 March 1871.

⁸⁰¹ Rassow ed., *Geheimes Kriegstagebuch*, 408.

⁸⁰² Meisner ed., *Denkwürdigkeiten Waldersee I*, 134-136.

papacy, many Catholics throughout Germany chose to celebrate this event instead.⁸⁰³

William took an active interest in the organizing of the parade itself, as Schneider has testified: ‘ganz im Gegensatze zu der Gleichgültigkeit, welche er gegen die Arrangements für die Feier am 18. Januar gezeigt hatte.’⁸⁰⁴ A programme approved by William shows that the entry parade formed part of a three-day celebration in Berlin. On 17 June a dinner would be held at the Berliner Schloß and a performance of Schiller’s *Wallenstein* and a church service on 18 June. On 16 June all troops would gather at the Tempelhofer Feld, where they and the captured French colours would be inspected by William, before assembling and marching towards the centre of Berlin via the Königgrätzer Straße. Ahead of the column would march the headquarters and commanding generals, followed by Bismarck, Moltke and Roon and then William and the royal field marshals and other male members of the royal house.⁸⁰⁵ This followed William’s wishes, for he ordered Bismarck to ensure the presence of all commanding generals to be present at the parade.⁸⁰⁶ In order to reflect the new German Empire, other states, in particular Baden, Württemberg, Saxony and Bavaria were formally invited by William to send troop units, though in practice many communications arranging this matter went via Bismarck.⁸⁰⁷ At William’s insistence, the number of troops sent by each state was kept within limits. Their transport would have been too expensive and he deemed it indiscrete to demand too many troops, as each state would also hold a victory parade of their own.⁸⁰⁸ The order of events and sequence of the procession demonstrated, as Seyferth has pointed out, that the entry parade was above all a projection of monarchical power in an old-fashioned sense. It underscored the role of the military that was beyond parliamentary control.⁸⁰⁹ This projection was strengthened by the fact that William had been in Berlin since March, but for this occasion was staged as returning to the capital at the head of his troops.

The culmination and endpoint of the parade would be the Lustgarten, where the statue of Frederick William III would be unveiled. The statue was part

⁸⁰³ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 457-458. See for the text of William’s instructions for setting 18 June for the *Dankfeier* GStA PK. I. HA Rep. 90A. No. 4594. Bl. 280, William to State Ministry, 27th May 1870, Bl. 282. Von Mühler to Bismarck, 29 May 1871 and Bl. 285, *Immediatbericht* of the State Ministry to William, 30 May 1871, containing the draft order.

⁸⁰⁴ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* III, 221. The celebration of 18 January to which Schneider refers was the proclamation of the German Empire.

⁸⁰⁵ GStA PK. I. HA. Rep. 90A. No. 4595. Krieg gegen Frankreich 1870/71, Bd. 3 1871-1896. Allerhöchste Bestimmungen über den am 16. Juni d.J. erfolgenden Einmarsch der aus dem Felde zurückkehrende Truppen in Berlin und die im Anschluß hiervon stattfindende Enthüllung des Denkmals Seiner Majestät des Königs Friedrich Wilhelm III^{ten}. Cf. GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Bd 16. Bl. 7, William to Augusta, 5 June 1871.

⁸⁰⁶ GStA Pk I. HA. Rep. 90A. No. 4595, William to Bismarck, 10 June 1871.

⁸⁰⁷ Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde. R 1401. Reichskanzleramt. No. 1152. Feiertlichkeiten beim Einzug der aus Frankreich zurückkehrenden Truppen XX gen. 43 adh 20. Mai – Nov. 1871. Bl. 3. Von Suckow to Bismarck, 26th May 1871, Bl. 5. Bismarck to von Werthern, 26th May 1871, Bl. 7. Werthern to Bismarck, 28th May 1871.

⁸⁰⁸ GStA PK. BPH. Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Bd. 16. Bl. 80. William to Augusta, 7 June 1871.

⁸⁰⁹ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 457.

of William's initiative to alter the political topography of Berlin and, together with a similar statue in Cologne of which the first stone was placed in 1865, formed part of elevating the memory of his father and his role in the Napoleonic Wars. In both these projects William took an active interest.⁸¹⁰ The Berlin's statue first stone was placed on 17 March 1863, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Prussia's militia.⁸¹¹ The event was organized to commemorate the way the population supposedly rallied around the Prussian king and included veterans of the Napoleonic wars. But the popular reception was nonetheless frosty, because of a lack of lodging for the troops and workers needed to march behind the troops.⁸¹² Originally, the date for the unveiling had been set for 3 August 1870, the 100th anniversary of Frederick William III's birth, but because of the outbreak of the war against France had to be cancelled.⁸¹³ At William's behest, the unveiling was then made part of the victory parade. To Augusta, William wrote on 18 February 1871 'Ich denke mir, daß es am besten wäre, die Enthüllung der Statue so weit wie sie zum 3. August war am Einzugstage der Truppen in Berlin stattfindet und zwar am Moment wenn die Truppen auf dem Schloßplatz en masse aufmarschiert sind.'⁸¹⁴ During an audience for interior minister Eulenburg on 5 June, William ordered that the unveiling would be a purely military ceremonial.⁸¹⁵ This was reflected in the subsequent orders William issued. The ceremony was to be kept within limits in terms of size, but William did order the presence of the cabinet ministers, as well as knights of the Iron Cross from the campaigns of 1813-1815 and an older generation officers, such as Wrangel.⁸¹⁶

But at the State Ministry, and especially Bismarck's insistence, the unveiling was to be kept distinct from the actual victory parade at Unter den Linden because of its Prussian particularistic character. This was a concession to the other German states and a reversal of the position William and the cabinet had taken the previous year. Back then, William wanted no distinction to be made for the unveiling in the attendance of the old and new provinces of Prussia, including Schleswig-Holstein, so that it could identify with the national-German memory of the Napoleonic Wars. Furthermore, the unveiling was to celebrate more than just the military achievements of Frederick William III.⁸¹⁷ The following year, William

⁸¹⁰ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* II, 115-117; Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* III, 140-141.

⁸¹¹ GStA PK. BPH. Rep. 51. I. No. 48. Bekanntmachung anlässlich der Grundsteinlegung für das Reiterdenkmal Friedrich Wilhelms III. in Berlin 1863 März 17.

⁸¹² Pflanze, *Bismarck* I, 204.

⁸¹³ GStA PK. I. HA. Rep. 77. Ministerium des Innern Abteilung I. Sektion 14. Königliches Haus und Hof. Tit. 98. Huldigungen u. andere Hoffeierlichkeiten. No. 87. Die hundertjährige Feier des Hubertusbürger Friedens. Die Erinnerung an den vor 50 Jahren erfolgten Aufruf des Hochseligen Königs Friedrich Wilhelms IV Majestät „An mein Volk“. Die Errichtung eines Standbildes Sr. Majestät des Hochseligen Königs Friedrich Wilhelm III. Bd. 2. 1863-1913. William to the State Ministry, 25 May 1870; Ibidem, Eulenburg to the *Staatsanzeiger*, 16 July 1870.

⁸¹⁴ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51.J. No. 509b. Bd. 16. Bl. 40, William to Augusta, 18 February 1871.

⁸¹⁵ GStA PK. I. HA. Rep. 77. tit. 98. No. 87. Marginal comments of the Minister of the Interior Zu Eulenburg in a concept to William I., March 1870.

⁸¹⁶ Ibidem, von Tresckow to Minister of the Interior zu Eulenburg, 5th June 1871 and von Tresckow to Minister of the Interior Zu Eulenburg, 9th June 1871.

⁸¹⁷ Paetau and Spenkuch eds., *Protokolle VI/I*, 185.

enquired with Bismarck whether members of the Reichstag and Federal Council would be present.⁸¹⁸ Bismarck argued against this, because representatives of the other German states were already present to witness the return of troops from across Germany. Were they to be present at what was essentially a Prussian celebration, then misunderstandings could arise.⁸¹⁹ Based on these considerations a ceremony followed in which Prussian troops would be lined up in the Lustgarten, after which William and other members of the dynasty would enter the grounds and the captured French colours would be placed at the base of the monument. Following a prayer, Bismarck would request William to give the order to unveil the statue, the national anthem and a hymn would be played, before the troops would march off.⁸²⁰ The unveiling succeeded in creating a dynastic dyad between Frederick William III's participation in the Napoleonic Wars with William's in the Franco-Prussian War, by placing the French colours at the statue and William's personal presence opposite the monument.

The victory parade centred much on William. This was partially against his own intentions, for William, like his father in 1814, wanted the parade to be about the troops rather than himself. Nonetheless, William had to accept addresses by the mayor of Berlin.⁸²¹ His central position was aided by his physical appearance. According to one eyewitness 'der Kaiser ritt allein. Niemand neben ihm. Der wunderbare Greis muß eine überlebensgroße Menschenkraft haben, diese äußeren Strapazen und innere Bewegungen so zu überdauern.'⁸²² Indeed, despite the sweltering heat, which caused his brothers Carl and Albrecht and the Saxon Crown Prince to faint, William, dressed in the dark uniform of the first foot guard regiment and wearing a *Pickelhaube*, remained seated throughout the military manoeuvres at the field of Tempelhof preceding the parade, the procession through the city, the parade and inspection of the troops and the unveiling of his father's statue – seven hours in all.⁸²³ The image of the indefatigable 74-year old monarch sitting on horseback at the head of his troops proved to be a powerful one: newspapers such as the Berlin-based *Vossische Zeitung* and the Augsburg-based *Allgemeine Zeitung* commented on his powerful, heroic and knightly appearance.⁸²⁴ On the day of the parade Theodor Fontane wrote the poem 'Kaiser Blanchebart': 'Vor seinem Heergefolge ritt, / Von seinem Volk umschart, / Inmitten von Helden und Prinzen / An der Spitze seiner Provinzen, / Der Kaiser Blanchebart.'⁸²⁵ By physical appearance alone, William

⁸¹⁸ BA R1401. No. 1152. Bl. 23. Von Tresckow to Bismarck, 11 June 1871.

⁸¹⁹ Ibidem, Bl. 24. Bismarck to von Tresckow, 14 June 1871. Also printed in: Hopp ed., *Bismarck. Gesammelte Werke* III/I, 127-128.

⁸²⁰ GStA PK. I. HA. Rep. 90A. No. 4595. 'Allerhöchste Bestimmungen über den am 16. Juni d.J. erfolgenden Einmarsch'.

⁸²¹ Meisner ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 425.

⁸²² Ruth Glatzer ed., *Berlin wird Kaiserstadt. Panorama einer Metropole 1871-1890* (Berlin 1993) 32.

⁸²³ Herre, *Kaiser Wilhelm I.*, 426; Bronsart von Schellendorf, *Kriegstagebuch*, 418.

⁸²⁴ *Vossische Zeitung*, 18 June 1871; *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 June 1871.

⁸²⁵ Joachim Krueger and Anita Golz eds., *Theodor Fontane. Grosse Brandenburger Ausgabe. Gedichte I Gedichte (Sammlung 1898). Aus den Sammlungen ausgeschiedene Gedichte* (2nd edition; Berlin 1995) 222-223; Roland Berbig, *Theodor Fontane Chronik III 1871-1883* (Berlin 2010) 1739.

responded to the early German empire's longing for heroes.⁸²⁶ This gave the Catholic newspaper *Germania* the incentive to put him on par with the Pope, both being just sovereigns, both wrongfully attacked.⁸²⁷ Nevertheless, William's exposure also made him the object of criticism. The liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung* questioned the absence of a general amnesty and the presence of the Austrian field marshal Gablenz at the unveiling of Frederick William III's statue.⁸²⁸

How was this victory parade perceived outside Berlin? Seyferth has argued that the population in other parts of Germany was not charmed by the victory parades in other German capitals, whilst these parades in turn were not written about in subsequent histories of the conflict.⁸²⁹ However, the sources indicate that William not only undertook active measures address this division, but also that this had effect. William wanted to undertake more parades, but because troops had to be transported per division via railway, William was told to restrict himself to attending the parade in Hannover. Because the elections there had resulted in a more particularistic outcome, Bronsart von Schellendorf feared popular interest would be limited. But William fell ill shortly before departing to Hannover and had to send his son instead.⁸³⁰ According to the *Ober-Präsident* of Hannover, the parade, with Frederick William present, was met with large popular interest, but dampened by William's absence.⁸³¹ What mattered for William foremost was, both in Berlin and beyond, that the parades served as a display of unity between monarchy, army and people. To Augusta, William wrote on 21 June:

‘Ich kann es eigentlich garnicht [sic] aussprechen, was ich in jenen Tagen empfunden habe. Das Wiedersehen der Truppen, die ich in so verschiedenen Momenten nach ihrer Heldenkämpfen sah der Jubel und die Decoration der Stadt, beides als Eindrücke der Residenz als ein comprimierter Dank des ganzen Landes; die Enthüllung des Monuments – das Alles schnürt mir noch heute die Kehle zu, wenn ich daran denke – und nun das alles zusammengefaßt in den Gedanken was geschaffen werden ist seit Monaten durch Heer und Volk – der bleibt einem nichts

⁸²⁶ Jefferies, *Imperial culture*, 114-115.

⁸²⁷ *Germania*, 16 June 1871.

⁸²⁸ *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 18 June 1871.

⁸²⁹ Seyferth, *Heimatfront*, 458. Seyferth based his argument on the suppression of the other victory parades on Theodor Lindner, *Der Krieg gegen Frankreich und die Einigung Deutschlands: zur 25-Jährigen Wiederkehr der Gedenktage von 1870/71* (Berlin 1895). This exclusion must be explained by the fact that Lindner's history was published at the request of the Prussian Ministry of Culture and a quarter century after the war, by which time the memory of the conflict had already converged far stronger on William I than the outset. Whether or not this meant that the memory of the other parades was sidelined in the immediate aftermath of the celebrations may be doubted.

⁸³⁰ Rassow ed., *Kriegstagebuch*, 420, 422.

⁸³¹ GStA PK. I. HA. Rep. 89 Geheimes Zivilkabinett, jüngere Periode. No. 15853. Zeitungsberichte des Oberpräsidenten und der Regierung in Hannover. Bd. 1. 1867-1879. Bl. 157v, The *Ober-Präsident* of Hannover to William, 25th July 1871.

übrig als die Hände und das Herz zum Himmel emporzuheben Dank zu stammeln.⁸³²

In retrospect, the 1871 victory parade provided the template for William's return to Berlin in December 1878, after having recovered from the assassination attempt on his life on 2 June. This begs the question why William's return was organized on such a scale. Two causes can be identified. First, the news of the attempt on his life was seen by some as a national humiliation. The British envoy Charles S. Scott wrote to Salisbury that 'The predominant feeling was one of intense humiliation, many under the first impression declaring that these two crimes will go far to efface the memory of the brilliant historical achievements of Germany during the last twelve years.'⁸³³ By partially replicating the parade of 1871 in 1878, the Prussian government and Berlin city authorities consciously cultivated this memory. Secondly, it served as a counterweight to fears of revolution. William and Augusta feared revolution in the immediate aftermath of the attempt on William's life. Stosch, who visited William and Augusta on 9 June, wrote that 'die Herrschaften waren sehr gebrochen; dieses gemeine Vergreifen an ihrer Person u. nun gar das Bedrohen mit dem Plebejischen Tod, ist so ganz im Widerstreit mit ihrer ganzen Existenz, daß es zerstörend auf ihre Nerven wirkt.'⁸³⁴ But William's rapid recovery made him eager to assume the reins of government again after the attempt. His grand return was a counter-revolutionary signal of the victorious military monarch taking the helm of government again. This perception was aided by Bismarck's absence at the return, because he remained at Friedrichruh for an extended leave.⁸³⁵

The tacit emphasis on William's heroism was mirrored by some of the decorations that the city of Berlin ordered. Large parts of the city centre were to be illuminated, such as the city hall. More importantly, the city illuminated many of its monuments, such as the statues of Frederick the Great, York, Gneisenau, Blücher, Scharnhorst, Bülow, Schiller, Stein, Schinkel and others. The Victoria on top of the Victory Column was to be lit up, as were von Werner's mosaic in the monument. It was surrounded by decorations in firework of William's name and Crowns and an eagle. Many other squares in the city were to be illuminated, such as the Wilhelmplatz, the Landsberger Platz, the Lustgarten, the Victory Column on the Belle-Alliance-Platz, the Schloßbrücke. The Brandenburg Gate was to be decorated with fireworks. Decorations at the Potsdamer Platz, the squares on both sides of the Brandenburg Gate and the square in front of William's palace were done in such a way as for each to form a unique arrangement, to be connected by separate decorations of flags and arches along the Königgrätzer Straße and Unter

⁸³² GStA PK. BPH. Rep. 51J. No. 509b. Bd. 16. Bl. 86-87, William to Augusta, 21 June 1871.

⁸³³ Mösslang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 248.

⁸³⁴ Baumgart ed., *Stosch. Politische Korrespondenz*, 209.

⁸³⁵ Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 469.

den Linden. In all of this, the city authorities sought to mirror the reception William had been given upon his return to Berlin in March 1871.⁸³⁶

William was nonetheless determined to shape the narrative of his return. Via Eulenburg he let the Crown Prince know that he accepted the decorations and festivities in front of his palace.⁸³⁷ At the same time, William prescribed the State Ministry which uniforms were to be worn upon his arrival.⁸³⁸ On 16 November, Eulenburg received detailed instructions via Perponcher from William on his arrival. He wanted the members of the royal family to be present, the field marshals, officials from the civilian branch, the State Ministry, the generals of the infantry and cavalry, the commandant and police president of Berlin, the mayor and deputies of the city. He stipulated the route, following the Königgrätzer Strasse to the Brandenburg Gate, as was decorated by the city. But from there ordered that he should travel in the centre of the road and that it should be cleared from public. William rejected the proposed decorations along the streets and squares that the committee wanted. William thought that this went beyond his reception in 1871 and for this reason could not accept it. Instead, he wanted money not spent on the decorations to be donated to the poor. He did agree to the illuminations of the statues as well as to the presence of photographers and children.⁸³⁹ He likewise ordered the president of the council of the Evangelical church to be present.⁸⁴⁰ William thus deliberately reduced the size of the reception, so as not to make it the equivalent of the entry parade in 1871, allowing that reception to endure as a unique one-off event.

How were these accents perceived? The lessening of the decorations with its underlying intention was observed by the *Vossische Zeitung*: ‘Von jenen früheren Decorierungen, welche derselbe Weg bei Gelegenheit der unvergeßlichen glanzreiche Siegeszüge vom September 1866 und vom Juni 1871 erhielt, unterscheidet sich die ihm diesmal gegebene sehr wesentliche durch die Abwesenheit jedes kriegerischen Charakters. Es ist der Einzug eines friedlichen Triumphators’.⁸⁴¹ Popular enthusiasm as expression of political adhesion had been considerable according to Hutten-Czapski: ‘Es ist unmöglich, die Begeisterung zu schildern, mit der der genesene Monarch in der Stadt empfangen wurde. Von sozialistischen Kundgebungen war nichts zu spüren, es wäre auch jeder, der sich in kaiserfeindliche Weise geäußert hätte, ein Opfer der Volkswut geworden.’⁸⁴² The reception thus took place amidst notions of political instability and unrest, as Spitzemberg also testified: ‘Wie viele gemahnte es mich

⁸³⁶ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 659. Feierlichkeiten aus Anlaß der Rückkehr Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelm I nach Berlin und der Wiederübernahme der Regierungsgeschäfte am 5^{ten} Dezember 1878. Stadtrath Gilow to Eulenburg, 7 November 1878.

⁸³⁷ Ibidem, Eulenburg to Crown Prince Frederick William, 27 November 1878

⁸³⁸ BA R 43. Reichskanzlei. No. 608. Hof- und Etiquetteangelegenheiten, Hoffeste und Feierlichkeiten. Bd. 1. Okt. 1878 – Mai 1880. Bl. 2, Wilmowski to Bismarck, 23 November 1878.

⁸³⁹ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 89. No. 659. Perponcher to Eulenburg, 16 November 1878.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibidem, unknown to Wilmowski, 26 November 1878 and Wilmowski to Stolberg, 30 November 1878.

⁸⁴¹ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 5 December 1878.

⁸⁴² Hutten-Czapski, *Sechzig Jahre*, 60-61.

an den Einzug anno 1871, und daß die sichere, frohe, ungebrochene Treue von damals doch wankend geworden, daß ihr ein Makel anhaftet, den nichts wegwäscht, und daß unser Glück von damals wankt wie die Treue.⁸⁴³ William's performance on this day primarily served to assure the population of his role. In this respect, the entry parade was a combination of a unique event, complemented by a returning ritual: upon his arrival at his palace at Unter den Linden, William went to his study and waived at the population several times as he did daily from there, before overseeing the march-past of guard of honour.⁸⁴⁴ This seems to have assured certain groups at court. Spitzemberg recorded that many hoped William would abstain from a grand entry, to reach out to Berliners who had voted against the government in recent elections. Evidently, William had not done so and instead Spitzemberg was left to record that 'hoffentlich hat nun sein altes weiches Herz Freude gehabt an all' dem Schmuck und Jubel'.⁸⁴⁵ William's publicly staged return was thus a signal to both court and population that an active monarch had taken up his duties again.

William's dynastic jubilees

In retrospect, the entry parade of 1878 was the last of its sort. Thereafter William's monarchical representation in Berlin was, next to the regular presentations at court, constituted by dynastic jubilees. William's 1878 return and its reception indicate that the growing distance in time to William's wartime role resulted in a somewhat larger emphasis on his symbolic and patriarchal role as monarch. The increased use of dynastic jubilees was enabled by specific rites of passage of the last decade of William's life and coincided with his expansion of his Imperial role since the late 1870s. But the gestation of this development was gradual and only more complete towards the ends of William's life.

Importantly, the increased use of dynastic jubilees also must be seen in a broader context of similar usages by other German and European monarchies. Simone Mergen has demonstrated that after the French Revolution monarchies looked for new means to generate support and reactivate old forms of loyalty that projected a homogenous consciousness of state and nation. It served to demonstrate political ideas of the monarchical principle, the monarch as father of his people and underline the bond between the king and his people. In the course of the century, wedding anniversaries and birthdays established themselves as dynastic jubilees. They projected monarchs as symbols of continuity and guarantees of social justice. In Saxony more than Bavaria, the league of princes that was the German Empire was celebrated, while both states celebrated the links across generations by incorporating the youth in its celebrations. The high tide of dynastic jubilees came after 1870, when pressured by the establishment of the German Empire monarchs were forced to present themselves as figures of national integration and part of the league of princes that was the German Empire, but also

⁸⁴³ Vierhaus ed., *Tagebuch*, 176.

⁸⁴⁴ *Königlich Privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 6 December 1878.

⁸⁴⁵ Vierhaus ed., *Tagebuch*, 176.

as holders of the particularistic identity.⁸⁴⁶ Outside Germany, the Netherlands celebrated the silver jubilee of King William III in 1874. In the United Kingdom, Queen Victoria's 1887 golden jubilee, celebrated with a pageant and service of thanksgiving, marked the first of a series of public ceremonies that saw the monarch presented as the symbolic head and matriarch of the nation.⁸⁴⁷ William's dynastic jubilees thus followed a wider European pattern, whilst in adherence to his state's particularism, his jubilees showed similarity with those in Saxony in Bavaria. This reflected William's dynastic-federal understanding of his role and determined the interferences he made in the preparation of these jubilees.

Under William's influence, his golden wedding anniversary was staged primarily as a family affair and in a limited sense projected his dynastic-federal conception of the German Empire. On 6 April 1879 the master of ceremony at the court, Count Stillfried had prepared a memorandum on the upcoming anniversary. He pointed at the potential German-wide interest in the event and pleaded for the attendance of representatives from other parts of Germany. Instead, William wanted one representative from each of Prussia's provinces and one of each German state, by which the balance in representation shifted in Prussia's favour. Rather than other foreign potentates present, William wanted family members attending to project the event as a family affair. Festivities were scheduled for 11 and 12 June, but at William's behest the deputies were not to be received until the second day. In the chapel of the palace were only the deputies and heads of the services to be present, next to other guests who were to be there by invitation only. A family dinner was to be held at the palace that afternoon. William was against having other deputies in the adjacent rooms and would return to his palace immediately after the religious service.⁸⁴⁸ A few weeks later, William ordered that only ten to twelve persons were to be deputized from Prussia's provinces, representing the landed aristocracy, cities and rural communities, because, according to Eulenburg, 'der Allerhöchsten goldenen Hochzeit, welche sich nur in den Grenzen eines Familienfestes bewegen soll'.⁸⁴⁹ The German princes and the wives of officials were to be present in the chapel.⁸⁵⁰ A further cap on the festivities was that William and Augusta would arrive at the palace during the hours of

⁸⁴⁶ Simone Mergen, 'Entstehung und Entwicklung von Monarchiejubiläen in Sachsen und Bayern im 19. Jahrhundert' in: Winfried Müller ed., *Das historische Jubiläum. Genese, Ordnungsleistung und Inszenierungsgeschichte eines institutionellen Mechanismus* (Münster 2004) 219-243; Simone Mergen, *Monarchiejubiläen im 19. Jahrhundert. Die Entdeckung des historischen Jubiläums für den monarchischen Kult in Sachsen und Bayern* (Leipzig 2005) 221-247.

⁸⁴⁷ Cannadine, 'Context, performance and meaning', 120-134.

⁸⁴⁸ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. Oberhofmarschallamt. No. 1621. Feier der goldenen Hochzeit des Kaisers und der Kaiserin, Bd. 1. 1879. Bl. 4. Memorandum by court master of ceremony Count Stillfried, with marginal comments by William I, 6 April 1879. Cf. Ibidem, Bl. 3. Undated memorandum to Perponcher that summarizes William's wishes as follows: reception of the congratulations ahead of the religious service, No reception afterwards, but a dinner at the palace and reception of the deputies on 12 June.

⁸⁴⁹ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 77. Tit. 98. Nr. 94. Die Feier der goldenen Hochzeit Ihrer Majestäten des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelm I und der Kaiserin und Königin Augusta am 11. Juni 1879. Bd. 1. 1879. Bd. 2. 1879-1880. Bl. 1. Eulenburg to unknown, 31 May 1879.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibidem, Bl. 10. Memorandum by William I on the first version of the programme, undated.

darkness and unnoticed by the public.⁸⁵¹ Their withdrawal from the chapel was organized in such a manner that they did not have to greet all the attendants again upon their departure, thus not straining the aging couple.⁸⁵² In addition, if owners of buildings that were not governmental wished illuminations, they were to pay themselves for the decorations.⁸⁵³ Because no Imperial Crowns existed and the royal Crowns were deemed inappropriate for William as German Emperor, Augusta wore a *Myrthenkrone* and William a *Myrthenzweig* on his uniform.⁸⁵⁴

Because of these instructions the actual ceremony was primarily a religious service in the White Chapel of the palace in Berlin, out of sight of the public. Ahead of the service, the heads of the civil and military services of government, city authorities of Berlin, Charlottenburg and Potsdam, commanding generals, presidia of the Reichstag and Prussian Diet, deputies from the Prussian provinces and other German states. Thereafter the procession would enter, headed by William and Augusta, who arrived shortly before at the palace, and the other members of the Hohenzollern dynasty and other German princes. This procession was constituted by William and Augusta, the Crown Prince and Crown Princess, the King and Queen of Saxony, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Baden, the Grand Duchesses of Saxony and Mecklenburg-Schwerin and princely representatives of the ruling dynasties of Bavaria, Württemberg, Weimar, Hessen, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Anhalt, Russia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Belgium. Then followed the religious service, after which the procession would leave the chapel to the palace's White Hall. Here, the guests would bid their farewells to the couple. The latter would then take their places on the thrones in the hall and would be flanked by Frederick William and his wife and their courtiers. Hereafter the defile cour would commence. On William's orders, Bismarck would lead the State Ministry and take position next to the throne when the Federal Council filed pass.⁸⁵⁵ The further sequence had likewise been stipulated by William, starting with the provinces, beginning with East Prussia, followed by the other provinces and the deputies of universities and the arts of Berlin, Charlottenburg and Potsdam, followed by the deputies of the other German states, universities and smaller states.⁸⁵⁶ The defile marked the end of the ceremonies of the first day. The following day, a gala dinner would be held for members of the royal families, the heads of the civil and military services.⁸⁵⁷

The deliberately limited nature of this celebration became clear in its subsequent execution and reception. Spitzemberg described how 'schon von früh

⁸⁵¹ Ibidem, Bl. 16. Perponcher to Stillfried, 28th March 1879.

⁸⁵² Ibidem, Bl. 17. Stillfried to unknown addressee, 25th April 1879.

⁸⁵³ Ibidem, Bl. 68a. William to the State Ministry, 31 May 1879.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibidem, Bl. 70. Stillfried to Perponcher, 16 May 1879.

⁸⁵⁵ BA R43 No. 608. Bl. 55. Stillfried to Stolberg-Wernigerode, 6 June 1879.

⁸⁵⁶ GStA PK I. HA. Rep. 77. Tit. 98. No. 94. 'Abschrift eines Allerhöchsteigenhändigen Schreibens', 28 May 1879.

⁸⁵⁷ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 1621. Bl. 47. Allerhöchst befohlene Ordnung der Feierlichkeiten bei der am 11. Juni 1879 stattfindenden Goldenen Hochzeit Ihrer Majestäten des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelm und der Kaiserin und Königin Augusta; ibidem, Bl. 50, 'Ordnung des Zuges der Allerhöchsten und der Höchsten Herrschaften'.

ab stand es Kopf an Kopf auf den Straßen, darunter viele Fremde, meist Leute vom Lande, kaum einer ohne sein Kornblumensträußchen, die zentnerweise zur Stadt gebracht worden sein wollen. Carl [her husband, FFS] als Bundesrat wohnte der Trauung bei und defilierte als solcher in corpore mit seinen Genossen, während ich mit Anna Nostitz zu den Diplomaten kam, die sich im Rittersaale trafen... Nach langem Warten kamen wir zur Defiliercour: Die Majestäten standen unter dem Throne, der Kaiser auf einen Stock gelehnt, sonst waren nur die Hofchargen anwesend. Dann mußten wir gleich weg, so daß wir von der Feier so gut wie nichts sahen; Carl kam erst um 3 Uhr zurück und eilten wir sofort unter die Linden, um noch die Rückfahrt zu sehen, kamen aber zu spät.⁸⁵⁸ This distinction between the closed and public parts of the ceremony was also described by von Werner, who detailed how he was led in front of the Emperor, as part of the group representing the academy of arts, and attended the religious service and subsequent dinner. Only then did William and Augusta appear in an open carriage to review the illuminations put up in the city.⁸⁵⁹ The limited nature of the celebration also meant that no amnesty was given to the bishops, which caused grievance with the Centre Party and was criticised in a speech by Schorlemmer.⁸⁶⁰ The golden wedding anniversary was thus primarily a demonstration of William's dynastic-federal conception of his Imperial role and showed its limitations towards the Catholic Church and, because of the absence of its members, those dynasties not related to the Hohenzollern.

In choosing to organize a public celebration of his accession to the throne in 1886, William followed a wider German and European context. To what extent William and his court and governmental officials perceived these jubilees abroad as models to be emulated in Prussia or for William's Imperial role remains unclear. What can be established with certainty is that already in 1883, the court wanted to mark William's accession to the regency 25 years earlier with a commemoration. But William refused to celebrate this with a public event, given that his brother's illness caused his assumption of the regency.⁸⁶¹ Because rumours of such an event circulated in the newspapers, William ordered Wilmowski to publicly deny this and state that no public event would take place, given the circumstances of his assumption of the regency. William's opinion had to be made public in newspaper coverage, which indeed subsequently happened.⁸⁶²

This stance determined William's initial outlook when plans to celebrate the silver jubilee of his accession to the Prussian throne on 2 January 1886 were brought up. To the State Ministry he had stated on 21 October 1885 that he saw no reason to commemorate the occasion, but if at all, had to remain within limits: services to be postponed to 3 January, rather than 2 January, as it marked the

⁸⁵⁸ Vierhaus ed., *Tagebuch*, 179.

⁸⁵⁹ Von Werner, *Erlebnisse*, 261-262.

⁸⁶⁰ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 161-162.

⁸⁶¹ BA R43. No. 1462. Persönliche Angelegenheiten des Kaisers sowie der Mitglieder des Königlichen Hauses. Bd. 1. Okt. 1878 – Dez. 1886. Bl. 16. Wilmowski to Bismarck, 11 May 1883; *Ibidem*, Bl. 81 Rottenburg to Wilmowski, 19 May 1883.

⁸⁶² *Ibidem*, Bl. 82. Wilmowski to unknown, 11 May 1883; *National Zeitung*, 22 June 1883, clipping in BA R43. No. 1462. Bl. 87.

anniversary of his brother's death. As this was a Sunday, William wanted references to the event in the Evangelical church's prayers. Apart from this, William did not want any public events because of the winter weather and his advanced age.⁸⁶³ The State Ministry subsequently ordered to use this instruction in its communication with local authorities.⁸⁶⁴ These were told the limitations William set out. They were permitted to hold their own local celebrations but were informed not to send presents and to express their congratulations in written form.⁸⁶⁵

Shortly before the actual date, changes were made in the events that suggest that the court sought to address the tensions between William's role as King of Prussia and German Emperor that became tangible with this celebration. Lucius von Ballhausen noted in his diary as late as 29 and 31 December that preparations had taken on 'große Dimensionen' and now included a religious service in the palace chapel, a *Defiliercour*, which included foreign ambassadors, a gala dinner and opera.⁸⁶⁶ This expansion suggested the commemoration went beyond the Prussian confines of the event and instead acknowledged the other German princes and foreign dignitaries as well. During the religious service in the palace chapel, ambassadors, representatives of foreign sovereigns, the non-Prussian members of the Federal Council, heads of the princely and former Imperial houses, knights of the Order of the Black Eagle, Bismarck and Moltke, the commanding generals, as well as the presidium of the Reichstag and Prussian Diet and House of Lords were to be present.⁸⁶⁷ In his sermon, Kögel pointed out that when William ascended the throne, it could not have been foreseen that he would take charge in particular events, meaning German unification.⁸⁶⁸ Following the religious service William and Augusta would take their place in the White Hall, where two seats had been set. They were flanked by other members of the Hohenzollern dynasty. Attending lower-ranked guests from Germany and diplomatic representatives, led by Bismarck would file past. In a separate room, William would then accept the congratulations of the State Ministry, before receiving the representatives of other German and foreign dynasties in the palace's Knight's Hall.⁸⁶⁹

These events took place in the inner parts of the palace and out of view of the public but were covered in detail by the newspapers. As such, they reaffirmed the hierarchical relationship between ruler and ruled, whilst at the same time incorporating them in the event through granting the public the role of

⁸⁶³ Ibidem, Bl. 160. Wilmowski to the State Ministry, 21 October 1885.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibidem, Bl. 158. Homeyer to Bismarck, 27 October 1885, excerpt of the State Ministry's meeting. Protocol printed in Hartwin Spenkuch ed., *Die Protokolle des Preußischen Staatsministeriums 1817–1934/38 VII 8. Januar 1879 bis 19. März 1890* (Hildesheim 1999) 181.

⁸⁶⁵ BA R43. No. 1462. Bl. 161. Puttkamer to the provincial *Ober-Präsidenten*, 3 November 1885.

⁸⁶⁶ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 325-326.

⁸⁶⁷ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 113. No. 1642. 25-Jähriges Regierungsjubiläum König Wilhelms I. 1886-1912. Programme for the religious service, 29 December 1885.

⁸⁶⁸ *Tägliche Rundschau*, 5 January 1886, clipping in GStA PK BPH Rep. 113, No. 1624.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibidem, Bl. 25. Undated memorandum on the sequence of the service. *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 4 January 1886, evening edition.

spectator. The public's share was not limited to this. Before the service William and Augusta made two public appearances. First, they appeared in the window of William's study in his palace at Unter den Linden. William himself moved away the drapes and pushed Augusta, seated in a wheelchair, forward, so that both could greet the crowds in front of the palace. Shortly thereafter, they travelled in a small carriage pulled by two horses to the royal palace and waved at the gathered crowds. This scene was repeated upon their return to the palace.⁸⁷⁰ The second form was a message of William to the German people published in newspapers.⁸⁷¹ Whether or not William drafted the text himself remains unclear from the sources, but the archived draft was signed by William himself.⁸⁷² The message is notable for two features. First, despite the event marking William's silver jubilee as King of Prussia and strictly speaking bearing no relation to his Imperial role, it referred to the latter office all the same. In it William stated that 'nicht bloß aus Meiner Monarchie, aus dem ganzen deutschen Vaterlande und weit über dessen Grenzen hinaus, soweit die deutsche Zunge klingt' did William receive good wishes. He stretched the relevance of a Prussian jubilee beyond his erstwhile realm. Secondly, by thanking those who had sent him their good wishes, William explicitly communicated with his population. In underlining the addresses, presents and telegrams he had received from the *Vereine* of churches and counties, societies, individuals and veterans, William's message gave insight in what he considered to be the *staatstragende* groups in German society.

The message's explicit reference to the presents William received for his silver jubilee points at the importance William attached to these. Eva Giloi has thematised the relation between the Hohenzollern monarchy and material culture in Germany in the 1750-1950 period as means to gauge the popular attitude towards the dynasty. She has demonstrated that the relics and gifts sent to William demonstrated that the German middle class was more independent and assertive in forming perceptions and attitudes towards royal power than previously has been assumed. At the same time, Giloi has shown that William disagreed with the royal house's restrictions placed on presents the public could send to its monarch, out of fear of their financial burden. Instead, William deemed this gift-sending 'proof of loyalty and affection'. By putting these gifts on public display and through press-coverage, these gifts and their practice of giving entered public consciousness.⁸⁷³ The example of the display of addresses and presents sent to William following the silver jubilee confirms this practice. The *Tägliche Rundschau* reported that several hundred gifts were sent to William, who had them put on display in the adjacent room to his study.⁸⁷⁴ As Giloi has argued, such reports in the newspapers highlighted the importance these gifts had for William,

⁸⁷⁰ *Tägliche Rundschau*, 5 January 1886 clipping in GStA PK BPH Rep. 113, No. 1624; *Königlich Privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 4 January 1886, evening edition.

⁸⁷¹ *Königlich Privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 5 January 1886, morning edition.

⁸⁷² BA R43, No. 1462. 164. William to Bismarck, 4 January 1886.

⁸⁷³ Giloi, *Monarchy, myth and material culture*, 207-208.

⁸⁷⁴ *Tägliche Rundschau*, 5 January 1886, clipping in GStA PK BPH Rep. 113, inv. nr. 1624.

sentimentalizing his persona.⁸⁷⁵ Evidently, William's court officials likewise recognized the utility of these gifts on display. After the celebrations, William agreed to Wilmowski's suggestion that these addresses and presents were to be put on display in the royal palace, with the revenue to be donated to the *König Wilhelm Stiftung für erwachsene Beamtentöchter*, of which William was the patron and for which the donations would reach the whole Prussian realm.⁸⁷⁶ The gifts were then put on display in the Gardes du Corps hall in the royal palace.⁸⁷⁷ In the three weeks between 1 and 21 February that the gifts were on display, 1508 visitors witnessed the exhibition, resulting in 754 Mark being raised.⁸⁷⁸ Following a decline in visitors, the exhibition was closed at Perponcher's initiative and to which William agreed.⁸⁷⁹

Outside Prussia, the reception of these events was more mixed, as becomes clear from the reports of the Prussian ambassadors in other German states. In Munich, the Prussian envoy received several junior members of the Wittelsbach dynasty.⁸⁸⁰ From Stuttgart, the ambassador stated that 'als ein überwiegend preußisches Fest ist das fünfundzwanzigjährige Regierungsjubiläum Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs in Stuttgart nicht besonders gefeiert worden, obwohl auch die allgemeine Bedeutung derselben für das deutsche Volk in Zeitungsartikeln gebührend hervorgehoben wurde'.⁸⁸¹ In Saxony, enthusiasm was less restrained, though was less surprising, given William's popularity there. According to the Prussian envoy, newspapers extensively described William's modesty, absence of any jealousy and religiosity, whilst at a court reception in Dresden countless groups brought to congratulations to the Saxon King for William.⁸⁸² By contrast, celebrations in Oldenbourg were modest: 'in jenen und einfachen schlichten und einfachen Weise, wie sie den Preußischen Gefühle an großen Gedenktagen entspricht.' These included a religious service attended by the grand-ducal family, decorations and illuminations of buildings, such as the Prussian embassy and a performance of Kleist's *Prinz von Homburg* at the court theatre.⁸⁸³ Such restrained interest in the jubilee was less a demonstration of William's unpopularity in these states, but rather a reflection of the dynastic-federal conception of his Imperial role and the ambiguous nature with which the silver jubilee was celebrated.

The third form of dynastic jubilee here under discussion is William's 90th birthday in 1887. Since 1871, William's birthdays gradually transformed from a

⁸⁷⁵ Giloi, *Monarchy, myth*, 208.

⁸⁷⁶ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 113. No. 1624. Bl. 139. Wilmowski to Perponcher, 13 January 1886.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibidem, Bl. 153. Perponcher to the local military commander, 29 January 1886.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibidem, Bl. 157. 'Einnahme zum Besten der König Wilhelm Stiftung für erwachsene Beamtentöchter', 22 February 1886.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibidem, Bl. 158. Perponcher to Wilmowski, 25 February 1886.

⁸⁸⁰ Politisches Archiv Auswärtiges Amt. Auswärtiges Amt, 1867-1920. No. R3529. Die Regierungs- und das Militärdienstjubiläum Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs. Bd. 1. 1.86-1.87. Bl. 10ff. Werthern to Bismarck, 4 January 1886.

⁸⁸¹ Ibidem, Bl. 23. to Bismarck, 4 January 1886.

⁸⁸² Ibidem, Bl. 31ff. to Bismarck, 4 January 1886.

⁸⁸³ Ibidem, Bl. 18ff. to Bismarck, 4 January 1886.

Prussian and primarily family occasion and fixture of the court calendar into a more dynastic-federal event. His 90th birthday marked a culmination of the changes described above and as such made this celebration stand out as a special form of monarchical representation meriting discussion.

Frank Bösch has demonstrated how the German Emperors' birthdays were a performative political act, that demonstrated a political hierarchy at work through the in- and exclusion of groups and individuals. For example, princes would come before diplomats, the military and parliamentary representatives, such as the Reichstag. The Reichstag would sense this hierarchy by letting all correspondence with the court about its attendance go via Bismarck. Especially William's age or health was often used as an argument to exclude it from the occasion on ground that their number was too large to handle for the monarch, as happened in 1872. By contrast, in 1884, the Reichstag was permitted to be present. On this occasion William urged its president to extend the anti-socialist laws as he had paid for it with his own blood. These comments were subsequently published in the newspapers. The *Defiliercour* was more open and integrative towards society and could include academics, such as Leopold von Ranke. The presence of foreign princes or officials could be used as instruments for foreign policy during this occasion for contacts or signal rapprochement. This significance grew in particular after 1871. The presence of other German princes was likewise a political signal; their presence became more prominent from 1871 onwards. In general, William showed himself little during this day, apart from a carriage ride in public or appearance at the window of his study. The public was acknowledged through the presents it sent to William and which he sometimes thanked the senders in person. In 1873 for example, he personally thanked the city council of Schwedt. Nonetheless, the proximity to the public grew over time, also by the growing crowds at his palace.⁸⁸⁴

This thesis argues that the gradual changes noted by Bösch about the way William's birthday was organized reached their culmination point with his 90th birthday in 1887. This follows from the noteworthy elements of the day itself. The proximity to the public was made clear by the crowds that had gathered in front of William's palace at Unter den Linden ahead of his appearance at his study's window. Photographic evidence shows that the crowd had swelled that day to thousands of people.⁸⁸⁵ These crowds stayed near William's palace and later near the *Schloss*, prompting William several times to appear at the window during the *Gratulationscour* to acknowledge their presence.⁸⁸⁶ William already delivered such acknowledgments at the start of the day, when from the front and side windows of his study he waved repeatedly to the crowds, dressed in his unbuttoned uniform coat. In the course of the morning William also oversaw the passing-by

⁸⁸⁴ Frank Bösch, 'Das Zeremoniell der Kaisergeburtstage' in: Andreas Biefang, Michael Epkenhans and Klaus Tenfelde, eds., *Das politische Zeremoniell im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Düsseldorf 2008) 53-76, there 53-62.

⁸⁸⁵ Windt, 'Majestätische Bilderflut', 84-85.

⁸⁸⁶ Bösch, 'Zeremoniell der Kaisergeburtstage', 61.

of six decorated carts with students.⁸⁸⁷ This choice of appearance connected the extra-ordinary occasion of his birthday with the daily ritual and trope of the working monarch greeting his subjects from his study.

During the second part of the day, projections of the political order came to the fore. The congratulations by other members of the royal family took place behind closed doors, which included 95 persons of the blood, who subsequently attended the family dinner.⁸⁸⁸ At the reception Bismarck and Moltke were present, as were representatives of other major European monarchs, including Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria, the Crown Prince of Denmark, the Prince of Sweden, the King of Rumania and the Prince of Wales. Following this reception, William announced the engagement of his grandson prince Henry of Prussia with Princess Irene of Hessen.⁸⁸⁹ These twin elements demonstrate how the event could be used for announcements relating to the dynasty, but also demonstrating the international stature William had gained as German Emperor. William's presiding role as German Emperor was shown by the attendance of the other German princes. Bösch has argued that this pointed at their integration in the nation state, even though they were ranked somewhat lower and their reception in Berlin could be determined by whether or not they were linked to the Hohenzollern dynasty through marriage.⁸⁹⁰ Indeed, already in 1884 a majority of the German princes had attended William's birthday.⁸⁹¹ Likewise attending this part of the day was the pope's emissary, Luigi Galimberti, which after the end of the Culture Wars was a signal of inclusion of the Catholic part of the population.⁸⁹² To this William had previously given his consent.⁸⁹³ Excluded from being received by William was the Reichstag and its representatives. Formally, it had been informed by the court marshal that this was done on doctor's orders. However, the strain of the day hardly gives credibility to this claim. Bösch has pointed out that William did speak to representatives of the student bodies and talked with them about why he had dissolved the Reichstag.⁸⁹⁴ For the evening soirée 900 invitations had been sent out.⁸⁹⁵ These marked the high point of a gradual expansion of this part of William's birthday in the course of his reign, one which was also more open and integrative towards society than other parts of the day.⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁸⁷ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 22 March 1887, evening edition.

⁸⁸⁸ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 528.

⁸⁸⁹ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 23 March 1887, morning edition.

⁸⁹⁰ Bösch, 'Zeremoniell der Kaisergeburtstage', 59. It should be noted that the attendance of the other German princes could likewise be determined by the current political situation. In 1872 for example, more German princes attended William's birthday after Bismarck had forced a breach with the *Ultramontanismus*, even though several princes uttered concern how this would affect the relations within the German nation state, according to Grand Duke Frederick of Baden. Fuchs ed., *Reichspolitik* I, 56.

⁸⁹¹ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 287.

⁸⁹² Bösch, 'Zeremoniell der Kaisergeburtstage', 59.

⁸⁹³ PA AA No. R3531. *Feier des Geburtstage des Kaisers und Koenigs Wilhelm I.* Bd. 2. 4. 2.87-25. 3.87. Bl. 23ff. Herbert von Bismarck to William, with marginal comments of William, 11 March 1887.

⁸⁹⁴ Bösch, 'Zeremoniell der Kaisersgeburtstage', 57.

⁸⁹⁵ *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 22 March 1887, evening edition.

⁸⁹⁶ Bösch, 'Zeremoniell der Kaisergeburtstage', 59-60.

William's stature as a ruler on this occasion was further strengthened by the print-medial coverage of the event. Several newspapers merged the occasion with the idea of monarchical rule in Germany. The *Kölnische Zeitung* commented that 'Er ist der Monarch: seine Herrschaft ist die eigentliche, innerhalb dieser Herrschaft hat es niemals Parteiungen und Strömungen gegeben, die widereinander geflutet wären und heute diesen und morgen jenen emporgehoben und nach vorn getrieben hätten. (...) der Kaiser steht in Wahrheit unerreichbar hoch über allem kleinlichen Getriebe.'⁸⁹⁷ This understanding of the political order was related by the liberal *Freisinnige Zeitung* to William's personal characteristics: 'wahrlich, hoch erhaben steht die Person des Kaisers über den politischen Kämpfen der Gegenwart. Seine ganze Persönlichkeit ist ein Vorbild für jedes Volk, das nach Gerechtigkeit und Tugend trachtet. Schlicht und einfach in allen Lebensgewohnheiten, aufrichtig und wahr in jedem Wort, edelmütig und nachsichtig, voll Herzensgüte und Milde gegen Jedermann, der zu ihm in Beziehung kommt, treu seinen Ansichten und Grundsätzen und Tag aus Tag ein bedacht auf strengste Pflichterfüllung'.⁸⁹⁸

This image was furthered by a message, likely to have been drafted by the State Ministry or Bismarck, but signed by William himself and subsequently printed in the government-friendly newspapers. This message reiterated the narrative of the collapse of the Prussian monarchy in 1806 and eventual German unification in 1871. It acknowledged the presents sent to him and his birthday as a German-wide event: 'In frühester Jugend habe Ich die Monarchie Meines tiefgebeugten Vaters in ihren verhängnißvollen Heimsuchung gesehen. Ich habe aber auch die hingebendste Treue und Opferfreudigkeit, die ungebrochene Kraft und den unverzagten Muth des Volkes in den Tagen seiner Erhebung und Befreiung kennengelernt. Jetzt in Meinem Alter blicke Ich, nach so manchen Wechselfällen Meines Lebens, mit Stolz und Befriedigung auf die großen Wandlungen, welche die ruhmvolle Vergangenheit der jüngsten Zeit, ein unvergängliches Zeugniß deutscher Einigkeit und aufrichtiger Vaterlandsliebe, in Deutschland geschaffen hat. '; 'Aus alle Theilen des Reiches (...) sind Mir Adressen in zum Theil kunstvoller, gediegener Ausstattung, Zuschriften und Telegramme, poetische und musikalische Gaben, Blumenspenden und Arbeiten in überreiche Anzahl zu diesem seltenen Tage zugegangen. '; 'Durch festliche Veranstaltungen und Festversammlungen ist der Tag aller Orten verherrlicht worden. Der Umfang und die Mannigfaltigkeit dieser beredten Beweise von Liebe und Verehrung ist so groß gewesen, daß sich die Feier des Tages zu einer nationalen Huldigung für Mich gestaltet hat.'⁸⁹⁹ The message's function was twofold: it communicated William as a ruler who again, as after the silver jubilee

⁸⁹⁷ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 22 March 1887.

⁸⁹⁸ *Freisinnige Zeitung*, 22 March 1887.

⁸⁹⁹ BA R43. No. 1463. Persönliche Angelegenheiten des Kaisers sowie der Mitglieder des Königlichen Hauses. Bd. 2. Jan. 1887 – Apr. 1888. Unnumbered message, signed by William, 23 March 1887; *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24 March 1887, clipping in BA R43 No. 1463; *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 24 March 1887, morning edition.

in 1886, addressed his subjects directly and narrated him as a historical figure and venerated ruler.

William's health, death and funeral

The question of William's health touches directly on the manner how he could conduct and publicly perform his monarchical role, meriting discussion for this study. Moreover, it takes on the argument that William grew increasingly frail in the 1870s and 1880s, especially after a series of small strokes in 1873.⁹⁰⁰ William's health did indeed fluctuate during his reign as German Emperor, though his repeated recoveries ensured that he remained sufficiently assertive in defending and executing his prerogatives. Indeed, as has been demonstrated above, William remained a considerable factor in the political decision-making process and conception of the German Empire. Part of the image of an increasingly frail Emperor originated from Bismarck, for whom such an image was politically expedient. It countered William's influence and elevated his own significance. Both during William's reign and later in his memoirs, Bismarck made the assertion of an increasingly frail William.⁹⁰¹ For these reasons, a discussion of William's health needs to address three aspects: the significance of his longevity for the manner in which his role was forged, the manner in which his health was made part of his self-staging and the actual degree to which his health affected the manner in which he could carry out his role.

William's fragile health did not prevent him reaching the age of 90 and his longevity strengthened his capacity to become an identifying figure. By any comparison, William's longevity was remarkable. His age exceeded the life expectancy of the generation into which he was born, as well as that of the population born during his reign.⁹⁰² His age also surpassed all of his predecessors and successors in the Hohenzollern dynasty.⁹⁰³ Although he was his parents' second child, he nonetheless outlived all his siblings but one, his sister Alexandrine.⁹⁰⁴ Even when compared to other long-living monarchs in his era,

⁹⁰⁰ Cf. Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 355-356.

⁹⁰¹ Cf. Bismarck's comments to Odo Russell on how William's declining health impaired his capacity to make a decision and grew more difficult in old age: Mösslang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 66-67; for Bismarck's memoirs, see Otto von Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen* (Berlin 1998) 471.

⁹⁰² Throughout the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, life expectancy remained constant, with 24,7 years in East- and West-Prussia, 29,8 years in the Rhineland and 31,3 in Westphalia. Not until the 1871-1880 decade does the life expectancy go up to 35,6 years for men and 38,5 years for women. In the middle and higher classes life expectancy is somewhat higher, partially because of better nutrition. See Nipperdey *Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1866*, 106-107.

⁹⁰³ Starting with the first King in Prussia – even though including the margraves of Brandenburg would not alter the argument – the age at death of the Hohenzollern rulers was as follows: Frederick I, 55 years (11 July 1657 – 25 February 1713); Frederick William I, 51 years (14 August 1688 – 31 May 1740); Frederick II, 74 years (24 January 1712 – 17 August 1786); Frederick William II, 53 years (25 September 1744 – 16 November 1797); Frederick William III, 69 years (3 August 1770 – 7 June 1840); Frederick William IV, 65 years (15 October 1795 – 2 January 1861); Frederick III, 56 years (18 October 1831 – 15 June 1888); William II, 82 years (27 January 1859 – 4 June 1941).

⁹⁰⁴ Frederick William III and Luise had ten children: a stillborn daughter (1794), Frederick William IV (1795-1861), William I (1797-1888), Charlotte (1798-1860), Frederica (1799-1800), Carl (1801-

such as Queen Victoria or Emperor Francis Joseph, William outranked them, though he was surpassed by the Bavarian Prince-Regent Luitpold, who lived until 91.⁹⁰⁵ Jürgen Osterhammel has argued that the major states, such as Austria and the United Kingdom, benefitted from their assertive long-living monarchs to maintain their position.⁹⁰⁶ This argument extends to William as well, even if his reign was shorter than that of Victoria or Francis Joseph. His continuous presence at the centre of the Prussian monarchy during the nineteenth century made him an identifying figure for its history and the century itself. At William's death, the *National Zeitung* wrote that 'wir Lebenden aber wissen es, daß mit ihm das neunzehnte Jahrhundert zur Rüste gegangen ist und eine neue Zeit dämmernd emporsteigt'.⁹⁰⁷ In its obituary, the *Kölnische Zeitung* stated that 'zwar wenn wir alle geschichtlichen Ereignisse, in die er verflochten war, besprechen wollten, so müßten wir die ganze neuere Geschichte erzählen'.⁹⁰⁸ These sentiments likewise uttered in private, such as in a letter to the German ambassador in Vienna, Heinrich VII. Reuß.⁹⁰⁹ As a result, William came to be seen as a guarantee for stability in international relations because of his dynastic linkage to Russia. Von Stosch wrote in July 1887 that 'so lange wie der Kaiser lebt, werden wir Frieden behalten'.⁹¹⁰ The flipside of this identification of William's longevity was angst amongst courtiers for the era after him. In 1886 Bismarck instructed Paul von Hatzfeldt to 'please tell the pope that as long as the old Kaiser lives and I remain at the rudder peace can be achieved. What may come after us no one can say'.⁹¹¹ On William's 90th birthday, Spitzemberg confided to her diary that 'was noch zu erwarten steht, leider nur Tage der Trauer sein können, und was danach kommt, wissen die Götter'.⁹¹²

This identification was also the result of how William and his court officials staged him as a physically strong and healthy ruler. This was especially important in the nineteenth century, when the legitimacy of the monarchical form of government depended on its visibility. To ensure this, William's court often took subtle measures. In early 1872, William had taken on illness and struggled with pain in his feet. This made it difficult for him to get on his horse in an adequate manner. In order to prevent embarrassment at the annual military parades in Potsdam in the spring, the courtyard of the Potsdam palace was closed off for

1883), Alexandrine (1803-1892), Ferdinand (1804-1806), Luise (1808-1870) and Albrecht (1809-1872).

⁹⁰⁵ At the time of their death, the age of these monarchs was as follows: Victoria, 81 years (24 May 1819 – 22 January 1901); Francis Joseph 86 years (18 August 1830 – 21 November 1916); Luitpold, 91 years (12 March 1821 – 12 December 1912).

⁹⁰⁶ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich 2011) 838.

⁹⁰⁷ *National-Zeitung*, 9 March 1888, evening edition.

⁹⁰⁸ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 9 March 1888, first evening edition.

⁹⁰⁹ Stone and Baumgart eds., *Heinrich VII. Reuß*, 442.

⁹¹⁰ Baumgart ed., *Albrecht von Stosch*, 433.

⁹¹¹ Quoted in Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 195.

⁹¹² Vierhaus ed., *Tagebuch*, 230. On the day of William's death, August von Mackensen wrote in his diary that 'Deutschland hat den Höhepunkt seiner Geschichte überschritten!'. Quoted in Röhl, *Wilhelm II. Jugend*, 947, n. 83.

the public, so that it would not see the trouble it took William to get on his horse.⁹¹³ Alternatively, a ramp would be constructed and covered with foliage, to prevent the audience recognizing it as such.⁹¹⁴ For his golden wedding anniversary, a special kneeler was placed in the royal chapel, enabling William to kneel for the prayers and get up by supporting, without the attendees noticing this.⁹¹⁵ Ahead of his speech from the throne in 1882, William requested from Puttkamer a specially bound copy of his speech to alleviate his arm, which he had hurt during a fall.⁹¹⁶ Ahead of the manoeuvres in Alsace-Lorraine in 1886, the minister for public works suggested that a *Fahrstuhl* would be installed at the train station in Strasbourg to help William to get to the platform. This was rejected by Perponcher at William's instructions, stating that if the steps would be covered with a fabric like linoleum, he would be able to mount them.⁹¹⁷ Such measures were practical, but their purpose was instrumental: it served to cover up William's frailty and uphold the image of the physically strong ruler.

William's failing health could not always be hidden and nor did it need to: it could be utilized for the process of self-staging as part of his monarchical conduct and for generating support. Geisthövel has demonstrated how William's annual stays in spas served to project the image of a bourgeois monarch who recovered from his labours to appeal to the middle class.⁹¹⁸ Such display went beyond annual spas, as William's recovery from the attempt on his life on 2 June 1878 demonstrates. After the attack by Nobiling, in which the shrapnel fired at William had caused flesh wounds in his face, chest and arms, he was rushed back to his palace at Unter den Linden for first aid and further recovery. Because most wounds were flesh wounds and because of his strong physical state William did not succumb. Consequently, court, government and military officials were permitted, albeit for a few minutes, to visit their monarch and observe his condition. At the end of the day of the attack, a physical decline had not set in and William's strong constitution had prevailed.⁹¹⁹ British envoy Odo Russell communicated to Salisbury that a deputy had been set up for the Crown Prince, but that William was expected to recover quickly and would resume his duties.⁹²⁰ The German public was kept informed via medical bulletins. Drafted by William's doctors, these were issued to the newspapers and printed on bright orange sheets of paper and put on display outside the palace. They gave detailed updates of William's recovery and in the first days after the attack were issued multiple times a day. Already on the first day of the attack, the bulletin described William's wounds and being in pain, but assured that he had not lost consciousness.⁹²¹ The

⁹¹³ Schneider, *Aus dem Leben* III, 244-245.

⁹¹⁴ Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann, *Die Hohenzollern* (Berlin 1995) 148.

⁹¹⁵ GStA PK. BPH. Rep. 113. No. 1621. Bd. 1. Bl. 70. Stillfried to Perponcher, 16 May 1879.

⁹¹⁶ Von Puttkamer ed., *Staatsminister von Puttkamer*, 135.

⁹¹⁷ GStA PK. BPH. Rep. 113. No. 403. Bl. 8. Perponcher to Maybach, 3 June 1886.

⁹¹⁸ Geisthövel, 'Nahbare Herrscher'.

⁹¹⁹ Hutten-Czapski, *Sechzig Jahre* I, 60.

⁹²⁰ Mösslang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 138.

⁹²¹ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 113. No. 1224. Attentat auf Kaiser Wilhelm I. am 2. Juni 1878 durch Nobiling, Bd. 1. 1878-1879. Bl. 81. Bulletin 2 June 1878.

following day, it stated that William had slept well, that the fever had not set in and pain and swellings had declined.⁹²² The bulletins did not shy away from further describing William's personal mood, as on the 7 June, the anniversary of his father's death: 'In Folge der Erinnerung an den Sterbetag Seines hochseeligen Herrn Vaters war eine trübe Stimmung und größere Mattigkeit hervortretend.'⁹²³ In the days thereafter, the bulletins described the improvement of William's appetite and of him leaving his bed and spending several hours in an upright chair.⁹²⁴ The detailed description of William's recovery provided by the bulletins corresponded with his actual recovery, as described for example by the Crown Prince in his diary.⁹²⁵ William eventually left Berlin for further recovery and his grand return in December also served to demonstrate that he had regained his health again.

Nonetheless, the measures and descriptions of his recovery could not hide the fact that in the 1870s and 1880s William's health frequently declined in a manner that could not be hidden, certainly not for his family, court and government. In this respect, the literature is not necessarily wrong. However, this study does argue that equal to such periods of decline, William recovered each time, often with increased physical strength. As Frederick William observed in 1877: 'Drei mal alle Jahre wird er krank um immer gesunder zu werden.'⁹²⁶ Wilmowski testified in his memoirs that 'die Körper-Konstitution des Kaisers war ausgezeichnet. Er erfreute sich bis an sein Lebensende eines vorzüglichen Schlafs und eines vortrefflichen Magens'.⁹²⁷ This did not exclude several health crises in the course of the 1870s. In 1873, William suffered from a paralytic stroke, which resulted in loss of the capacity to concentrate and losing track of discussion.⁹²⁸ However, the Crown Prince has recorded in his diary that already on 9 June 1873, William again spoke with clarity and coherence on the political situation with regards to Bismarck and matters of personnel.⁹²⁹ What did raise concern with Stosch in June and November that year was the length of William's physical weakness and tiredness.⁹³⁰

None of these health problems were long lasting. Strachey wrote his impression of William's physical state during the 1876 military manoeuvres in Saxony, which demonstrates the effect of William's self-staging as a physical strong ruler to the public:

The Emperors' energy, and power of work, whether with troops or in his cabinet, are almost incredible. He is still quite vigorous, and upright in the saddle: after a long morning on horseback on the Parade ground,

⁹²² Ibidem, Bl. 82. Bulletin 2 June 1878.

⁹²³ Ibidem, Bl. 94. Bulletin 7 June 1878.

⁹²⁴ Ibidem, Bl. 100. Bulletin 9 June 1878.

⁹²⁵ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 279.

⁹²⁶ Baumgart ed., *Stosch*, 199.

⁹²⁷ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 180.

⁹²⁸ Pflanze, *Bismarck II*, 355.

⁹²⁹ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 193.

⁹³⁰ Baumgart ed., *Stosch*, 108, 117.

which had to be reached by carriage and railway, and a gala dinner with its' inevitable series of speeches and presentations, the Emperor proceeded to the Theatre in State where he finally stood about in the Balcony for nearly two hours, evidently insensible to the fatigues of which men 20 or 30 years younger than himself were complaining.⁹³¹

On 18 September 1878, Lucius von Ballhausen noted that 'Bismarck erzählte noch, der Kaiser habe sich schon völlig von der schweren Verwundung erholt, sei frisch und kriegslustig, Konflikte auszufechten. Streiche sich den Schnurrbart ganz jugendlich und wolle demnächst wieder völlig in die Geschäfte eintreten.'⁹³² This was no momentary impression. In January 1879, Stolberg wrote to Reuß that 'Der Kaiser ist Gottlob recht frisch; zuerst auf der Rückkehr fand ich ihn verändert, jetzt ganz wie früher, seine Umgebung behauptet sogar, er sei kräftiger wie vor den Attentaten. Seine Theilnahme an den Geschäften soll die alte sein, jedenfalls weiß ich daß er sich manchmal sehr eingehend darum bekümmert.'⁹³³ Six months later, and despite having fallen shortly before the celebrations for his golden wedding anniversary, William made a strong impression according to Stosch: 'Der alte Herr imponirte durch die Kraft, mit welcher er alle Schmerzen u. alle Schwächen überwand.'⁹³⁴

During the last decade of his life, William increasingly began to suffer from *Ohnmachtsanfälle*, colds and blatter infections, though just frequently recovered from these and succeeded to successfully stage his monarchical role. On 15 August 1882, Stosch observed this first-hand: 'Heute war ich beim alten Kaiser zum Vortrag; er war von merkwürdiger Frische. Albedyll meinte, Er sei seit langen Jahren nicht so arbeitskräftig gewesen.'⁹³⁵ The following year, the death of his brother Carl affected him strongly, but he kept up a strong appearance according to Lucius von Ballhausen: 'Se. Majestät anfangs sehr bewegt, (...) Se. Majestät machte trotzdem einen elastischen Eindruck und reichte jedem in gewohnter Freundlichkeit der Hand.'⁹³⁶ During a parade on Sedan Day on 2 September 1884, William lost consciousness whilst in the saddle in front of the public.⁹³⁷ Nonetheless, William attended the manoeuvres in Westphalia later that month. During one day, William travelled from Brühl to Münster and back, acknowledging crowds, granting audiences and visits. Although William slept badly and felt unwell, he insisted being present at the dedication of the monument

⁹³¹ Mösslang and Whatmore ed., *British envoys*, 312-313.

⁹³² Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 142.

⁹³³ Stone and Baumgart eds., *Heinrich VII. Reuß*, 224.

⁹³⁴ Baumgart ed., *Stosch*, 229.

⁹³⁵ *Ibidem*, 257.

⁹³⁶ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 247. Cf. the description of Ampthill to Granville: 'The Emperor sent me a message to say that he wished to speak to me immediately after the ceremony of the funeral of Prince Charles, and I proceeded to the Palace where I found His Majesty alone and deeply moved by the painful impression the sad and solemn service we had just attended in the Imperial Dôme had left on all present. (...) The Emperor who was crying could not speak for some time and leant on my arm until he recovered himself sufficiently to continue.' Mösslang and Whatmore eds., *British envoys*, 179-180.

⁹³⁷ Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 190.

for General von Göben, even though he had to support himself with a chair, because of his insistence that he had to stand at such occasions. But during the train journey to Baden, William's courtiers found him on a sofa, fainted. Whilst outside crowds cheered the passing train, his courtiers sought to revive him. Orders were sent out to keep crowds from train stations away further down the line and cancel the reception by dignitaries. Upon arrival in Oos, William and Augusta were whisked in a closed carriage in the night, to prevent them being seen. According to Wilmowski, William's recovery took some time.⁹³⁸ However, the following month, William had sufficiently recovered to attend the meeting between himself and the Russian and Austrian Emperor, which included a military review. To Reuß, von Bülow wrote that 'Unser allergnädigster Kaiser war in Skierniwice wunderbar frisch. Der Anblick, wie Er mit kleinen, aber doch noch sicheren Schritten sein Bataillon vorüberführte, war wirklich ergreifend, daß vielen Russen, darunter auch dem Großfürsten Nikolaus, die Tränen herunterliefen.'⁹³⁹ Yet in November, at the opening of the Reichstag, William confused the pages of his speech from the throne, mixing up sentences and nearly falling upon descending from the dais.⁹⁴⁰ In 1885, William's health problems became more serious. In January, he still struggled with fatigue from his colds and suffered a faint during a report by Albedyll the next month.⁹⁴¹ According to Pflanze, William suffered further small strokes whilst in Bad Ems and at Salzburg in July.⁹⁴² Frederick William was warned by William's physician Leuthold that these could occur again at any moment, though according to the former 'was mir aber garnicht [sic] einleuchten will, da ich S.M. wie immer finde'.⁹⁴³ Wilmowski has testified that the repeated faints and attacks made both William's doctors and the Crown Prince fear for the worst.⁹⁴⁴ But when Stosch was received by William, he found the monarch somewhat skinnier, but overall unchanged and moving steadily around and talkative, clearly having overcome his latest *attaque*.⁹⁴⁵ At a hunting party on the Schorfheide on 1 November, Lucius von Ballhausen found William 'ungemein rüstig und lebhaft'.⁹⁴⁶

⁹³⁸ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 175-176. William himself seems to have seen the experience in less severe terms. To his sister Alexandrine he wrote 'Ja, die tatenreiche Woche ist beendet. Ich kann versichern, daß ich keinen Tag übermüde war und immer gut schlief, obwohl des Treibens viel war. Gestern verlief die Fahrt durch das alte und neue Köln unter Jubel sehr gut; das neue zeigte bereits die schönsten Häuser in Renaissancestil und wird eines der schönsten Stätteile jener Stadt werden. Zum zweiten Akt besah ich einige der neuen Festungswerke, wobei ich mich bei kühlem Wind wohl erkältet habe und heute sehr heiser und unwohl mich fühle, aber doch der Enthüllung der Statue des General Göben beiwohnte, die sehr würdig und sehr taktvoll verlief; dagegen haben wir den Niederwald aufgegeben auf Rat meiner Ärzte, obgleich ein kalter Nebel der Sonne gewichen ist.' Schultze ed., *Briefe an Alexandrine*, 219-220.

⁹³⁹ Stone and Baumgart eds., *Heinrich VII. Reuß*, 307-308.

⁹⁴⁰ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 466.

⁹⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 469-470.

⁹⁴² Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 190.

⁹⁴³ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 484.

⁹⁴⁴ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 175.

⁹⁴⁵ Baumgart ed., *Stosch*, 314.

⁹⁴⁶ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 320.

During the last two years of William's life this pattern continued. On 1 January 1886, Reuß wrote that 'mit dem alten Herrn geht es schwach. Gott gebe, daß ihn der 3^e Janu[ar] nicht umbringt.'⁹⁴⁷ But three days later and one day after the celebrations for William's silver jubilee, Stosch wrote to Gustav Freytag that 'Daß das ominöse Jahr 86 vorüber, hat den alten Kaiser innerlich erfrischt.'⁹⁴⁸ One year later, Stosch could write about William at the annual gathering of the Order of the Black Eagle that 'er ist geistig überraschend frisch, körperlich trägt er an der Last der Jahre. Als wir im Toilettzimmer des Capitels versammelt waren, kam der alte Kaiser so gebeugt u. steif u. schleppend herein, daß wir uns alle ansahen; er fing dann an mit den Einzelnen zu plaudern, immer die Person betreffende Gegenstände berührend, und wurde dabei langsam größer und gelenker; als er bei seinem Mantel angekommen, war ihm dieser nicht mehr zu lang. Majestätisch schritt er daher.'⁹⁴⁹ Indeed, William wrote about the gathering to Alexandrine that 'Ich habe das Kapitel des Ordens sehr gut ertragen. Da die Zeremonie kaum eine halbe Stunde dauerte und dann der Nekrolog von 17 Verstorbenen in zwei Jahren sitzend verlesen wurde, [es] war dies trotz seiner Länge ungemein interessant, durchaus keine Ermüdung.'⁹⁵⁰ More serious that year was the cold William developed after having inspected the fleet at Kiel.⁹⁵¹ According to Pflanze, William never fully recovered from the cold he developed as result of his insistence on standing on the open deck in cold weather, so that the passing warships would see their Emperor.⁹⁵² But the sources make clear that even hereafter William upheld his pace. On 3 July, Stosch wrote that although William had not fully recovered yet, he was determined to travel to Koblenz. Nine days later, the Crown Prince wrote to Stosch that he could convince himself William had fully recovered and that the pace would go on unaltered.⁹⁵³ Indeed, Frederick William noted in November that the signs of illness had not returned and William slept well.⁹⁵⁴ Already two weeks earlier, Frederick William had written to Stosch that he did not expect that annual cold to be as severe as in previous years.⁹⁵⁵ At the New Years' reception on 1 January 1888, Augusta stated to Lucius von Ballhausen that 'der Kaiser arbeitete gewissenhaft und oft mehr, wie ihm gut sei. Sie versuche zuweilen ihn zu bereden, ins Theater zu gehen, oder rate ihm auch ab, er tue aber immer was er wolle. Es gehe ihm jetzt recht gut'⁹⁵⁶ According to Stosch 'Nur Seine Majestät der Kaiser steht wie im Leben, so auch hier hoch über die Masse.' When a cold subsequently did set in, doctors feared his recovery would

⁹⁴⁷ Stone and Baumgart eds., *Heinrich VII. Reuß*, 319.

⁹⁴⁸ Baumgart ed., *Stosch*, 341.

⁹⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 398.

⁹⁵⁰ Schultze ed., *Briefe an Alexandrine*, 242.

⁹⁵¹ See for a description of this visit *Kieler Zeitung*, 2 June 1887, evening edition; *Kieler Zeitung*, 3 June 1887, morning edition; *Kieler Zeitung*, 3 June 1887, evening edition.

⁹⁵² Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 274.

⁹⁵³ Baumgart ed., *Stosch*, 426, 428-429. According to Lucius von Ballhausen 'Er trage das Unwohlsein, das er sich bei der Gelegenheit zugezogen habe, gern und leicht in der Erinnerung daran'. Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 394.

⁹⁵⁴ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 554.

⁹⁵⁵ Baumgart ed., *Stosch*, 442.

⁹⁵⁶ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 415.

last three weeks, but William instead required only twelve days.⁹⁵⁷ Lucius von Ballhausen visited William on 27 February and found him 'wie immer'.⁹⁵⁸ At Moltke's instructions in early March, an Oratorium was prepared for William's birthday on 22 March.⁹⁵⁹

William's final illness set in unexpectedly on 3 March, when he made his last public appearance at the window of his study. A urinary tract infection combined with chills and a fever led to a gradual decline of his physique over the next six days. He was taken to his bed but retained consciousness until the 8th. William died on 9 March, 8:28 A.M., 90 years old, less than two weeks before his 91st birthday.⁹⁶⁰

That William died in his palace at Unter den Linden in Berlin was a coincidence. His presence in his Berlin palace in February and March each year was part of his annual rhythm. But because of the location of the palace, being in the capital directly at Unter den Linden, the event could become a public occasion. After all, the public could gather here more easily, than at his residence in Babelsberg. In this respect, William's death was more public than that of Frederick William IV in 1861, who died in the comparatively remote Sanssouci palace in Potsdam, after being already out of public view for several years because of his illness, which also removed him from public consciousness.⁹⁶¹ William's son and successor likewise died in relative isolation at the Neue Palais in Potsdam, even though press reporters were waiting outside for his imminent demise.⁹⁶² Given the efforts William had made to construct a dyad between him and his parents and in particular his father, it was fitting that his death resembled that of Frederick William III. He too died at his palace at Unter den Linden, the Crown Prince's palace. Whilst inside the palace his family, including the Russian Emperor, attended his deathbed, whilst outside a crowd had gathered in the days before his death.⁹⁶³

Like his father, William's death contained a performative dimension that permitted his demise to be staged as that of a strong monarchical ruler. Because William remained conscious until the day before he died, and despite gradually getting confused because of the fever, he was able to receive officials. Wilmowski provided a report to William on 5 March, even though this was limited to only the minimum required. Indeed, Wilmowski has stated afterwards that access, with

⁹⁵⁷ Baumgart ed., *Stosch*, 472. William's recovery is confirmed by Spitzemberg, who wrote in her diary on 1 February that 'Heute war ich bei den Majestäten mit Eulenburg, Golz, Fürstenberg, Alten, Blücher und den Hohenzollern. Entgegen dem peinlichen Eindruck, den sehr viele Menschen am letzten Donnerstage von des Kaisers körperlichen und geistiger Gebrechlichkeit hatten, fand ich ihn heute recht Frisch aussehend und im Gespräche nicht vergeblich oder abwesend.' Vierhaus ed., *Spitzemberg*, 239.

⁹⁵⁸ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 424.

⁹⁵⁹ Kessel, *Moltke*, 734.

⁹⁶⁰ Besier, 'Wilmowski', 181-182; Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 424-426; Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 427-429 (accounts of Bismarck and Kögel); Herre, *Wilhelm I.*, 507.

⁹⁶¹ Barclay, *Frederick William IV*, 281-283.

⁹⁶² Müller, *Our Fritz*, 232-233.

⁹⁶³ Stamm-Kuhlmann, *König in Preußens großer Zeit*, 570.

brief intervals, to William was provided to all those had belonged to his court.⁹⁶⁴ On 8 March, William received Bismarck, conferred with him about relations with France and Russia and provided the Chancellor with the signature for the dissolution of the Reichstag.⁹⁶⁵ Bismarck suggested that William sign only with a 'W', but this he refused: 'Nein, ich werde den ganzen Namen zeichnen'.⁹⁶⁶ The unsteady signature revealed William's physical decline, but was frequently reprinted in newspapers in the days after his death. This helped to create the image of a monarch still included in the governmental process even on his deathbed. In similar fashion, William's line 'Ich habe keine Zeit jetzt müde zu sein', uttered to his daughter, entered newspaper coverage and was interpreted as proof William as a ruler who, even in his dying moments, worked for his people.⁹⁶⁷ In addition, the presence of his wife, daughter and Prince William of Prussia, allowed for the scene to be invested with notions of marital loyalty by the newspapers.⁹⁶⁸ Volker Ackermann has invoked Philipp Ariès' notion of the 'beautiful death' to describe the manner in which William, surrounded by his family, courtiers and clergy-man gently passed away after having accepted his death.⁹⁶⁹ But the sources also demonstrate to what extent family, courtiers and officials invested William's death with notions of him as a hero. 'Er ist gestorben wie ein Held, ruhig sein Leben aushauchend, ganz ohne jeden Todeskampf.', was how William's daughter Luise wrote to Alexandrine about her father's passing.⁹⁷⁰ When two days before his death William's condition slightly improved, Albedyll commented that 'die erste Schlacht mit dem Tode hat der Held gewonnen'.⁹⁷¹

The access that court and government officials had to William's deathbed makes clear that no distinction existed between this private scene of his demise and public role as a monarch. On the contrary: William's passing was a performative act in which different and ever-wider public spheres were addressed. Newspapers played an important role in providing the reading public access to William's bedroom, his demise and him lying on his deathbed. In this, readers were aided by the highly detailed and descriptive reporting that was typical of late nineteenth century newspaper-reports. These intimate descriptions also allowed for sentimentalizing William's persona by providing descriptions of his personal possessions, relating this to his mother and reiterate the William-Luise dyad. The *Deutsches Tageblatt* wrote of William's bedroom: 'Das Schlafzimmer des Kaisers ist in seiner Ausstattung von der denkbar einfachsten Einrichtung. Von der

⁹⁶⁴ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 181.

⁹⁶⁵ Pflanze, *Bismarck* III, 274.

⁹⁶⁶ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 428.

⁹⁶⁷ Cf. *Neue Preußische Zeitung / Kreuzzeitung*, 11 March 1888.

⁹⁶⁸ The *Vossische Zeitung* stated that 'An dem Totenbette des Kaisers stehen seine Angehörigen, Kinder und Kindeskinde, vor Allem die hohe Edle Frau, die fast sechs Jahrzehnte hindurch treu in Freud und Leid an seiner Seite wandelte, und die, selbst eine Stille Dulderin, heute den schwersten Gram unter allen deutschen Herzen empfindet'. *Königlich Privilegirte Berlinische Zeitung / Vossische Zeitung*, 9 March 1888, evening edition.

⁹⁶⁹ Volker Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeiern in Deutschland. Von Wilhelm I. bis Franz Josef Strauß. Eine Studie zur politischen Semiotik* (Stuttgart 1990) 75.

⁹⁷⁰ Schultze ed., *Briefe an Alexandrine*, 250.

⁹⁷¹ Besier ed., 'Wilmowski', 181.

eisernen Feldbettstelle zu sprechen, ist kaum nöthig. Sie hat den Kaiser auf allen seinen Reisen begleitet, ins Hauptquartier und ins Feld (...) Es bekundete die soldatische Einfachheit, die Genügsamkeit und Anspruchslosigkeit des Kaisers, aber auch wie er schwer sich selbst von Dingen trennte, an die er sich gewöhnt. (...) Das Bett steht nicht längs der Wand, sondern in das Zimmer hinein, hinter einer halb aufgenommenen Gardine. Zu Häupten des Bettes an der Wand befindet sich ein hölzernes Kreuzifix. Links an der Wand steht ein mit Glsthüren und grünseidenen Vorhängen vergebener Mahagonischrank, in welchem (der "N.Z." zufolge) Andenken und Geschenke sich befinden, auf die Kaiser besonderen Werth legte, zumeist an die Mitglieder der Familie, aber auch Erinnerungszeichen an der Jugend.⁹⁷² The *Freisinnige Zeitung* gave a detailed description of William's final hours from the evening of 8 March onwards.⁹⁷³ The *Deutsche Reichsanzeiger* provided a complete overview who was present on the night before William's death, including Bismarck, Moltke, the ministers of war of the Royal House, the heads of the Civil and Military cabinet, as well as court officials and William's physicians.⁹⁷⁴ *Die Post* described how William looked after his death: 'Der Kaiser blieb in der Lage, wie er gestorben war, halb aufrecht sitzend in den weißen Kissen, mit weißer Nachtkleidung, unter der dunkelrothseidenes Tuch zum Vorschein kommt. Bis zur Brust ist der Leichnam mit einer weißseidenen Steppdecke bekleidet. (...) Der Ausdruck des Dahingeschiedenen ist der eines Schlafendes; mild und freundlich schauen die Züge noch im Tode. Kein Ausdruck des Schmerzes oder des Leidens. Die linke Hand ruht fast auf dem Rande des Bettes, die rechte ist auf die Decke herabgesunken, und eine lichte Klarheit umgibt des toten Kaisers Haupt. Es ist, als ob es nach der Stelle gerichtet wäre, wo eine weiße Marmorbüste aufgestellt ist – es ist die Büste der Königin Luise.'⁹⁷⁵

William's imminent demise also generated popular interest directly in front of his palace. Already in the days leading up to his death, a large throng had gathered there, despite the cold rain.⁹⁷⁶ Why these people gathered here has been subject of debate. Geisthövel has argued that, although their attendance pointed at the importance attributed to the figure of the monarch, it remains unclear whether this was done out of political beliefs, personal grief or this mass event mobilized the masses.⁹⁷⁷ But two eyewitness accounts document that the crowd outside William's palace primarily attended because of the event and their identification with William. Theodor Fontane described the atmosphere in a letter to his daughter Mete: 'bei Café Bauer fing das Gedränge an und setzte sich bis zum Palais hin

⁹⁷² *Deutsches Tageblatt*, 10 March 1888, first edition, clipping in: GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51. No. 38. Zeitungsartikel zum Tod und zu den Beisetzungsfeierlichkeiten Kaiser Wilhelms I. und der Kaiserin Augusta. 1888, 1890.

⁹⁷³ *Freisinnige Zeitung*, 10 March 1888.

⁹⁷⁴ *Deutsche Reichsanzeiger*, 9 March 1888, printed in Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 426.

⁹⁷⁵ *Die Post*, 10 March 1888, clipping in: GStA PK BPH. Rep. 113 Oberhofmarschallamt No. 1204. Beisetzung des Kaisers Wilhelm I., Bd. 2. 1888. Bl. 76.

⁹⁷⁶ Lucius von Ballhausen, *Bismarck-Erinnerungen*, 426.

⁹⁷⁷ Alexa Geisthövel, 'Tote Monarchen. Die Beisetzungsfeierlichkeiten für Wilhelm I. und Friedrich III.' in: Andreas Biefang, Michael Epkenhans and Klaus Tenfelde, eds., *Das politische Zeremoniell im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Düsseldorf 2008) 139-161, there 161.

fort; die Menschen sahen unglaublich gelangweilt aus und ich empfang einen geradezu kläglichen Eindruck. Nichts von Geist, von Leben, von Liebe oder Theilnahme, nur einem elenden Schaubedürfniß hingegeben, standen Tausende da, der Regen dripte von den Schirmen und wie Cretins sahen sie nach dem Palais hinüber. Ich will zugeben, daß es nicht anders sein kann und daß wenn ein 91er stirbt, eine Bevölkerung nicht in Thränen zerfließen kann, aber wenn man dann den Zeitungs-Radau liest, dann ekelt einen die furchtbare Lüge.⁹⁷⁸ Young Harry Count Kessler thought differently. In his diary he recorded that ‘Emperor William was less a great man than the great emperor. Strong common sense taught him to put the right men in the right place, and his firm will and unflinching courage made him keep them there. Incapable of jealousy, kind to his subjects, generous to his enemies, he lived to be grieved even by the latter and adored by the first. Never, till today, have I felt the full meaning of the words “*father of his country*.” Never before has there been a sovereign who was more truly the father of his people. Over many a strong man’s face did I see the tears trickle today, as he read the heartrending news; there will be other emperors; but our “our emperor, our good old emperor,” as millions have repeated daily for the last seventeen years, has closed his eyes forever.’⁹⁷⁹

Ackermann has argued that in the obituaries for ‘great men’, the theme of the unity of the nation is usually emphasized. William is presented as the unifying symbol who embodies the nation above all class divisions, whilst Bismarck suggested that it was William’s last wish that the nation remains unified.⁹⁸⁰ But the obituaries also suggest that William became the converging point for a range of perceptions, some of which were the direct result of his own personal doings. *Die Post* reiterated the motive of William as an identifying figure of the nineteenth century and argued that he had regenerated faith in the monarchical form of government in a century of revolution: ‘er hat in den gebildeten Welt den Glauben an die Monarchie wieder erweckt, einen Glauben, der starke Erschütterungen erfahren in dem Jahrhundert, das wie Einige meinen, mit Kaiser Wilhelms Tode abschließt.’⁹⁸¹ William’s patriarchal approach to the German Empire was underlined by the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*: ‘die alte Feindschaften der deutschen Stämme verstummten im Anblick des würdigen Greises auf dem neuen Kaiserthron (...) Gewiß hat das ehrwürdige Alter des Kaisers das Seinige beigetragen, um Fürsten und Stämme auch innerlich zu versöhnen und willig und freudig zu machen für die Festigung des neuen Bundes’.⁹⁸² The *Deutsches Tageblatt* recalled the social legislation initiated in 1881 and quoted William’s royal *Botschaft* of that year. William’s conservative, Christian ethos that motivated this now returned in the *Deutsches Tageblatt*’s

⁹⁷⁸ Kurt Schreinert and Charlotte Jolles eds., *Theodor Fontane. Briefe II Briefe an die Tochter und an die Schwester* (Berlin 1969) 89-90.

⁹⁷⁹ Laird Easton ed., *Journey to the abyss. The diaries of count Harry Kessler, 1880-1918* (New York 2011) 13-14. Emphasis in the original.

⁹⁸⁰ Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeiern*, 81.

⁹⁸¹ *Die Post*, 18 March 1888, clipping in: GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 1204. Bl. 85.

⁹⁸² *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung / Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 March 1888.

obituary: ‘Diese Botschaft, mit welcher Kaiser Wilhelm die Soziale Frage zur Lösung gestellt, wird eines der erhabensten Dokumente aller Zeiten sein. Nicht nur auf Deutschland allein wird sich der Segen ergießen, welcher von ihr ausgeht; in allen christlichen Ländern der Erde wird sie ihren Triumphzug halten, werden sie Grundsätze christlicher Nächstenliebe zum Staatsgesetze erhoben werden.’⁹⁸³ These obituaries testify the effectiveness of William’s strategies of legitimization of dynastic federalism and a social kingship.

In research literature William’s funeral has been defined as ceremonial with political intentions. Ackermann has argued that it formed the first of a series of national funerals in Germany, followed later by the funerals of Ebert, Hindenburg, Adenauer and Strauß, that were exercises in political semiotics.⁹⁸⁴ Geithövel has argued that in the second half of the nineteenth century, when visibility was imperative for the monarchy to generate legitimacy, the public funeral of the sovereign was used to symbolically remove him from life. The mass printed media played an important role in enlarging this event by including the reading public in the sequence of events.⁹⁸⁵ Michael L. Hughes has argued that the funeral of William and of Wilhelm Liebknecht, as public funerals as opposed to private ones, are political demonstrations. They demonstrate the legitimate leader of his population and the political hierarchy he headed, as well indications of political citizenship through the in- and exclusion of groups and individuals.⁹⁸⁶ Within this scholarly context and in the framework of this study, two questions are important. First, what did William plan himself for his funeral and what does this say about his conception of his role? Secondly, what role did the court and government play in staging William’s funeral and how did they follow or amend William’s conception of his role? This latter question is important because, as noted above, officials considered in the 1880s considered giving the court a more Imperial aura.⁹⁸⁷ After William’s death, there was the opportunity to do so, even if this was against the deceased monarch’s wishes.⁹⁸⁸

William’s own decisions regarding his funeral were limited to where he was to be laid to rest and what uniform with medals and decorations he was to wear. His first instructions to this end date from 1857, reflecting his assumption that he had passed the peak of his life.⁹⁸⁹ The instructions also included tributes to his father, who let him take part in the ‘Ruhm und Ehre’ of the Prussian army and

⁹⁸³ *Deutsches Tageblatt*, 10 March 1888, first edition, clipping in: GStA PK BPH Rep. 51. No. 38.

⁹⁸⁴ Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeier*.

⁹⁸⁵ Geithövel, ‘Tote Monarchen’.

⁹⁸⁶ Michael L. Hughes, ‘Splendid demonstrations: the political funerals of Kaiser Wilhelm I and Wilhelm Liebknecht’ in: *Central European History* 41 (2008) 229-253.

⁹⁸⁷ Neugebauer, ‘Funktion und Deutung’, 92-94.

⁹⁸⁸ The practice of going against a deceased monarch’s instructions for his funeral was not without precedent in Hohenzollern history. Frederick William II ordered a public and religious funeral service for Frederick the Great that by no means reflected the wishes of his predecessor. See: Johannes Kunisch, ‘Das Begräbnis eines Unsterblichen? Die Trauerfeierlichkeiten für Friedrich den Großen’ in: Johannes Kunisch, *Friedrich der Große in seiner Zeit. Essays* (Munich 2008) 106-144, there 115-131.

⁹⁸⁹ Angelow, ‘Wilhelm I.’, 253.

his brother, who allowed him to restore ‘Zucht und Ordnung’ in Germany, after he had given the example in Prussia.⁹⁹⁰ In an 1862 instruction and reiterated in 1866, William stipulated that he wanted to be laid to rest temporarily in the *Friedenskirche* in Potsdam with a funeral similar to that of his father. Then, once it had been built, in a mausoleum Babelsberg that was to be modelled after gothic chapel in Petershoff near St. Petersburg, with room for two coffins, like his parents’ mausoleum.⁹⁹¹ However, because of the war against Austria, William’s ideas changed. In 1866, William stipulated that he wanted to wear the uniform of the 1st Guards Regiment and the 3rd Class of the Iron Cross, the second George’s Cross, his two Pour le Mérite, and the war medals of 1814, 1863, 1865, the memorial cross of 1866, the Hohenzollern, Russian and Badenese medals, as well as the star of the Order of the Black Eagle. He was to be covered in his military coat and wear a *Feldmütze*.⁹⁹² In 1879, he instructed that he was to be laid to rest in the royal vault in the Berliner Dom once this was completed, but until then to be temporarily placed in the mausoleum at Charlottenburg. The transfer of his coffin to Charlottenburg was to be done during the night, as had been the case with his father.⁹⁹³ When in 1885 it became clear that the reconstruction of the Berliner Dom was not expected to be finished in the near future, William instructed that he and Augusta were to be laid to rest in the mausoleum in Charlottenburg and that it was to be opened to the public.⁹⁹⁴ William’s instructions for what he was to wear when laid in his coffin and his final resting place were followed by the court. The manner in which he was dressed was also picked up by the newspapers, including *Die Post*, *Germania*, and the *Kreuzzeitung*.⁹⁹⁵ This means that the military-monarchical narrative that William sought to project with him being dressed in this manner resonated in these conservative newspapers.

This attempt of William to place his own persona at his funeral in a specific historical perspective was complemented by the court through its choice of coffin. Rather than a neutral or practical component in the funeral, the coffin was instead a visual centrepiece of the event, offering the chance to invest it with a specific historical meaning. At first, newspapers assumed the coffin to have been

⁹⁹⁰ GStA PK BPH Rep. 51. K. Krankheiten, Ableben, Nachlaß. I. No. 4. Testaments Kaiser Wilhelm I nebst Publicationsprotocoll u. Übersendungstreifen des Grafen Otto von Stolberg-Wernigerode (4/4 88 1888. II. Fünf Schriftliche mit drei Anlagen, welche sich in einen mit fünf Siegeln verschlossenen Kreuzcouvert mit der Aufschrift: ‘Hierin ein Codizill zu meinem am 8 März 1863 im Königliche, Haus-Archiv niedegelegten Testament. Commercy in Frankreich den 24. August 1870. Wilhelm, König von Preußen’. Bl. 2. Coblenz 1857 den 10. April. Also printed in Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms I*, 409-411.

⁹⁹¹ GStA PK BPH. Rep. 51. KI. No. 4. Instructions ‘3. Berlin 1862 / 1866 30. Dezember’.

⁹⁹² Ibidem, ‘4. Weitere letztwillige Bestimmungen. Bbg. 28.-10-65 / 1866 / 1870’. Cf. Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 274-275, ‘Letzwillige Aufzeichnung 31. Dezember 1871.’, with reflections on his life, but without further instructions for his funeral.

⁹⁹³ GStA PK BPH Rep. 51. KI. No. 4. ‘VI. Codicill vom 11. April 1879 nebst einer aus zwei Blättern bestehenden Anlage vom 16. April 1879, welche wörtlich also so lauten: ‘Berlin den 11. April 1879. Abänderende und Zusätzliche Bestimmungen zu meinem Haupt (?) demselben folgenden Codicillen’.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibidem, ‘Anlage zu VI. Einlage zu Blatt vom 11. April 1879, Seite 1 in folgende meines Codizilles’, signed ‘Berlin 10.12.85. Wilhelm’. Plans for the reconstruction of the Berliner Dom were part of Crown Prince Frederick William’s ‘dynastic project’, see Müller, *Our Fritz*, 143-147.

⁹⁹⁵ *Die Post*, 13 March 1888, clipping in GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 1204. Bl. 80.; *Germania*, 13 March 1888; *Neue Preußische Zeitung / Kreuzzeitung*, 13 March 1888.

modelled on that of the Great Elector or Frederick I, with Geisthövel assuming it to have been the former.⁹⁹⁶ This distinction is important, for in doing so, the court consciously sought to identify not with the first King in Prussia, but with the Hohenzollern who founded the military might of the future Prussian state. Explicitly, the internal correspondence of the court makes clear that the coffin was modelled on that of Frederick William, the Great Elector. William's body was placed in an inner coffin of zinc. The outer coffin was made of oak wood, 2.21 meters long and at the base some smaller and less high than at the top. It was covered with red *Samt* with the goldened corners and handles.⁹⁹⁷

At the funeral itself, the court perpetuated William's conception of the German nation state as a monarchical nation and the dynastic federalism that he had made integral to his Imperial role since the late 1870s. Illustrative for this is the funeral procession after the service from the Berliner Dom to the Brandenburg Gate. The procession consisted of a military and a monarchical component. Neither Bismarck nor Moltke attended, because of the cold weather.⁹⁹⁸ The new Emperor Frederick III was too ill to attend, whilst Augusta was too frail. The front of the procession was formed by military units, including cavalry, infantry and artillery. Then followed the court officials and William's personal physicians, after which came the cabinet ministers and state secretaries, which carried the insignia of Brandenburg, Prussia and the German Empire. The mourning party followed the carriage with William's coffin. This was headed by Crown Prince William of Prussia, followed by the King of Saxony, of the Belgians and of Romania, as well as the other male members of the Hohenzollern dynasty. These were followed by the heirs of Austria, Great Britain, Russia, Sweden, Italy and Denmark. Also in attendance were the rulers of the other German dynasties and mayors of the free cities, with the exception of the King of Württemberg and the Prince-Regent of Bavaria, who had sent representatives instead. These were followed by parliamentary representatives and representatives of the bureaucracy.⁹⁹⁹ Ackermann has argued that this procession was organized as a sentence, which expressed the power of the state and in which it being led by the dynasties placed the nation in second place. By keeping the population in a passive role, it not only created distance between the two, but also suggested that the monarch was sovereign and not the people.¹⁰⁰⁰ This thesis agrees with the last point, but argues that the procession was not about a distinction between dynasties and the nation. Rather, the procession was to project that the nation was constituted through its ruling dynasties, exactly as William had sought to project as German Emperor.

⁹⁹⁶ *Neue Preußische Zeitung / Kreuzzeitung*, 13 March 1888, assumes the coffin to have been modelled on that of Frederick I; ditto, Geisthövel, 'Tote Monarchen', 141; *Wilhelm Schlesinger's Neues Intelligenzblatt*, 14 March 1888, clipping in GStA PK BPH Rep. 51. EIII d1. No. 38., assumes the coffin to have been modelled on Frederick the Great; a correction of this report followed several days later, cf. *Die Post*, 16 March 1888, clipping in: GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 1204. Bl. 83.

⁹⁹⁷ GStA PK BPH Rep. 113. No. 1203. Bl. 157. Memorandum of Bohm, 17 March 1888.

⁹⁹⁸ Angelow, 'Wilhelm I.', 263.

⁹⁹⁹ Geisthövel, 'Tote Monarchen', 146; GStA PK BPH Rep. 51. KIII. Beisetzung. No. 3. Reglement des Leichenbegräbnisses.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeiern*, 284-287.

For this reason then, the other German potentates were included in the procession, even if their place behind foreign heirs points at the increased stature of the German Imperial role on the international stage. That the monarchical principle took precedence over popular sovereignty is demonstrated by the fact that parliamentary representatives came at the closing of the procession.

This demonstration of the monarchical nation raises the question how the population viewed this procession and William's passing. This question is important, as both Ackermann and Geithövel have argued that the public had diverging perceptions of the event. Geithövel has pointed out that the decorations and symbols resulted in different understandings, whilst some were understood despite there being no underlying intention at all.¹⁰⁰¹ Ackermann has forwarded a semiotic reading of the decorations.¹⁰⁰² However, this study argues that the decorations by the local population and authorities instead point at an increasingly more self-confident and assertive stance by the localities that is in line with the popular reception and decoration similar to other parts of the German Empire that William visited in the 1870s and 1880s and as demonstrated in chapter IV. The freedom for doing so became possible not in the least because the State Ministry had decided to lessen decorations on state buildings to save costs.¹⁰⁰³ Much of the decorations between the Berliner Dom and the Brandenburg Gate had been provided by the Berliner *Architektenverein*. Only the decorations at the Berliner Dom and the Lustgarten were installed at the orders of the court. These included a baldachin with a W, and images of an Imperial Crown, laurels and palm leaves. The remainder of the route's decoration was provided by the *Architektenverein* and the city council. The former was responsible for installing pylons, obelisks, temple-like structures, arms and flags and mottos, all draped in black and green. The more the procession moved away from the Dom, the less Christian mottos appeared and instead more national motives were forwarded. In addition, opposite the *Zeughaus*, arms and armour were installed to refer to William's military role. At the opera house, the city council primarily used symbols to refer to itself. At the crossing of the Friedrichstrasse and Unter den Linden a *Trauerhimmel* had been constructed with an Imperial Crown lit up by electricity and referring to the continuity with of the Empire and Emperor after William's death. The closure of the route was marked by the Brandenburg Gate. Although no longer in use as the city gate, it nonetheless marked a transition point for the procession. The base of the quadriga was draped with the motto VALE SENEX IMPERATOR, referring to the idea of the *Friedenskaiser*, a gesture to the liberal Berliner magistrate. At the other side of the gate were installed mourning geniuses and four goddesses of victory. Ackermann has rightfully argued that these decorations point at the ambiguity of the Imperial idea and as such stood in stark contrast to the Prussian nature of the manner in which William was dressed and his laying in state at the Dom.¹⁰⁰⁴ However, this juxtaposition overlooks the fact that this difference

¹⁰⁰¹ Geithövel, 'Tote Monarchen', 155-157.

¹⁰⁰² Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeiern*, 241.

¹⁰⁰³ Spenkuch ed., *Protokolle VII*, 226.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeiern*, 244-245.

between projection and reception continued the dynamic that had already existed in William's own conception of his role and were not mutually exclusive. Instead, William's Prussian-particular and dynastic-federal notion of his Imperial role and the court's continuation of it after his death was sufficiently composite for the Imperial idea to reinforce itself.

Conclusion

William did not develop an Imperial court, but a monarchical representation was an integral and important part of his Imperial role. This chapter has demonstrated this by using examples of large events that were held next to the annual rhythm of the court and which William sought to alter in accordance with his ideas. Their development and increasing frequency shows their growing importance for how William staged his role. In this, William followed a wider European development that saw dynasties relying increasingly on grand displays of ritual and ceremonial to generate popular support and immerse themselves in their national roles. William's court officials likewise recognized this development but did not succeed in making their desired changes out of deference to their sovereign.

William's own conduct makes clear that he likewise recognized the importance of these stagings and the manner in which he differed from some of his German and European counterparts is revealing about the specifics of his role. Unlike other European monarchs, William made his Imperial role far more composite, a reflection of his adherence to a Prussian particularism and dynastic federalism that mirrored his own understanding as well as the state of German nationhood. William's refusal to develop an Imperial court was thus not the antithesis to his national role on par with other European monarchs, but an expression of his understanding of his office. Whereas in other European countries monarchies relied on a revival of court culture, William's monarchical representation relied to a considerable degree to large stagings beyond the court calendar to give effect to his Imperial role.¹⁰⁰⁵ What sets William also apart from some other European monarchs is the degree to which he was visible in his role via these representations both in Berlin and throughout the Empire. In a century of revolutions this visibility was key for a monarchy's survival but did not guarantee a monarch living up to it. Queen Victoria's withdrawal from public life in the 1860s and Ludwig II's isolation in the 1870s and 1880s did little good for the standing of their respective institutions. By contrast, William seems to have relished this part of his role. The Crown Prince noted on 6 November 1878, as William was recovering from the attempts on his life, 'ich bin überzeugt daß S.M. den Augenblick der Geschäfts Uebernahme mit Ungeduld erwartet, u. ferner daß sowie er erst in Berlin seine alten Gewohnheiten wieder aufgenommen hat, Meldungen, Menschen sehen, u. Ballet im Gange sind, er auch ganz der Alte wieder ist'.¹⁰⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰⁵ Cf. Osterhammel, *Verwandlung*, 846-848.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Baumgart ed., *Tagebücher*, 284.

The increasing importance of grand monarchical representations for William's role should not belie the fact that he recognized their importance well before 1871. This is important to note, as Cannadine and Van Osta have argued that such grand monarchical representations and the professionalism with which they were organized did not come to the fore until the last third of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰⁷ For Germany, this argument was reiterated by Röhl, that a 'proper' Imperial court culture did not come about until during the reign of William II.¹⁰⁰⁸ However, Barclay has shown that already Frederick William IV in the second third of the nineteenth century relied on grand representations and developed a court culture to enhance his role.¹⁰⁰⁹ This shows the importance of William's belonging to a specific political generation for understanding the manner in which he forged his stagings in Berlin. That William adhered to a Prussian court, even after becoming German Emperor, was an expression of both his Prussian-particularistic stance that he forged in the 1850s and of his later understanding of his Imperial role. William's generational-determined recognition of grand monarchical staging was subsequently expressed in the dedication of regimental colours and his coronation in 1861. After 1871 William perpetuated this practice with the victory parade, his grand return to Berlin in 1878 and so on. William's drawing on these stagings in the capital had a precedent before becoming German Emperor and with this fits into a broader generational and historical context.

The most notable change in William's stagings in the capital is how these events related itself to the fragmented German polity. At the outset in 1871, it was William who wanted to include military units of other German states in the victory parade in Berlin, a signal that he recognized their role in the war and German unification. The caveat here is that Bismarck had to intervene in the parade's preparations to ensure that the unveiling of the statue for Frederick William III, strictly spoken a Prussian affair, would not be merged with the victory parade at Unter den Linden, which included troops from the other German states. The absence of further occasions prevented the repetition of this symbolic act to be repeated in the years thereafter. That William gave his return to Berlin in 1878 a more Borussian character through his interventions was an attempt to relate the return to the parade of 1871. This stance that typified William in the late 1870s. But the gradual expansion of William's stagings in Berlin and inclusion of other German states began the following year with the celebration of his golden wedding anniversary by inviting representatives from other German dynasties. This coincided with the consolidation of the military manoeuvres as a monarchical practice to appeal to all German states. That William let other German states participate, and despite the limitations he sought to place on its celebrations, is representative of his acceptance of his Imperial role in the late 1870s. This stance was built upon by the court is evidenced by its adjustments to overcome the

¹⁰⁰⁷ Cannadine, 'Context, performance and meaning'; Van Osta, 'Performing monarchy'.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Röhl, 'Hof und Hofgesellschaft'.

¹⁰⁰⁹ David E. Barclay, 'Hof und Hofgesellschaft in Preußen in der Zeit Friedrich Wilhelms IV. (1840 bis 1857). Überlegungen und Fragen' in: Karl Möckl ed., *Hof und Hofgesellschaft in den deutschen Staaten im 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert* (Boppard am Rhein 1990) 321-360.

tensions between William's Prussian and his Imperial role during his silver jubilee as King of Prussia in 1886. William's 90th birthday in 1887 marked the end point of this development through the inclusion of other German princes and a representative of the pope. That foreign princes also attended demonstrates that the increasing stature of William's Imperial role at home was mirrored abroad.

The dynastic federalism that underpinned this change was one of four strategies of legitimization that determined William's stagings in Berlin, next to a Prussian particularism or Borussianism, the dynasty as family and William as a physically and healthy figurehead. Each of these cultivated specific notions and values circulating in Germany's political culture, such as bourgeois family values and notions of a heroic and strong individual. Importantly, these strategies were also the result of William's own interventions and conduct. The former is demonstrated by William's decision to make the 1879 jubilee primarily a family occasion and the latter by his physical stamina, despite his advancing age. That William recognized the potential of altering the narrative of these stagings is important for understanding how he forged his political agency. It shows that even after 1871, William still succeeded in appropriating these occasions to befit his ideas of his monarchical role.

In all their variations, these specific strategies served a unifying purpose for William: to present him as the embodiment of the monarchical political order and Imperial Germany as a monarchical nation. The extent to which William sought to demonstrate that he was Germany's prime political centre of gravity became clear in how he either sidelined or excluded parliamentary representatives in his stagings in Berlin, such as at his 90th birthday or at his funeral. By implication, this made the remaining political actors, princes, military and civilian officials, the actual representatives of the political order. Although William sought to limit some of the stagings discussed in this chapter, these did little to cap the central role he had in these functions. Paradoxically, this allowed the public to see him even more as a modest Imperial figurehead. Aided by his longevity and biography, William's stagings in the capital allowed the monarchical form of government and his conception of his role to merge fully with his persona. This is why one observer could write after William's funeral that 'niemand (...) ahnte, daß nicht nur Kaiser Wilhelm, sondern das monarchische Prinzip zu Grabe geleiteten, dessen Hauptstütze die persönlich Achtung vor dem pflichttreuesten Inhaber eines Thrones gewesen war.'¹⁰¹⁰ The personification of William with Germany's form of government was not only testament to the success with which he staged his role, but also could anticipate a nostalgia for his persona once the equilibrium between monarch, his self-staging and his realm was upended.

¹⁰¹⁰ Glatzer ed., *Berlin wird Kaiserstadt*, 375.

Conclusion

On 18 January 1871, William was proclaimed German Emperor in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, William had supported German unification under Prussian leadership. To Ernst von Saucken-Tarputschen, William wrote on 18 November 1850 that ‘Was ich Ihnen im Sommer 1848 hier an dieser Stelle sagte, ist und bleibt mein Wahlspruch: Preußen muß als Preußen an die Spitze Deutschlands kommen, nicht aber als Provinz in dasselbe aufgehen. Und so wird es auch kommen. Wann? Das ist eine ganz andere Frage.’¹⁰¹¹ Once German unification was imminent in 1870, the exact wording of the Imperial title was important in deference to the other German sovereigns. Bismarck was indifferent to whether the stronger ‘Emperor of Germany’ or weaker ‘German Emperor’ was to be chosen. What mattered more for him was the support of the southern German states, rather than the title’s wording.¹⁰¹² William thought differently. To him, the stronger version of the Imperial title would be a demonstration to the world of the power-increase of the Hohenzollern dynasty.¹⁰¹³ But William also feared that German unification would mean that Prussia would be dissolved into Germany, as Fehrenbach has argued.¹⁰¹⁴ These two positions determined William’s stance in the subsequent discussions over the wording of the Imperial title. It would lead to heated disputes between William, Bismarck, Frederick William, Grand Duke Frederick of Baden and others. William was also involved in the organization of the actual proclamation. He ordered that the proclamation was preceded by a religious service on 16 January, led by the priest of the 1st Guards Regiment and of the Potsdam royal palace, Bernhard Rogge. William did not want to be placed at the centre of the sermon. According to Claudia Lepp this reflected both his religious convictions, as well as his rejection of the Imperial title.¹⁰¹⁵ But William did order that the proclamation be held on 18 January.¹⁰¹⁶ This was the date of Frederick I’s coronation as King in Prussia in 1701, linking this event to the Hohenzollern dynasty’s elevation to the Imperial title. At the actual event William descended from the dais to greet the princes and officers present but walked past Bismarck without saying a word.¹⁰¹⁷

William’s role in the debate on the Imperial title and the proclamation in Versailles present in a concentrated form the problems this thesis has sought to address. From William’s fear that Prussia would be dissolved into Germany

¹⁰¹¹ Schultze ed., *Briefe an Politiker* I, 132.

¹⁰¹² Pflanze, *Bismarck* I, 504.

¹⁰¹³ Gall, *Bismarck*, 451.

¹⁰¹⁴ Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen*, 74.

¹⁰¹⁵ Claudia Lepp, ‘Summus episcopus. Das Protestantische im Zeremoniell der Hohenzollern’ in: Andreas Biefang, Michael Epkenhans and Klaus Tenfelde, eds., *Das politische Zeremoniell im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Düsseldorf 2008) 77-114, there 91-92.

¹⁰¹⁶ Berner ed., *Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 252-253.

¹⁰¹⁷ Pflanze, *Bismarck* I, 505.

Marion Dönhoff and Gordon Alexander Craig concluded that William was an unwilling Imperial figurehead who preferred to adhere to 'old' Prussia.¹⁰¹⁸ How William ultimately gave in to Bismarck's demands over the title suggest that he was unable to offer political counterweight to his Chancellor. This thesis has refuted these two long-held assumptions. The notion of William as an arch-Prussian has been demonstrated as a posthumous construction of cultural memory, conditioned by the political, cultural and economic changes of the 1890s. The idea that Bismarck perpetually overruled William has been shown to have been the result of Bismarck's literary advantage in having left behind writings that substantiated this impression.

This thesis has argued that William's self-staging, the crafting of his public image and the conceptions of his Imperial role are central in understanding him as a monarch. William's stance in the debate and the proclamation of his Imperial title demonstrate that he was knowledgeable and self-conscious about these aspects and their political implications. In doing so, this thesis has uncovered many instances in which William asserted his authority that literature previously has overlooked. William thus gradually developed and expanded a stronger Imperial role, but also recognized the effect of German unification for Prussian state-identity and the importance of symbolic acts for his monarchical role. The selection of a date for the proclamation of the German Empire and an accompanying religious service are illustrative for this. Lepp has rightly argued that about the service that it has often been overlooked in literature because of the dominance of Anton von Werner's paintings of the event in cultural memory.¹⁰¹⁹ But more importantly it put on display some of the key tenets of how William forged his role.

¹⁰¹⁸ Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, *Preußen. Maß und Maßlosigkeit* (Berlin 2009) 7-8: 'Am 17. Januar 1871, einen Tag bevor er im Spiegelsaal von Versailles zum Deutschen Kaiser gekrönt wurde, sagte Wilhelm I. zu Bismarck, der folgende Tag, der 18. Januar, werde der unglücklichste Tag seines Lebens sein, weil er es sei, der dann das preußische Königtum zu Grabe trage. Und in der Tat war jener pompöse, taktlose Mummenschanz in Versailles ein sehr augenfälliges Ende des alten Preußens, zu dessen Charakterisierung nicht zufällig das Wort >>schlicht<< so häufig verwendet worden ist. (...) Wann also hat Preußen zu bestehen aufgehört? Ich meine, Wilhelm I. hatte recht, das Datum heißt: 18. Januar 1871. Denn das Preußen, welches dann im Rahmen des neugegründeten Deutschen Reiches weiterlebte, hatte wenig mehr zu tun mit dem alten Preußen: Es entwickelte schließlich Züge, die mit Recht allenthalben Befremden, wenn nicht Abscheu hervorgerufen haben.' Gordon A. Craig, *The end of Prussia* (Madison 1984) 48-49: 'On 17 January 1871, the day before he was to be proclaimed as emperor of the new German Reich in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles, King William I of Prussia said to his minister-president, "Tomorrow will be the unhappiest day of my life. For we will be carrying the kingdom of Prussia to its grave, and you, Prince Bismarck, will be responsible for that." When we think of the constitutional and political circumstances of the German Empire of 1871-1918, it is difficult to regard this as anything but the testy remark of a tired old man who was bewildered by the complexities of the situation at the end of the war with France. (...) And yet, in a deeper sense he was right. In that too exuberant, too boastful, too flashy ceremony in the Hall of Mirrors, something of the old essence of Prussia, did give up the ghost, and in the years that followed the values that had characterized the kingdom of Frederick William I and Frederick II were subverted by those of the new age of materialism and power.'

¹⁰¹⁹ Lepp, 'Summus episcopus', 90-91.

This study has demonstrated the importance of William's belonging to the political generation of monarchs born between 1790 and 1815. This generation's formative experience of war and revolution, the rise of nationalism and liberalism and subsequent attempts at curbing their prerogatives meant that many of these monarchs saw their reign as either (eventually) seeking to accommodate these developments or as a juxtaposition between the monarchical principle and popular sovereignty, as Ranke instructed William's contemporary Maximilian II of Bavaria.¹⁰²⁰ The evidence reviewed shows that William, an adherent of Stahl's ideas of the monarchical principle, saw his own conduct in much the same terms, even as German Emperor.¹⁰²¹ Like other monarchs of his generation, William promptly recognized the importance of performativity in direct, physical, ritual and ceremonial and medial form to make this juxtaposition tangible and to effect his royal prerogatives. In similar fashion, William recognized the importance of projecting himself as the epitome of his nation from the middle of the century onwards and so contributed to the forging of a particularistic state identity. William was no less political in utilizing the arts for political purposes than Frederick William IV, even though William forged a more popularizing and specific monarchical-military narrative. In this, William showed similarities to his Bavarian counterpart Maximilian II. Both recognized the ascent of history as a scholarly discipline and factor in culture and its potential in forging his persona as the epitome of his monarchical nation.

William's longevity and his ascent to the throne as the last of his generation, resulted in this political outlook and its accompanying practices of political rule persisted into the last third of the nineteenth century. This generational background explains much of the continuities in William's conduct after becoming German Emperor in 1871, such as his adherence to a Prussian particularism or Borussianism, both for his own persona as for his politics of history, whilst serving as an Imperial figurehead. This seeming *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen* could afterwards generate claims that the arch-Prussian William was out of step in the newly formed German nation state. But this assumption failed to notice the persistence of William's generational outlook that was by no means as disjointed from the German political order, culture and nationhood as was assumed. Rather, the composite state of German nationhood, itself partially a persistence of the state-building efforts of William's generational contemporaries, meant that these could coexist better than literature has presumed.

A second important conclusion of this thesis has been the importance of transcending the Prussian and German confines by understanding William's conduct in a wider European context. Many of the problems that William faced, such as generating popular support for political legitimacy or the competition for public attention from charismatic political or military figures, can be observed in other European countries, such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Russia. In two more forms this European context has been made tangible. First,

¹⁰²⁰ Theodor Schieder und Helmut Berdings eds., *Leopold von Ranke. Aus Werk und Nachlass. II Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte* (Munich 1971) 441.

¹⁰²¹ Herre, *Wilhelm I.*, 242.

the case of William has demonstrated that this context also served as a framework in which practices of monarchical rule were channelled, observed, taken over and appropriated to benefit a specific realm. Here, not only generational belonging, but also dynastic networks and shared experiences were instrumental. This study has demonstrated that especially in the case of William's politics of history, such as with his ideas for the Victory Column and the arsenal, were often based on ideas he had seen elsewhere, such as Austria, France and Russia, and then sought to appropriate for the Prussian-German context. This not only shows how William as a political actor was integrated in the wider European development of the practices of monarchical rule, but also that he was a perceptive observer of this developments and skilfully sought to utilize them for his own role.

This entanglement of monarchical practices in a transnational context points to dynastic networks as the second form in which the European context functioned in William's case. For most monarchs in nineteenth-century Europe their role was determined by balancing between being part of a supranational dynastic elite and figurehead of a (multi-)national realm, a balance that was increasingly fraught as nation states consolidated. Nonetheless, these supranational dynastic networks were still a considerable factor in international relations. What is remarkable here is not their declining importance, but rather their persistence.¹⁰²² Research in this field is, compared to the exhaustive corpus of scholarship on international relation in this period, still limited.¹⁰²³ But William provides an important case study for demonstrating how these networks could affect the formulating of foreign policy. Although William failed to prevent the coming of the Double Alliance in 1879, his resistance, staging even an encounter between him and Alexander II, demonstrated the stubbornness of these supranational networks as a factor for monarchical conduct.

This study has demonstrated that William possessed a considerable skill to forge his role through performativity in ever-different spatial and medial contexts. William did not distinguish between a 'private' or 'public' appearance; in the final instance, all encounters were for him stagings of his role as monarch, even if the image he wanted to project could differ. Emphasizing performativity enables us to gauge his effectiveness as a political actor better than by stressing that his personal characteristics were alike in private and public, as Pflanze has done.¹⁰²⁴ Instead, this study has argued that William consciously drew on two categories of self-staging: in direct, physical appearances, such as symbolic acts and ritual and ceremonial, and in medial form of correspondence and mass printed media. William often knowingly used these two categories in conjunction. In the decision-making process for example, William participated in the State Ministry's

¹⁰²² Cf. Jane Ridley, who has argued that 'Queen Victoria's dynastic realm and extended family formed a central feature of this Europe of revived monarchical power'. Jane Ridley, "'Europe's grandmother' Queen Victoria and her German relations' in: Frank-Lothar Kroll and Martin Munke eds., *Hannover – Coburg – Windsor. Probleme und Perspektiven einer vergleichenden deutsch-britischen Dynastiegeschichte vom 18. bis in das 20. Jahrhundert / Problems and perspectives of a comparative German-British dynastic history from the 18th to the 20th century* (Berlin 2015) 243-258, there 258.

¹⁰²³ Cf. Kroll, 'Staatsräson oder Familieninteresse'.

¹⁰²⁴ Pflanze, *Bismarck III*, 291.

deliberations and if absent or to reinforce his viewpoints, used correspondence and memoranda to ensure that his views were taken into account. This study has made clear that William had a clear understanding of how the emerging print media could be utilized for this purpose as well. The manner in which William drew on Schneider from the 1850s onwards to write newspaper articles that highlighted his role and in addition (and after Schneider's death, Meding and Oncken) to write biographies of him, shows William understood their utility to forge his public persona for a large audience of readers at a time of emerging mass printed media and increased literacy. In similar fashion, William recognized the importance and utility of monarchical spectacle well before 1871, as the dedication of regimental colours in 1861 for example showed. But especially after 1871, both for his new Imperial role and the increasing reliance on popular support, such large events became more important. William demonstrated an awareness of self-staging of his role and the Empire by incorporating symbolic acts that acknowledged the other German states at the annual military manoeuvres outside Prussia. This also goes the way he sought to rearrange the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral and the unveiling of the Niederwald monument. On both occasions he sought to befit these his conceptions of his role of the monarchy and the nature of the German Empire. What this does show is that no feasible distinction can be made between William's 'staged' power and 'real' power resting with Bismarck or an overall decline of political power; it shows instead that William's performativity was key to be a considerable political actor in his own right.

Literature has sometimes suggested that William fulfilled his monarchical role out of a sense of duty.¹⁰²⁵ This argument is justified when seen in the context of William's monarchical-military socialization. But it can easily fall prey to William's own attempts at staging duty, together with self-discipline, modesty and frugality as his 'virtues' to generate legitimacy for his persona. This study has built on the work of Sellin and Kroll in identifying strategies of legitimization that William developed to give content to his practices of performativity. Consequently, this study could demonstrate that some of William's strategies can be perceived as functioning in a manner similar to other monarchs in the same time period, such as the projection of a social kingship, whilst in others there are distinct strategies for the Prussian-German context, such as a dynastic federalism in recognition of the composite state of German nationhood after 1871. None of these strategies were mutually exclusive. In fact, their complementary usage helped William to increase the number of groups from which he could generate support and which in turn could identify with him.

In developing these strategies, William cultivated values, symbols and assumptions circulating in German political culture and through their resonance increased the effectiveness of his performativity. William's Borussianism, as on display in his politics of history, drew on a teleology of history that was a dominant feature of 1860s and 1870s Prussian *Geschichtskultur*. The dyad with his parents

¹⁰²⁵ Cf. Angelow, 'Wilhelm I.', 262: 'Trotz seines hohen Alters bewältigt Wilhelm ein umfangreiches Pensum gesellschaftlicher Auftritte und politischer Verpflichtungen.'

Frederick William III and Luise that he projected not only cultivated bourgeois family values, but also helped to sentimentalize his image, in particular when his image was related to the memory of his mother, and that of a Prussian military monarch who, like his father, countered the Bonapartist threat. In similar manner, his frequent meetings with his daughter Luise helped to solidify the cultivation of family values, especially given his own well-known unhappy marriage. William's dynastic federalism cultivated Germany as an Empire of monarchies that respected dynastic and particularistic sovereignty, which, paradoxically, made him more acceptable as Imperial monarch. By presenting himself as a physically healthy and strong figure who exercised his political and military prerogatives, William cultivated notions of the heroic individual in German culture. At a time of vast social and material changes and a growing anonymous governmental and bureaucratic apparatus, William's projection of Prussian virtues met popular aspirations for an identifying figure.¹⁰²⁶

These strategies were not static. As this study has demonstrated, William's Borussianism and military role were more pronounced in the early 1870s, whilst his social kingship and dynastic federalism were more predominant in the 1880s, making clear that the consolidation of the German nation state and William's expansion of his Imperial role went hand in hand with changing strategies of legitimization. This does not mean that these strategies were met by universal acceptance. William's Borussianism in his politics of history was early on recognized by the Prussian Diet as ill-fitting with his Imperial role, whilst Bismarck disagreed with William's dynastic federalism as put on display at large events in the 1880s. Nonetheless, William's sophisticated use of these strategies in differing spatial and medial contexts at successive stages in his reign show that he was a self-conscious monarchical actor seeking to effectuate his role according to his own ideas.

Ultimately, the more important question is how these practices of performativity and strategies of legitimization related to two problems of his Imperial role: how to offer counterweight to other competing centres of political gravity and present himself as the figurehead of a fragmented German polity. Regarding the former, this study has demonstrated that William showed considerable assertiveness towards the Prussian Diet and German Reichstag in order to be seen as their political superior. Given the zeal with which he guarded his monarchical prerogatives, it is no surprise that he wanted to be seen as the prime political centre of gravity in the new German nation state. Two strategies have been identified in this study. First, William sought to forge a competing narrative of monarchical decision-making for the Prussian and German political

¹⁰²⁶ Interestingly, in projecting virtues, William put into practice what another member of his political generation, Leopold I of the Belgians, advised to the future Queen Victoria as early as 18 October 1833: 'Our times, as I frequently told you, are hard times for Royalty. Never was there a period, when the existence of *real qualities in persons in high stations has been imperiously called for*. It seems that in proportion as sovereign power is abridged, the pretensions and expectations of the public are raised.' Quoted in Matthew Dennison, *Queen Victoria. A life of contradictions* (London 2013) 28. Emphasis in the original.

order. This came especially to the fore in the early 1880s, when William sided with Bismarck in the royal edicts to the Prussian Diet that served to signal that the political primacy rested with the Prussian monarchy and went on to further this edict in Meding's authorized biographies. In similar form, when the State Ministry's social legislation came up, William decided to attend the Diet's opening in order to present the legislation as his legislation and legacy and had this documented in Meding's authorized biography. Such initiatives were to demonstrate that the political primacy rested with William and not with the elected representatives. The second strategy was the conscious excluding or side-lining of parliamentary representatives at ceremonial occasions. This study has provided multiple examples of occasions when parliamentary representatives were shunned or only invited at an advanced stage of an event's preparation, such as at the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral or at his birthdays. Such acts had symbolic significance and served to relegate these parliamentary representatives to a minor role. Biefang has provided important details about how William crafted his image and relationship with the Reichstag.¹⁰²⁷ But this study has also demonstrated that while William recognized the existing constitutional structure, he did draw on representation in medial and ceremonial form to shift the emphasis in the interpretation of the political order in favour of the monarchy.

This stance likewise determined William's conduct towards Moltke during the Franco-Prussian War. The harmonious relationship between William and Moltke and William's willing granting of authority to Moltke to conduct operations has long persisted in literature. Although William supported the rise of the General Staff under Moltke, but its rise effectively hollowed out William's military prerogatives. Moltke did not seek intentionally to weaken his position, but the consolidation of his position came at a time when warfare became ever more industrialized and increasingly required military 'technicians'. This division of labour led to a divergence of claims to military command as a source for political prominence and legitimacy. William's self-staging during the war and in particular the manner in which he implicitly set himself apart from Moltke, makes clear that he understood this development. By drawing on a staged departure and return to Berlin at the outbreak and end of the war, direct physical presence on the battlefield and authorizing newspaper accounts and, after the war, book-length biographies, William consciously crafted an image of himself as a successful military monarch that echoed early modern notions of a *roi-connétable* and so sought to effectuate his military role by tapping into this source for popular legitimacy.

The challenge posed by Bismarck as a competing centre of political gravity is more complex. Bismarck did not seek personal popularity whilst in office and was too much a supporter of the monarchical form of government to have publicly challenged William in such a manner. But Bismarck's dominance in formulating policy and mastery of the political structure of early Imperial Germany has led scholars to relegate William behind Bismarck as Germany's

¹⁰²⁷ Biefang, *Andere Seite der Macht*, 277-305.

foremost political centre of gravity. This is not unfounded, but this study has questioned whether establishing such a hierarchy or counting policy victories of Chancellor over Emperor provides sufficient understanding of their cooperation and as the sole determinant in judging William's conduct. Instead, this study has established two factors in William's exercise of his role vis-à-vis Bismarck. First, this study has detailed William's own monarchical outlook in several conflicts with Bismarck and the extent to which these were a factor for the more pragmatic Bismarck to take account of. By concentrating on those disputes that touched directly on William's role or the matters he deemed important, it has become possible to establish where William did succeed in convincing or overruling Bismarck. Although William's dynastic outlook did not prevail in the conflict over the Double Alliance in 1879, the manner in which he drew on performativity by memoranda and meeting Alexander II meant that the dispute could be perpetuated for several weeks, demonstrating the strength of William's position. In the Culture Wars, William's preference for social harmony permitted him to offer more counterweight to Bismarck in matters such as the Act on Monasteries. Significantly, in those matters that touched directly on his role and understanding thereof, William was at his most forceful. How William succeeded in convincing the State Ministry for him to attend the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral and overruled Bismarck by inviting a large number of German princes for the unveiling of the Niederwald monument shows that he could be a considerable factor in the political decision-making process to be reckoned with. That these two occasions occurred in the 1880s is no coincidence. By then William had not only become accustomed to his role, but also developed his own conception of it. His conduct eventually resulted in him building up political capital and popularity, of which he was sufficiently aware. This was eventually the second factor that determined his conduct vis-à-vis Bismarck and came especially to the fore in his resistance to Bismarck's plans to Germanize Alsace-Lorraine in 1886. That William was unwilling to have his personal popularity affected by such a controversial policy demonstrates that by then he was capable of successfully opposing the Chancellor if his understanding of his role made him to do so. For Bismarck, it could be hard being Chancellor under William.

William's self-staging permitted him to develop his own sphere in which he could exercise his agency and one that was only rarely touched upon by Bismarck. In the case of his authorized biographies, William drew on a series of authors who mostly operated beyond the official structures of government and the court; although Schneider had a formal position as reader, his performed role as William's biographer without interference of other officials, whilst Meding's manuscripts were sent via a court official, though he did not intervene in its contents. Naturally, William's plans for altering Berlin's political topography could not be undertaken without support or intervention of the government, given the scale, prominence and finances involved. This is why the government and Prussian Diet opposed William on several occasions, such as with his plans for the Berlin arsenal which were initially too much determined by a Prussian-particularistic stance. By and large however, William had considerable freedoms

in these projects, as is borne out by the fact that he served as the fulcrum for all artistic matters for undertakings such as the Victory Column and the *Ruhmeshalle*. William's travels, including his attendance at the annual military manoeuvres, were a further instance in which he had more or less his own sphere in which to stage his role. Through symbolic acts, such as wearing medals of the state he visited or encounters with other German princes, William could give effect to his dynastic federalism as hallmark of his Imperial role. That Bismarck only in 1884 requested William to visit Münster during the manoeuvres due to the upcoming elections is a further indication that his travels were also part of his own sphere to forge his role.

In the course of his reign, William became ever more active in forging his Imperial role and addressing the fragmented German polity. This conclusion by this study shows that there is no reason for scholarly paucity on how William related himself to the non-Prussian parts of the German Empire. Partially, this reluctance can be explained by an understanding from historians that mistook William's Prussian stance for an unwillingness to forge a truly Imperial role. But as this study has shown, William's conception of his Imperial role was a state and dynastic-based conception, forged through his generational experience of war and revolution that gave him a legitimist outlook and enabled a Prussian-particularistic stance that be welded with a dynastic federalism. This, arguably, composite conception was, unlike many other forms of the Imperial role that were debated before 1871, no theoretical conception, but one that relied on being put into practice. Travels across Germany, encounters with members of other German dynasties, symbolic gestures and by incorporating the other German states in large events, both in Berlin and in other parts of Germany, were the means with which William made this conception a tangible reality. He himself played a considerable role in making these forms work: he was responsible for inviting the other German states to participate in the victory parade down Unter den Linden after the war against France and inviting the other German dynasties for the dedication of the Cologne Cathedral and the Niederwald monument; he intervened sometimes in orchestrating the encounters with other German monarchs during his travels or military manoeuvres to ensure that their sovereignty would be acknowledged; he was responsible for symbolic gestures towards the other German states, such as sending his son south at the outbreak of the war with France. Although William's state- and dynastic-based conception of his role mirrored to some extent the German polity, it also indicates its limitations. William's stance during the culture wars was more moderate than Bismarck and he pleaded for it to be winded down earlier on. But his conduct towards the Catholic church during the organization for the Cologne Cathedral's dedication made clear that William ultimately saw them as subordinate to the authority of the Prussian monarchy. William showed even less understanding for the rise of social democrats and supported the extension of the anti-socialist laws. Nonetheless, from the mid-1870s onwards, William did more than just accept his Imperial role, he actively forged it and provided the fragmented German polity with a figurehead with which the varying parts of the

country could identify and that helped the Hohenzollern monarchy develop its Imperial role.

All of this makes clear that William was neither a transitional figure between the reign of Frederick William IV as the last sole king of Prussia and William II, who became the first truly German Emperor; nor does William's claim to historical relevance rest solely on the fact that he was the first German Emperor. Rather, his reign and the manner in which he forged his role were important on its own terms and in these he was more successful than has often been assumed. From the experience of political upheaval in the first half of the nineteenth century, William learned the importance of performativity and timely recognized the importance of presenting himself as the epitome of his state, monarchy and military. In so doing, he helped forge a Prussian particularistic identity, but this was in line with other German monarchs during the same period. If he was more explicit than Frederick William IV in projecting monarchical-military-narrative via the arts, architecture and historical writing, he was no less skilled in utilizing them than his brother. With considerable coherence and determination William altered Berlin's political topography and during three decades authorized a series of biographies that helped canonize his image. William timely recognized how the rise of the General Staff under Moltke, the founding of the Reichstag and the consolidation of Bismarck's power as Chancellor infringed his prerogatives as competing centres of political and military gravity. In response, he drew on direct physical presence in the presence of his officials or the wider German public and stating his opinions in memoranda and correspondence to exercise his prerogatives and forge a narrative of monarchical decision-making. William's generational belonging made him more sensitive to the composite state of German nationhood than his successors Frederick III and William II. He forged an Imperial role which welded Prussian particularism with dynastic federalism and so respected the sovereignty of the other German dynasties and states. As he increasingly accepted his Imperial role from the late 1870s onwards, he put this understanding into practice and through travels and ceremonial events across Germany and in Berlin gave effect to his new office. In so doing, William projected the new German polity as a monarchical nation; for him there was no juxtaposition between dynasty and nation. Rather: the nation existed in, and was embodied by its sovereigns, with himself as its presiding figure. Through his longevity and consistent performing of his role, William succeeded in becoming the central identifying figure and political actor of the new German state. The nostalgia for his persona that emerged fully after his death was undeniably a cultural construct; but given the subsequent course of the Hohenzollern monarchy and Prussian and German history, it is difficult to avoid this sentiment.

Illustrations

Illustration 1. 'Am Grabe der Königin', *Die Gartenlaube* (1870) 577; Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (SBB PK), shelf mark 4" Ac 7218.

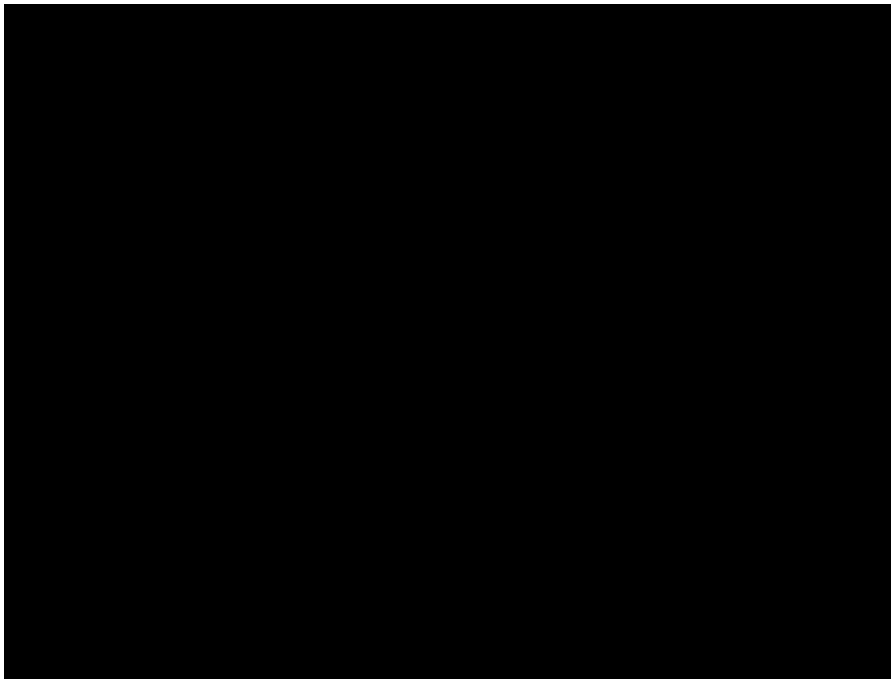


Illustration 2. 'Kriegsrat Versailles 1870/71', Oskar Meding, *Fünfundachtzig Jahre in Glaube, Kampf und Sieg. Ein Menschlichen und Heldenbild unseres deutschen Kaisers von O. Meding. Mit Illustrationen nach den von des Kaisers und Königs Majestät Allergnädigst zur Benutzung verstatteten Aquarellen als Festgabe für das deutsche Volk herausgegeben von Carl Hallberger* (Stuttgart 1882) 45; Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (SBB PK), shelf mark 161685.

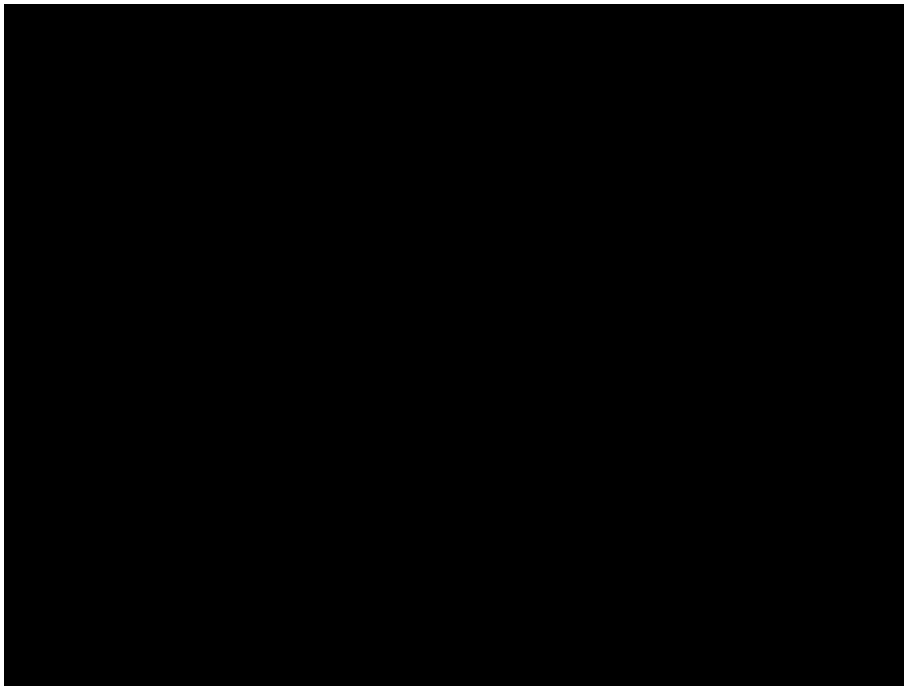
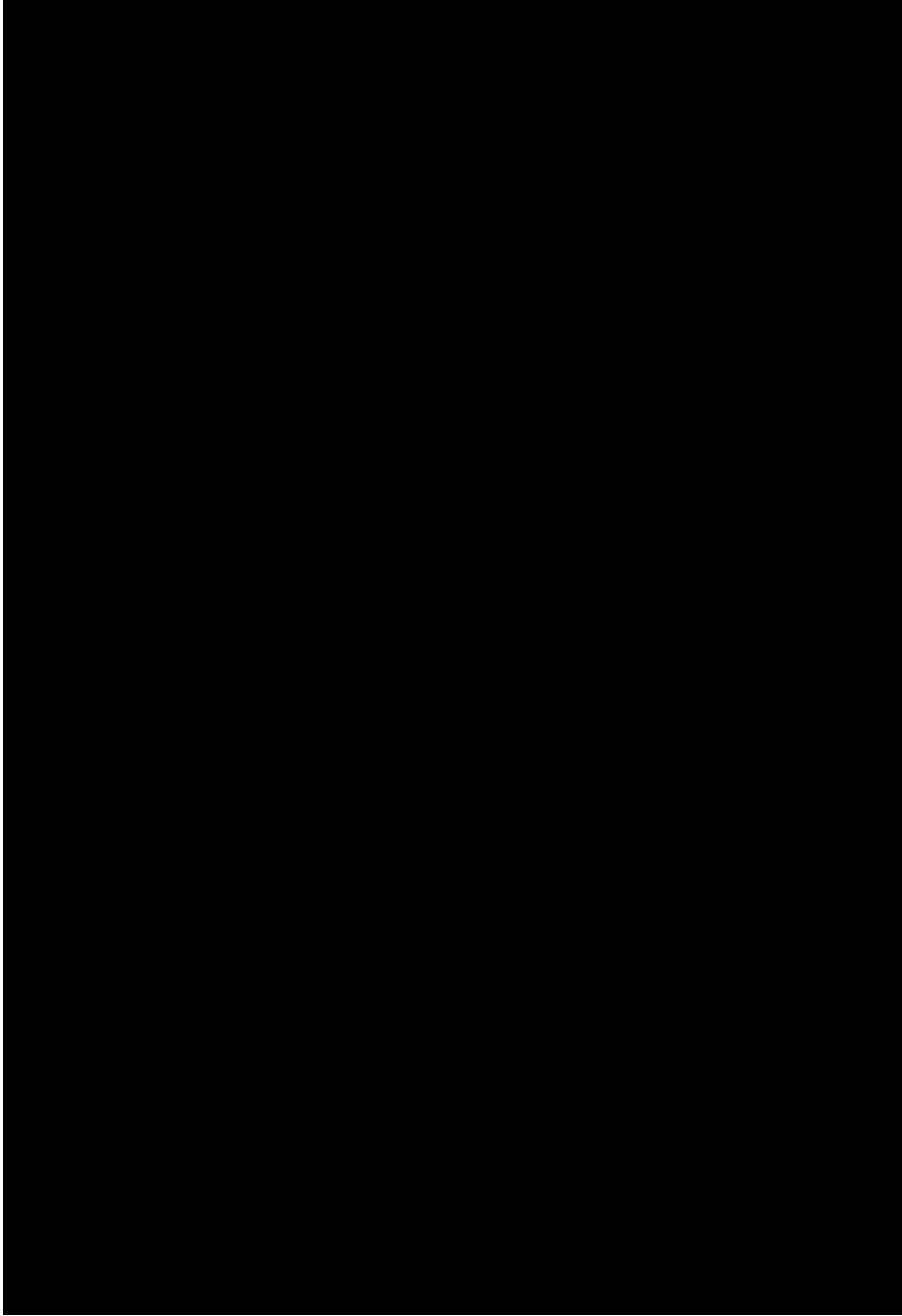
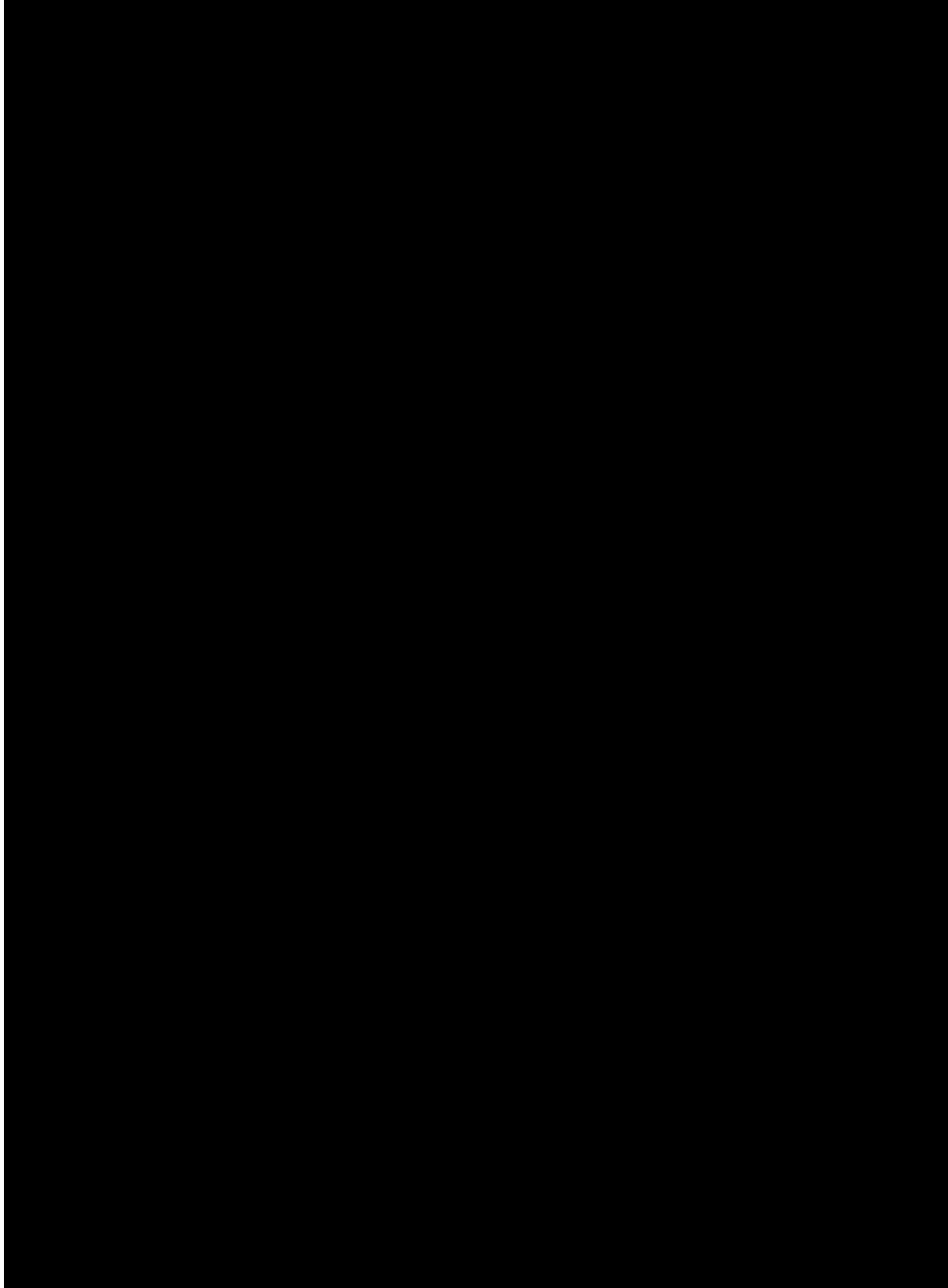
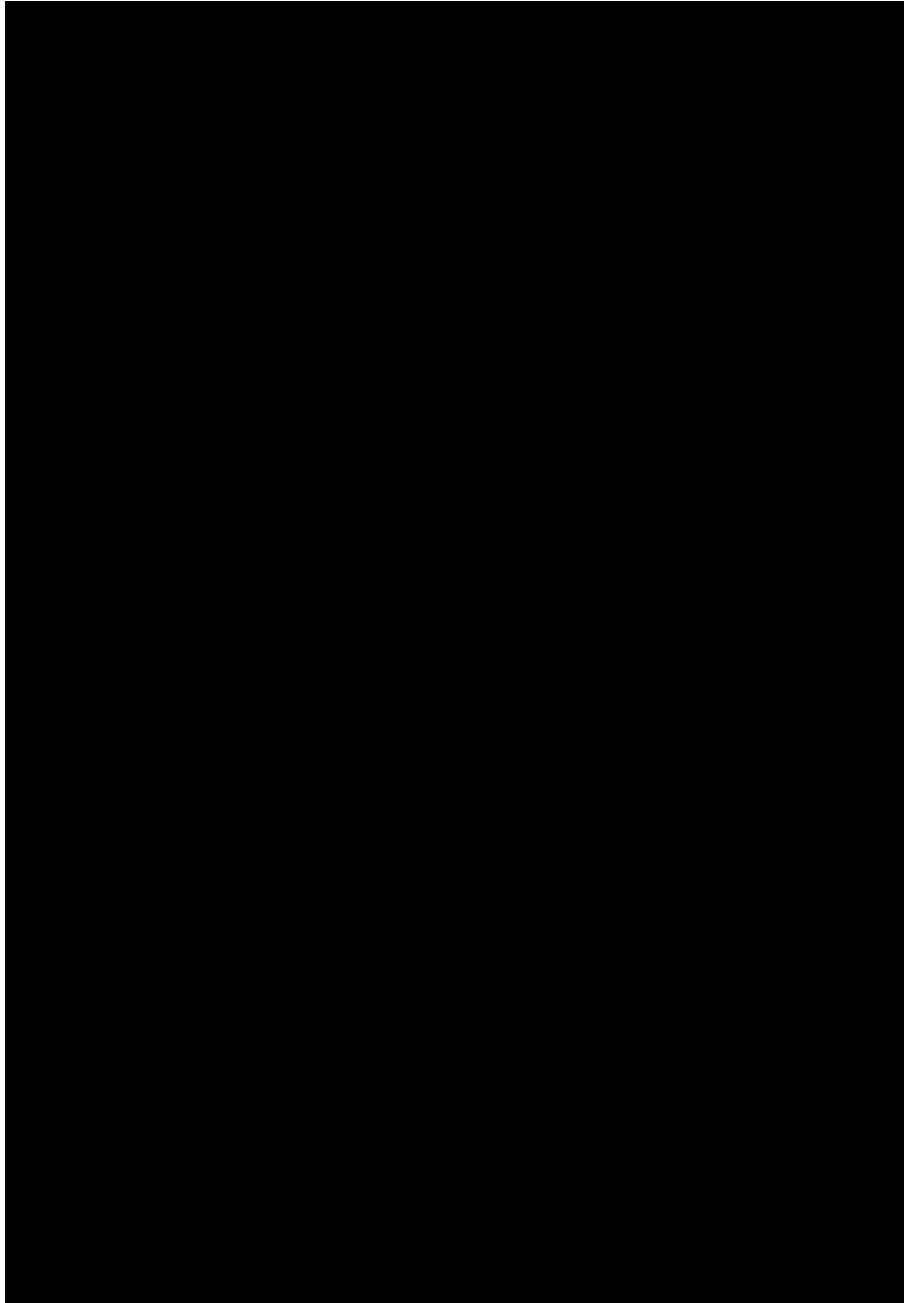


Illustration 3. 'Handschriftlicher Entwurf für die Rede Kaiser Wilhelms I. vor der Enthüllung des Niederwald-Denkmal 28. September 1883', Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, I. HA. Rep. 89. Geheimes Zivilkabinett, Nr. 20850. Errichtung eines Nationaldenkmals auf dem Niederwald bei Ringen am Rhein. 1874-1908. Bl. 160b-160c. © GStA PK.







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