Nazi Militarism

By Matthew M Caverly

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Abstract

This essay aspires to answer the question, "Why did the German polity so readily accept National Socialism as its power-determining ideology?" Scholars, statesmen, journalists, and other interested onlookers have grappled with this question far longer than the Third Reich's rise and fall. Some have claimed that the repressive peace imposed on the Germans in the wake of the First World War—the Treaty of Versailles—is to blame (Paxton 2011). Others have found specifically racialist and racist bases for the adoption of Nazism by the Germans with its twin pillars of Aryanism and Anti-Semitism speaking to long held traditions of Teutonic might and historical destiny (Peukert 1989; cf. Rosenberg 1930 and cf. Fichte 1808).

Populist uprisings against both the extant capitalist bourgeois order and its Bolshevik communistic alternative have been portrayed as legitimate cause celebrity for the advancement of Nazism in Germany (Fritzsche 1990). Yet others have laid the claim/blame on the advancement of imperialism or on the excesses of unrestrained domestic and international capitalism as setting conditions for Hitler's rise (Barkai 1990 and Hayes 1987).

Of course, perhaps the most dominant portrayal of Nazi ideological adoption by German society is found in the veritable cult of personality developed by the party's leader—Adolf Hitler as "Der Fuhrer" (Shirer 1990). Finally, the role of Pan-Germanic Nationalism as a unifying device which articulated a "cult of sacrifice" within the people of Germany or as the promoter of a nationalist-imperium have been examined as causes of the "descent to irrationalism" (Gerwarth 2006; Goldhagen 1997; and Koenigsberg 2009).

This paper will look at the role played by Germanic militarism as a determiner of Nazi ideological adoption by the German State and Society during the 1930's. I will examine the historical background, socio-cultural characteristics, and generalizable implications from this case analysis for the broader political milieu. Unlike most of the other reasons given for the German people's adoption of Nazism, the case of relatively unrestrained militarism is not unique to the Germans in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries.

In fact, militarism can be seen in other historical examples of nationalist uprisings, imperialisms, and general ideological renderings as parts of respective "philosophies of history." The warnings that this piece will sound are not meant as after-the-fact accusations to a people and system (i.e. the Third Reich) now largely long dead. But, such warnings are done to showcase troubling patterns of ideological extremism that we continue to face in the modern world.

Introduction

The greatest war in the history of the world owes its origins to the behavior of Germany's Third Reich as the world's, at that time, principal belligerent. This nation-state took upon itself the role of conqueror in an attempt to create an Aryan Empire that encapsulated much of continental Europe. The Nazis prosecuted a war of conquest that began in the years just prior to the opening of hostilities in 1939. And, this effort ended in failure in 1945 with the destruction of the Nazi state and society at the hands of a two-pronged offensive along Eastern and Western Fronts led by the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Third Reich is one of the most analyzed social spaces and political times in the entirety of humanistic and social scientific inquiry. The reason is that it was far more than just a historical blip on the civilizational radar screen. The Nazis re-shaped what it meant to be a "people" by taking the idea of the nation-state to an imperial form. They were not alone in this endeavor; Napoleon attempted such an empire of ideals with his "completion of the Enlightenment's call for revolutionary liberty—by overthrowing the *ancien regimes* of continental Europe's absolutist monarchies" (Outhwaite 2003)

One could also find a corollary in the American South's defense of its "peculiar institution" of race-based slavocracy (Wyatt-Brown 1982). And, to some extent, Germany's Axis partners' (i.e., Japan and Italy's) pursuits of autarchic empires to maintain and expand their own self-perceived racio-cultural hegemony (Snyder 1991).

However, the Nazi Swastika became an unchallenged symbol of evil in a way that the Fasces, the Rising Sun, or even the Hammer and the Sickle never quite did. Germany's pursuit and practice of power for its own sake would eventually be remembered as a manifestation of the banality of mankind in its most nihilistic form. In popular culture, whenever a villain is needed to represent the worst vices in us as individuals and groups the Nazi image is resurrected.

They have become the perfect foil for our collective derision; to call one a Nazi is to vilify that individual beyond redemption! The horrors of the Holocaust are taught as warnings against the civilizational decline of an entire societal retrogression into irrationalism, despotism, and extreme ethno-chauvinism. The Third Reich, if nothing else, gives us an abject lesson that the abyss of unreason sits close to us all and it does not take much for a political society under duress to embrace its seductive calls for "A New Order!" For whether it is the extremes of Bonapartism,

Bolshevism, Islamofascism, Zionism, and yes, the kind of *loyalist* rhetoric found in some circles in modern Western societies like amongst the so-called neo-conservatives—the "hearts of darkness" await to swallow, in whole or in part, the "lights of reason." This begs the question, "What leads to such collective (as opposed to Kierkegaardian individual) ego-

rational suicide?" More specifically to the case study at hand, "Why did the German polity so readily accept National Socialism as its power-determining ideology?"

The literature review will showcase this question by examining some of the dominant theories that have been presented by scholars to explain the Nazi turn. In the theory section of the paper, we will look at an alternative perspective to previous ones based around the unique role of militarism—the idea that states and societies should be oriented around and towards militarized objectives. These objectives are summarized in the basic definition for the concept as: (1) Glorification of the ideals of a professional military class, (2) Predominance of the armed forces in the administration or policy of the state, and (3) A policy in which military preparedness is of primary importance to the state (Free Dictionary, "Militarism" [http://www.thefreedictionary.com/militarism accessed on 12-05-12](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/militarism)).

After a brief discussion of the case historical methodology, we will move on to the narrative of Germanic militarism as a cultural device which ultimately served a primary role in the development of National Socialism and as a setting piece for the German peoples' acceptance of the Nazi cause. It will be shown that a pattern of historical militarism defined the German state and its society in increasingly authoritarian and bureaucratic terms.

This phenomenon made Germany's culture susceptible to the kind of irredentist calls for "fatherland nationalism" and the promotion of racialist policies that buttressed such folk nationalism by the Nazis. For that matter, militarism as a predominant cultural ethos within German society, polity, and economy not only presaged Nazism but actively generated it! Hitler tapped into and was himself a product of a cultural system that over-privileged the concerns of nationalist glory through military action. In Germany by the time of Hitler's rise, the military had long since ceased to be a means of the state but had become an end in itself. A torched end that even the loss suffered in the Great War of 1914-18 could not extinguish!

Finally, we will conclude with some implications from this study as to its general warning about the potential depravities of overly militarized societies. Remember that Germany was a Constitutional Federated and Parliamentary Republic, a Western society with a strong ethic of rational governance, a fully committed capitalist system with corresponding Welfare and Regulatory States, a place identified by largely free and fair elections with high turnout rates as well as a highly developed religious culture built around Lutheranism and Catholicism; it was in many respects an ideal Western state.

Yet, it took a very negative political turn based I believe largely around a deep and abiding militarist tradition that made it especially susceptible to anti-democratic rhetoric during times of great duress like witnessed in the early days of the Great Depression. In these halcyon days of "love it or leave it" type national-militarist rhetoric in the United States and other Western Societies, as a post 9/11 securitized environment has taken hold and become at least partially institutionalized, we should be wont to learn the lessons of Nazi Militarism.

Literature Review

Scholars from a diversity of fields in the humanistic and social scientific disciplines have tried to tackle this and related questions as to "Why Nazism in Germany?" Some have looked to institutional explanations by suggesting that the Treaty of Versailles was to blame, ultimately, for the Nazi turn by German society. As Paxton (2005) claims, the repressive conditions of the treaty which gave an undue level of blame for the horrors of the First World War on both the German State and its People emplaced a cultural pathos within which only needed a catalyst, in this case, Hitler to activate.

Taking a more economic perspective, George Garvy (1975) attributed the rise of Hitlerism to the dictator's success at exaggerating the employment of countercyclical economic policies which re-credited, re-employed, re-armed, re-industrialized, and generally re-developed the German economy. In other words, it was Keynesianism in practice before J.M. Keynes even authored *The General Theory*.

To some political economists and economic historians, the Olsonian thesis of incentives based interest group actions by Mancur Olson (1965) provides the primary explanation for the ultimate failure of Weimar and the opening for Nazism. To Olson enthusiasts, Harold James (1986) and Knut Borchardt (1991), the Weimar Republic inadequately channeled conflict between distributional groups—specifically unions, political parties, and business associations which led to an ongoing societal dismantling. The Nazis essentially, seized power on the back of internally induced economic fragmentation.

This stands in contrast to the notions of Treaty-induced causes like the before-mentioned Paxton (2005) or those who have found an external economic agent of causation for Hitlerism in the Great Depression's impact on the German domestic and foreign economy like the work of Wolfgang Helbich. Helbich (1959) claimed that the foreign policy of the late Weimar regime under the Bruning Government was re-dedicated to responding to the reparations and Ruhr Industrial Valley domestic crises induced by the Great Depression, especially regarding relations to France.

This set-up the government for a fall and provided an opening for the plurality electoral victory of the Nazis by making the civil society of Germany particularly ripe for reactionary movements, that vilified opponents both real (i.e., France) and imagined (i.e., Poland) (1959).

Furthermore, the fall of the pre-existing Weimar Republic has been given attention by scholars such as Sheri Berman (1997), who found that it was the very weakness of the political structures of the Weimar State that made it incapable of responding to the richly developed civil society of the German people. Under this theory, the Willhimine and Weimar Systems were late developing and ultimately inadequate to meet the robust desires and needs of the ancient German society (Berman 1997).

Hitler and the Nazis merely emplaced their political institutional structures on a society already enraptured by its own *zeitgeist* (1997). The inability to maintain governments, create

coherent foreign and domestic policies, as well as adequately channel conflict: conditions associated with strong societies in weak states make them vulnerable to authoritarian alternatives (i.e., the Nazis) (c.f., Huntington 1968).

Others, have stressed the opposite institutional catalyst, like Maurice Duverger's (1980) introduction of the theoretical concept of the "semi-presidential system" that he claimed was manifested in the Weimar Republican Era (1919-1933). To Duverger (1980), the semi-presidential form is composed of three institutional characteristics (1) an independent president elected by universal suffrage, (2) the presidency is invested with significant powers, and (3) an institutional check is leveled against the head of state by a separate head of government with a cabinet of ministers selected out of the parliament.

The "emergency powers" of the German President, invested as a legacy of the Kaiser Era, were portrayed as a locus for Hitler's concentration of power in the formation of *Der Fuhrer* with the *Enabling Act of 1933* (Shirer 1990). Carl Schmitt's (1921) *Die Diktatur* (On Dictatorship) defended the necessity of a strong executive with "exceptional power" to preserve order and provide a means of reasserting General Law. Schmitt believed that the Executive must be untrammeled by specific laws in order to serve a higher social level—the maintenance of the state during times of extreme threat to the body politic (1921).

Thus, Schmitt praised the existence of this constitutional fiat for the *Reichsprasident* (Empire's President) within the Weimar System and called for its expansion in his later defense of Hitler's usage of the "state of exception," to re-make the constitutional order—a kind of ongoing crisis (c.f., Agamben 1998)! Readers may find such academic proselytizing difficult to digest but this idea is not all that different from John Locke's notion of the "prerogative (or, emergency) power" as discussed in *The Second Treatise on Civil Government* (1690). And, that self-same power put into practice and justified as such by America's own Abraham Lincoln during the dark years of the Civil War (Milks and Nelson 2011).

These institutionally based theories are not the only explanations used to assert the basis for the Nazi turn and some of their limitations are addressed by alternative efforts. For instance, the lack of attention to behavioral empirics in much of the institutional literature limits its generalizability. The historian H.A. Winkler (1976) offered up an electorally-strategic reason for the Nazi's rise which lie in their pronounced effort to follow a two-level game wherein; differing social groups were offered electoral spoils on an individual level, yet at a higher aggregated level the Nazis promoted themselves as a "classless party" giving themselves the sobriquet "People's Party."

This captures the idea that agency often matters as much as processes/structures: the Nazi Party set itself up as a "catch-all" party. This idea stands in contrast to the more single-interest or socio-demographically oriented Class Parties like the various Peasant, Catholic, Protestant Monarchist, Conservative, Liberal, Social Democratic, Socialist, and Communist Parties that it was competing with in the Proportional Representation based elections for the Reichstag.

Likewise, political scientists Gary King, Ori Rosen, Martin Tanner, and Alexander Wagner (2008) have found an alternative pattern when examining voting behavior wherein the electoral coalitions that eventually produced a Nazi outcome were, in fact, not exclusively economically based. These scholars found that groups who were economically impacted but NOT devastated by extant economic conditions in Germany's late 20's and early 30's—the Protestant Middle Classes, along with rural non-Catholic non-Peasant Party affiliated Working Classes and the non-unionized Working Poor were the primary voters who consistently supported the NSDAP (National Socialist Worker's Party).

As these authors contend and in contrast to many economically inspired theses, the Nazi Party was an electoral coalition of groups NOT specifically in danger of joining the ranks of the unemployed. Rather, they responded to other clarion calls which often took on a very opaque color!

The most common form of these alternative defining moments for the Nazi movement is found in its visceral treatment of race. As Peukert (1989) finds, the historical confluence of the twin forces of Aryanism and Anti-Semitism within the NSDAP social imaginary was the single compelling force that drove their party body, mind, and soul to engage in what many still consider the greatest evil in the history of modern man!

Aryanism was an old concept that dated back to at least the Teutonic Code of the Early Middle Ages. The idea of an age of supermen who were genetically, technologically, culturally, and spiritually superior to the rest of us was not something that was intrinsically Germanic. Similar such viewpoints pervaded the Ancient World, helping to justify and continue to call for the expansions of Empires from the Fertile Crescent to the Ganges and Yangtze River Valleys in India and China (Roberts 1993).

Japan built its empire on the notion of racio-cultural superiority, as did Egypt, Athens, and Rome (1993). Likewise, the crusaderism of the West against the East in Medieval Times, the rise of Arabic, Seljuk, and Ottoman Empires were also infused with at least a form of ethno-elitism in the sense of religious purity (Lapidus 2002). Furthermore, the trenchant battles between Christians of various sects dating back to the early days of the religion and continuing well into the Reformation all contained elements of chauvinism (Tillich 1968).

However, Aryanism did develop with a specifically Germanic accent, the tie made to it in philosophical works by such luminaries as Fichte's (1793) and (1808), *Contributions to the Corrections of the Public's Judgment Concerning the French Revolution,* and, Addresses *to the German Nation* calls for nationalism tied up with Hegelian and Kantian undertones. That are further re-interpreted as treatises which espouse Germanic linguistic ancientness, cultural heroism (via Tacitus), and ominously anti-Semitism (1793; 1808).

A bit more controversially, both Carl Schmitt (1950) and Karl Popper (1945) connected Hitler with Hegel stressing continuity in the notion of "the fulfillment of National Will" in the civic freedom of the modern *Volk State.* Hegel viewed his own post-Holy Roman Empire Period in Germany as the paradigmatic case where the Nation-State stood on the precipice of full development.

Walter Kauffman (1951) responded quite negatively to the above observations by claiming that they were based on faulty methodology and a lack of attention to more nuanced readings of Hegel's major works. But, the line of thought linking Germanic nationalism to the notion of a spiritualized calling in the form of the Will is a strong corollary with the echoes of Aryanism.

Racialist theories that took on a specifically "Aryan" cast were first promulgated in the mid-19th century in the work of French racial demographer Arthur de Gobineau's (1853-55), *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*. In this piece, Gobineau articulated the view that white superiority was a specifically Aryan ideal and set it against its polar opposite in the form of the Semitic peoples.

Gobineau laid the blame for the failure of the French Revolution on racial degeneration due to high levels of inter-mixing with "culturally sterile" races by elements across French society (1853-55). The Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain's {1911 (1899)}, *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* was another Aryan promoting device that specifically connected the rise of the Second Reich as proof of the movement of collective spirit of a racially pure Germans-for-a-greater-Germany.

The above drew on but largely departed from the late 18th century contributions of theologian and philosopher of history Johann Gottfried von Herder. Herder's historical works called for a German *Volk* tradition of unanimity that superseded and ought to replace the Prussian nationalism of his time (von Herder {2004 (1784-91)}. In *Ideas for the Philosophy of History for Humanity* (1784-91), von Herder claimed that the modern Germanic peoples originated from Indian and Persian "proto-Aryans" who were differentiable from "parasitic" Semitic Peoples by their capacity for high reason.

This triumvirate connection of a pan-Germanic Will to racially purified Aryanism with a strong cast of Anti-Semitism would become the social, political, and economic basis for the Third Reich. Political Philosopher Alfred Rosenberg {2004 (1930)} wrote all of this down in his Nazi apologetic manifesto, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*. Although a more secularized and a less Madame Blavatsky oriented mystical version of this same idea was presented, albeit in a non-systematic way, in Hitler's {1971 (1926)} own, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle).

Another way of looking at the rise of the Third Reich can be found in its larger political sociological contexts. This school of thought relies less on the ties that bind like pan-Germanic identity or even pronounced Anti-Semitism and more at the centrifugal forces that shows us who and what we are by exaggerating the claims about who and what we are NOT! This form of identity politics was claimed by Fritzsche (1990) in his, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* to lie at the heart of the Nazi rise to power.

He based such a claim on the mass politics practiced during the time as parliamentary instability and economic deprivation led the citizenry into the streets being organized by increasingly extremist elements. The Nazis merely successfully tapped into this phenomenon

by setting themselves up as one of the reactionary forces and the one best suited to put down Bolshevism and Anarchism amongst the revolutionary groups (1990).

Thus, in the beginning the NSDAP was just another fringe group but by the end it was the last defender of order after the Weimar Republic had descended into a quasi-failed state condition (1990). As King et. al. (2008) point out this analysis by Fritzsche is difficult to substantiate because the parliament did continue to function, as did the bureaucracy, military, clergy, business, and labor within Germany. What brought the NSDAP to power was election and then administrative "grabs" justified as "emergency initiatives" and eventually the displacement of the ancient regime with a "New World Order" Aryan culture.

So, if it was not political sociology then what was it? Returning to political economy, some like Barkai (1990) in *Nazi Economics: Ideology, Theory, and Policy* and in the case study provided by Hayes (1987) in *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era* found that the economics of the Third Reich in both theory and practice did not fit evenly on the command to free market scale. The Nazi economy was a hybrid of collectivism with its orientation toward public projects and command planning as well as capitalism with its emphasis on business, especially industrial and financial initiatives (Barkai 1990; Hayes 1987).

If anything, the Nazi economy with its vast employment of corporatism was a kind of neo-mercantilism, or command capitalism (c.f., Overy 2004). Perhaps, the NSDAP should have called itself the "National Capitalist Business Party!" The debate between Marxist Timothy Mason and economic historian Richard Overy regarding whether or not it was the forces of internal economic (Mason's thesis) or external (Overy's counterpoint) economic crises that pushed Germany to launch war, arguably prematurely, in 1939 is instructive in trying to locate a mechanism of causation for the Nazi turn (Mason & Overy 1997). However, it is historically out of synch with the rise of Hitler and is, in effect, a theory and counter-theory for the onset of World War II. Therefore, it does not help us in discerning this puzzle, so we must look further.

As a final place for answers we will turn to the movement of pan-Germanic nationalism, with its emphasis on the search for Lebensraum (Living Space) and the role played by Hitler as its secular cult leader. Probably the most cited work on the Third Reich is historian and journalist William Shirer's (1990) *The Rise and fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*, in it, Shirer claims that the key to the rise to power by the Nazis was in their ability to tap into the potential of unbridled nationalism. Shirer's idea was that the German people had a long history of national self-development through, "…blind obedience to temporal rulers as the highest virtue of Germanic Man…" with a corresponding, "premium on servility" (1990).

To this author, the German People were almost pre-ordained to descend into the abyss of irrationalism due to their historical predilections (1990). Also, Shirer (1990) was convinced that Hitler was the single decisive figure in the Third Reich, more than its leader; he was its living personified symbol. The cult of personality that developed around *Der Fuhrer* sustained the movement but also delimited it to his own personal success. Once the tables turned on Nazi militaristic aggression, the rock of Hitler proved to be built atop a sand of massed sycophants who disappeared as quickly as they had coalesced (1990).

In more targeted ways, this theme was also explored by authors such as Robert Gerwarth's (2006), *The Bismarck Myth* wherein he made the claim that Hitler had set himself up as the heir of Bismarck, expanding his base of power on the Iron Chancellor's own mythology as great statesman, war leader, and diplomat. Daniel Goldhagen's (1997), *Hitler's Willing Executioners* showed how ordinary Germans in the tens of thousands voluntarily participated and tacitly approved of the Holocaust as part of an enlarged cult of anti-Semitism.

And, Richard Koenigsberg's (2009) monograph, *Nations Have a Right to kill* examined the theme that the entirety of the German society and polity committed themselves to the nationalist-imperium impulse. They did this even to the point of committing a collective national suicide to achieve the dystopian nightmares of Hitler's personalized version of National Socialism (2009).

The difficulties with these analyses are that they either overly bless the German people as being duped by the machinations of an evil cabal led by Hitler. Or, they overly damn those same people as willing executioners of Nazism. Now, let us turn to an alternative perspective!

Theory and Method

In this work, I will articulate a theory for the rise of the Third Reich that I believe provides a better explanatory device. Furthermore, this thesis contains a generalizable conclusion which allows us to apply it in other similar circumstances. *My view is that the pronounced historical tradition of militarism within the German Polity made it susceptible to the kind of far-right wing politics associated with Hitler and the Nazis.*

This theory avoids the pitfalls of many of the previous attempts because it is dissociated from intrinsically Germanic explanations like "Germanized" versions of nationalism, imperialism, anti-Semitism, and even Hitlerism. Also, the theory is contextualized enough that it does not suffer the limitations of case-specific explanation as found in many of the behavioral, economic, and institutionally based theories. Finally, this alternative is empirically defensible with a broad base of historical evidence which allows for its generalizability to alternative cases.

Unlike a larger culturally based thesis like William Shirer's (1990), a theory grounded in a single phenomenon like militarism allows it to be teased out in a way that cannot be done with "Grand History" theories. These other "Large Process and Structure" theories contain numerous interaction possibilities that generally decrease their explanatory power and virtually negate predictive qualities.

As to methodology, this paper is employing a case historical analysis of the development of the German Empire in terms of tracing and identifying the path dependent phenomenon of militarism within its state and society. We will look back at precursors that date from the time of the Early and High Middle Ages, as seen in the Teutonic Warrior

Tradition and exemplified in the formation of the Holy Roman Empire, as well as its apex under Otto the Great.

Then, we will take a deeper look into the practice of a militarized erection of the Germanic state in first the 30 Years War and then under the Prussian leadership of the Frederick Williams. We will conclude the historical survey with a look at the establishment of the Bismarkian Era in the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars. We will spend the remainder of the paper, bringing ourselves current to the time of the Nazi turn by looking at the decisive role that militarism and para-militarism played in shaping the contours of that dark move in German history. The reader should note that the historical narrative will be kept as abbreviated as possible and follow a trajectory of moving from the general (and hence shallow) to the specific (and thus more in-depth).

<u>Historical Analysis</u>

What we now call the "German People" is a polyglot of numerous tribes of varying sizes that occupied much of Northern and Central Europe from pre-historical times. It is not necessary to discuss the movements of these peoples or their eventual consolidation into a distinct Germanic identity. However, the influence of the Teutonic Tradition on these groups (and not just the Teutonic Tribe) with its notion of a warrior ethos is necessary to showcase the largely differential development of military values' role in Germanic society.

On one level, as the 19th century political scientist John Burgess pointed out the Teutonic Tradition held ostensibly democratic virtues (Burgess {2000 1890)}. As an ideal, it called for the selection of leaders based on collective agreement of followers in a council called the *Witan* (Salway in Morgan 1983). Germanic Chieftaincies, however, were based on their ends not their means for leadership—and, to be sure, those ends were devoted to the prosecution of war! Political theorists have made much of the idea that the German *Volk* or Folk Tradition lie at the heart of their specifically racialist orientation toward nationalism [c.f., Fichte 1808; von Treitschke ed. & tr. {1915 (1894)}].

However, that obfuscates the notion of a pronounced proclivity towards organized violence and the glorification thereof that surrounds the mythology and history of the Germans. The composer and dramatist Richard Wagner's influence on Hitler is well known but what is more important to us is his glorification of the Great Nordic mythological hero Siegfried, the proto-Nietzschean Blond Beast, which was not so much a propaganda piece for the Aryan Ideal but a reflexive personality of an already extant social consciousness.

The root of German Idealism in the 18th and 19th centuries can be found in the path dependent movements of the very real war chiefs discussed by the Roman Senator and historian Tacitus from the Late Roman Period. The Teutonic culture of blood rituals involving fealty had at its root the notion of servility in exchange for protection.

This idea was enforced by conquerors on the conquered and while it would be removed of its militarized origins in the development of liberalism in England and France (the rights and duties of the governors in respect to the governed) it remained a staunch part of the Medieval and later nationalist cultures of Central Europe. The Germanic tribes including but not limited to the Goths, Franks, and Saxons all embodied the warrior tradition with its continued pagan notions of blood sacrifice, fealty to the leader, and the glorification of warfare as a Divine Aspiration (Oman 1998, Book I).

While Charlemagne is credited with creating the Holy Roman Empire in 800 A.D. (the nascent German state), it was the activities of successors such as Otto the Great and Frederick Barbarossa who took the war-culture of the German People to their apex during the Middle Ages. We must remember that this was a time of almost endemic warfare, much different from the Classical Period of Western Civilization that preceded it or the Modern World that followed it.

However, the role of the Knight Tradition that developed out of the so-called Teutonic Code during these centuries would live on as a cultural metaphor for nationalist-imperium. The 30 Years War (1618-1648) was fought, at least partially, under the perceived religiosity contained within the idea of the Teutonic Knights (Benecke 1978). The two Frederick Williams re-organized the Prussian kingdom as a modern nation-state under a militarized and para-militarized bureaucracy which aped aspects of "The Order of Brothers of the German House of St. Mary in Jerusalem."

This was especially true in terms of its notions of standards, appearances, and actions (Duffy 1985). All of which called for adherence to a higher order, to the Teutonic Knights that meant the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor—to the Prussians it meant the Frederick Williams themselves!

The Mythologizing of Charlemagne's memory lived on in the activities of Brandenburg-Prussia as well as lesser principalities, confederacies, and independent dukedoms like Hesse, Swiss, or Saxony as their militarized societies became a kind of modern Sparta. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries it was a source of mercenaries for the various armies and navies of the Great Powers of Europe as they were engaged in wars large and small.

The Empire was dissolved by Napoleon in 1806 in the wake of the Treaty of Pressburg, however, the emergence of Prussia and Austria as nation-state powers helped solidify Germanic identity. But, it was an identity that was highly given over to militarized notions of politics and policy.

This militarization of diplomacy and even domestic politics lie at the heart of the celebrated chancellorship of Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck is remembered for his practice of *Realpolitik* in a game of balance of power with England, France, and Russia. However, he is even more important for his militarization of the new German Empire's state and society, with his war mobilization plans, economic coordination, cult of Kaiser Nationalism, naval build-up, press propaganda, and pursuit of overseas imperialism (Holborn 1969).

Bismarck has been studied for his social progressivism in establishing the German Welfare State and especially for his diplomatic triumphs (c.f., Hennock 2003; Kissinger 1968). But, I contend that it was his decisive military planning and execution in the Austro-Prussian (1864, 1866) and Franco-Prussian Wars (1870-71) that cemented the myth of the "Iron Chancellor."

A myth of untrammeled military greatness as a substitute for diplomatic excellence that the Second Kaiser and, ultimately, Adolf Hitler would tie themselves to leading directly to the destruction of the Second and Third Reich's. In other words, the lesson learned by Bismarck's foreign affairs was not *realpolitik*, not a diplomatist balance of power centered foreign policy but *machtpolitik*, a military-centered preponderance of power perspective.

In the wake of the Crimean War (1853-56), Bismarck, who assumed the Minister-President and Foreign Minister positions of Prussia in 1862, began the reconfiguration of Prussian society by placing it on an ongoing crisis mentality. He did this by advancing notions of military preparedness, diplomatic badgering, press censorship and consolidation of "emergency" power in the hands of the government (Pflanze 1963-90).

The modernization of the army as a conscript based, massed, and professional entity by Bismarck's Lieutenant Roon and its employment on the battlefields against Austria and France by the master strategist Moltke further solidified the idea of Germany as an unstoppable force (1963-90).

Bismarck did not create the myth of German invincibility and militaristic crusader spirit, that was already there, he just institutionalized it. However, this effort increased the role of the "myth" in the social consciousness of the German people. It was tapped into by Wilhelm II at the start of the Great War and you can see it waxed philosophically in the newspapers and even academic treatises of the time (Koenigsberg 2009).

The idea is captured in Hitler's speeches and writings (i.e., *Mein Kampf*), as notions of "blood soil," "racial greatness," and "fatherland *volk*" are used repeatedly in various contexts. For the origins of many of these ideas you do not have to look very far as we see from this decisive and ominous quote from Bismarck in 1862:

Prussia must concentrate and maintain its power for the favorable moment which has already slipped by several times. Prussia's boundaries according to the Vienna treaties are not favorable to a healthy state life. The great questions of the time will not be resolved by speeches and majority decisions—that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849—but by iron and blood.
--Budget Committee Speech to Chamber of Deputies September 30, 1862

In the period just after the end of the First World War, the National Socialist Worker's Party (NSDAP) was organized. However, it was just one of numerous military-oriented organizations that were sprouting up across the major populated areas of Germany during those years. Even, its penchant for creating a para-military wing, in this case the SA, was not

intrinsic to the Nazis—nor to the Right Wing as the communists also organized para-militaristically.

Also, the theme of order promoted by the Nazis was employed by other conservative, nationalist, militarist, monarchist, and other reactionary groups in speeches, propaganda, demonstrations, etc.… The Nazis were the group that emerged at the top of this "race-to-remake-the-world" in Germany. But, the militarist tradition that they more successfully than their competitors channeled as their own, was already there! The parades, strikes, demonstrations, symbolisms, speeches, etc.…were all used in various degrees by any number of groups throughout Germany (and for that matter other countries, including the USA).

However, the Germanic movements, especially among the monarchists, conservatives, nationalists, militarists, Nazis, and other right wing groups were more specifically militarized than the Left's (the communists stand out as an aberration from this trend) regarding political actions (Cooper 1990). Finally, Hitler's personal fascination with the military and his self-assurance of his own military genius were part and parcel of the general inclination across German society toward the perceived and real virtues of military training, organization, and activity in daily living in the Germany of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (1990). One of Hitler's favorite quotes captures the nuances of this view:

War, was a good in itself because states, like people, were driven to dominate each other and warfare was the process by which national domination was achieved…That war should ever be banished from the world, is not only absurd, but profoundly immoral…Permanent peace, would be a crime, and societies that wanted peace were obviously decaying" --von Treitschke (tr. 1915).

Right wing politicos have always venerated the virtues of militarism more so than their Left-wing alternatives, in fact, we see this to this day in the American two-party conflict between the Republicans and the Democrats. However, unchecked militarism wherein; the military becomes the end rather than the means of politics; to turn the Clausewitzian phrase on its head, leads to an untroubled march to war for its own sake! For the Germans, this march was so destructive that it ultimately destroyed their position as a Great Power for decades.

Conclusions and Implications

In this paper, we have examined the possibilities of a militarist based explanation for the turn to Nazism by the German polity in 1933. To be sure, we have examined alternative theories including: institutional, racial, economic, sociological, and personality based versions. I have criticized these theses and offered up the militarism explanation through a targeted historical analysis of the development and path dependent impetus of the phenomenon on the state and society of Germany.

Implications of this study move far beyond the mere locating of a phenomenon of interest in the historical development of a people; for I believe that we can see much of ourselves in the Germany of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The West, especially the United States, has a virtual monopoly on organized violence wherein; the U.S. alone accounts for 49-51% of global defense spending (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2012).

The West dedicated much of the 20th century to fighting one form of ideologically conceived absolutism or another in terms of the world wars and the Cold War. However, in the years since the demise of the Cold War the U.S. (to take the most prolific example) NEVER dipped below 85% of the Cold War high in defense spending (Congressional Budget Office Report 2010). Right wing parties throughout Europe have long been promoting increases in military sizes in the wake of responding to the Global War on Terrorism.

The militarized torches of Thatcherism and Gaullism have never been completely extinguished in Britain and France. And, the return of a national militarized Russia under Putin has not helped matters in terms of lowering the global profile of western militarism. Last year, the U.S. spent 664 Billion dollars on the Pentagon, largely for big ticket war machines that have no use or purpose in the counter-insurgency operations being conducted in Afghanistan (c.f., Office of Management and Budget Report 2012).

The rise of xenophobia toward "others" and excessive localism, in combination with re-invigorated gun cultures as well as messianic type religiosity points to a radical departure from mainstream liberalism (and for that matter, modernity) among some groups in the West, especially in the U.S. This ominously portends to a future that may make so-called modernized nation-states susceptible to the machinations of extremism—particularly right wing extremism due to its inherent link with militarism.

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