

The Rise of Prussia 1700-1830

Philip G. Dwyer



THE RISE OF PRUSSIA 1700-1830



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

THE RISE OF PRUSSIA 1700–1830

Edited by
PHILIP G. DWYER



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2000 by Pearson Education Limited

Published 2013 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright © 2000, Taylor & Francis.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notices

Knowledge and best practice in this field are constantly changing. As new research and experience broaden our understanding, changes in research methods, professional practices, or medical treatment may become necessary.

Practitioners and researchers must always rely on their own experience and knowledge in evaluating and using any information, methods, compounds, or experiments described herein. In using such information or methods they should be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others, including parties for whom they have a professional responsibility.

To the fullest extent of the law, neither the Publisher nor the authors, contributors, or editors, assume any liability for any injury and/or damage to persons or property as a matter of products liability, negligence or otherwise, or from any use or operation of any methods, products, instructions, or ideas contained in the material herein.

ISBN 13: 978-0-582-29268-0 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The rise of Prussia: rethinking prussian history, 1700–1830 / edited by Philip G. Dwyer.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-582-29268-9 (pbk.) — ISBN 0-582-29269-7 (cased)

1. Prussia (Germany)—History—Frederick William I, 1713–1740. 2. Prussia (Germany)—History—1740–1815. 3. Prussia (Germany)—History, Military. 4. Nationalism—Germany—Prussia—History—19th century. 5. Church and state—Germany—Prussia—History—18th century. I. Dwyer, Philip G.

DD395.R58 2000
943'.05—dc21

00–057560

Typeset by 35 in Baskerville MT 11/13pt

CONTENTS

<i>List of Maps and Tables</i>	viii
<i>List of Prussian Rulers</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	x
<i>About the Contributors</i>	xii

Introduction: The rise of Prussia

<i>Philip G. Dwyer</i>	1
The disparate nature of the Prussian state	4
Religious and intellectual movements: Pietism and the Enlightenment	5
The rural and urban environment	8
The state and the army	12
Expansion and consolidation	15
The French Revolution and Napoleon	22

1. Prussia in history and historiography from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century

<i>Stefan Berger</i>	27
Prussian historiography in the eighteenth century	30
Prussian historiography in the early nineteenth century	34
The ‘German vocation’ of Prussia and the ‘Hohenzollern legend’	37
The critics of Prussianism	40

PART ONE: POLITICS, RELIGION AND SOCIETY

2. Frederick William I and the beginnings of Prussian absolutism, 1713–1740

<i>Rodney Gothelf</i>	47
Frederick William I as king	47
Some obstacles to the development of Hohenzollern absolutism	51
Restructuring the central agencies of the state	56
The expansion of the army	59
Conclusion	66

3.	Piety, politics and society: Pietism in eighteenth-century Prussia	
	<i>Christopher Clark</i>	68
	Philipp Jakob Spener and the origins of the Pietist movement	69
	The alliance between Pietism and the monarchy	71
	The impact of the Pietist movement on Prussian society and institutions	84
4.	Prussia and the Enlightenment	
	<i>Johan van der Zande</i>	89
	The social and political context of the Enlightenment	90
	The two faces of the Enlightenment	96
	Enlightenment institutions and sociability in Prussia	100
	The debate in Prussia on the Enlightenment	103
	 PART TWO: THE RURAL AND URBAN ENVIRONMENT	 109
5.	The transformation of the rural economy in East Elbian Prussia, 1750–1830	
	<i>Edgar Melton</i>	111
	Prussian <i>Gutsherrschaft</i> around 1750	111
	Prussian <i>Gutsherrschaft</i> in crisis, 1750–1807	116
	Resolving the crisis of <i>Gutsherrschaft</i>	120
	The agrarian reforms, 1807–21	123
	Results of the reforms	125
	Conclusion	127
6.	The development of the Prussian town, 1720–1815	
	<i>Karin Friedrich</i>	129
	The end of the Teutonic Knights' state and the towns of	
	Royal (Polish) Prussia	132
	Brandenburg-Prussian towns and Hohenzollern rule	135
	The towns of Prussian Silesia	143
	The annexation of the Polish Prussian cities	145
	The impact of the urban reform work: the <i>Städteordnung</i> of 1808	149
	 PART THREE: THE STATE AND THE ARMY	 151
7.	Prussia's emergence as a European great power, 1740–1763	
	<i>H. M. Scott</i>	153
	The sinews of Prussian power	153
	Prussia's emergence, 1740–6	159
	Consolidation, 1746–56	165
	Survival, 1756–63	170

CONTENTS

8.	1763–1786: The Second Reign of Frederick the Great? <i>H. M. Scott</i>	177
	Bureaucratic absolutism or personal monarchy?	178
	Aping the great powers?	186
	Conquering new provinces in peacetime	193
	The legacies of the second reign	197
9.	The Prussian military state, 1763–1806 <i>Hagen Schulze</i>	201
	Prussia’s geopolitical imperative	203
	The position of the nobility	207
	The French Revolution and its consequences	211
10.	Prussia’s army: continuity and change, 1713–1830 <i>Dennis Showalter</i>	220
	Geography, diplomacy and Prussia’s military requirements	221
	The nature of the army	226
PART FOUR: PRUSSIA, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND NAPOLEON		
237		
11.	Prussia during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1786–1815 <i>Philip G. Dwyer</i>	239
	Frederick William II and the search for territorial aggrandizement	240
	Frederick William III and the Napoleonic threat	246
	A place in the European states-system	255
12.	The Prussian Reform Movement and the rise of enlightened nationalism <i>Matthew Levinger</i>	259
	Eighteenth-century traditions and nineteenth-century challenges	262
	The project of nation-building in Napoleonic Prussia	265
	Legacies of enlightened nationalism	275
	<i>Suggestions for further reading</i>	279
	<i>A note on further research possibilities</i>	299
	<i>Index</i>	313

LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES

MAPS

1. Prussia at the death of Frederick William I (1740)	308
2. Prussia at the death of Frederick II (1786)	309
3. Prussia at the death of Frederick William II (1797)	310
4. Prussia at the time of the Treaty of Tilsit (1807)	311
5. Prussia at the time of the Congress of Vienna (1815)	312

TABLES

Table I.1 Relative troop strengths of the European powers	14
Table I.2 Prussian participation in European wars, 1701–1871	18–19
Table 2.1 Growth of the Brandenburg-Prussian army, 1713–40	59
Table 9.1 Population of the European powers around 1700	205

LIST OF PRUSSIAN RULERS

<i>Rulers</i>	<i>Reign</i>
Frederick William, the Great Elector (1620–1688)	1640–1688
Elector Frederick III, King Frederick I from 1701 (1657–1713)	1688–1713
King Frederick William I (1688–1740)	1713–1740
King Frederick II, the Great (1712–1786)	1740–1786
King Frederick William II (1744–1797)	1786–1797
King Frederick William III (1770–1840)	1797–1840
King Frederick William IV (1795–1861)	1840–1861
King William I, Kaiser William I from 1871 (1797–1888)	1861–1888
Kaiser Frederick III (1831–1888)	1888
Kaiser William II (1859–1918)	1888–1918

PREFACE

The purpose of this collection of essays and its companion, *Modern Prussian History, 1830–1947*, is to offer an overview of key themes in Prussian history over long periods of time. Specialists have approached their subjects from new perspectives, incorporating recent research which often questions traditional interpretations. Although distinct and separate, the two volumes are in many ways complementary. An essay taken in isolation, from either volume, will probably not give the reader very much of an insight into why Prussia developed the way it did. A combination of essays taken together, however, will throw light on long-term trends in Prussian – and by extension German – history. The resulting picture shows that Prussia was much more complex, diverse and in some respects less reactionary than traditional interpretations would have it.

These essays also give an indication of the wealth and diversity of work that has been carried out on Prussia over the last few decades. A number of them review Prussia's rise to power and the problems that its kings faced in asserting themselves on both the domestic and the foreign political fronts. This is a fairly standard approach: historians have generally thought in terms of foreign policy, the administration and the army when discussing the rise of Prussia. However, there is a tendency for Prussia's regional, ethnic and religious diversity to be glossed over in general texts that make sweeping assertions about what 'Prussia' was, and what it was to be 'Prussian'. Prussia's emergence as a leading European power, which was by no means straightforward nor inevitable, cannot be adequately understood without reference to its diverse social, economic and cultural structures. A number of essays in this collection consequently examine questions that are often neglected in the traditional political narratives: religion, intellectual history, the economy, and the development of a specifically Prussian culture and society, both urban and rural. They are all intimately linked in one way or another to the development and expansion of the centralized state. An attempt is thus made to integrate political history into a broader social framework.

Historians have never agreed on when Prussian history begins and when it ends. Stefan Berger's contribution in this volume discusses the various

dates offered by historians and points out how differing interpretations of Prussian history were often related to specific political agendas. The dates chosen for this collection have been defined primarily by a desire to stay within the modern era. As such, 1701, the year when Frederick, Elector of Brandenburg-Prussia, crowned himself king in Königsberg, seems like the most practical date to start with. It was much easier to find a terminating point – 1947, when the Allies officially dissolved the state of Prussia. It was thought that 1830 would be an appropriate halfway point between these two dates. Despite its apparent arbitrariness, 1830 marks a new departure in Prussian history. By that stage, the liberal Reform Movement, which began in 1807 and which was born in military defeat at the hands of Napoleon, had petered out and the conservative forces around the throne had reasserted their position of power. The 1830s also saw the founding of the first conservative weekly newspaper, the *Berliner Politisches Wochenblatt*, and the creation of a Customs Union, the *Zollverein*. In other words, an old force (the nobility) was finding new ways to express itself, while new forces (economic and political) were coming onto the scene which would eventually vie with traditional social and political structures. The tensions these forces created are some of the issues explored in *Modern Prussian History, 1830–1947*.

This collection of essays is the end result of a collective effort and I am deeply indebted to all the contributors, not only for their unflinching co-operation and support, but for the patience with which they have borne the delays that inevitably attend this type of collection. Two people in particular, however, stand out above the others – Hamish Scott, who gave unstintingly of his time and advice when this book was just an idea, and Andrew MacLennan, formerly of Addison Wesley Longman, for his enthusiasm, energy and encouragement during the early stages of this project. It has seen the light of day largely as a result of their help. Thanks to Heather McCallum, who took up the project midstream. I should also like to thank Bill Hagen, Dennis Showalter, Tim Hochstrasser and Narelle Parkinson for their help and advice at various stages of the project. Renate Oakley helped me with the translations from German into English. I am also happy to acknowledge, at a time when research money is difficult to come by, the support of the Research Management Committee at the University of Newcastle and the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst for providing financial assistance towards the completion of this and its companion volume. Their generous support has made the project possible.

Philip G. Dwyer

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Stefan Berger is Professor of History at the University of Glamorgan, Wales. He is the author of *The British Labour Party and the German Social Democrats, 1900–1931* (Oxford, 1994, German transl. Bonn, 1997), *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (Oxford, 1997), and *Social Democracy and the Working Class in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (London, 1999). He is currently working on a cultural history of German nationalism for Edward Arnold.

Christopher Clark is a Fellow and Lecturer in Modern European History at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. He is the author of *Politics of Conversion. Missionary Protestantism and the Jews in Prussia, 1728–1941* (Oxford, 1995) and *William II* (London, 2000). He has published widely in the field of Prussian and German history.

Philip Dwyer is Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Newcastle, Australia. He is the editor of *Modern Prussian History, 1830–1947* (London, 2000), and author of a number of articles on Prussian foreign policy during the Napoleonic era. He is currently working on a study of Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand for Longman's 'Profiles in Power' series, as well as editing a collection of essays entitled *Napoleon, France and Europe: A Reassessment*.

Karin Friedrich is Lecturer in History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College, London. She is the author of *The Other Prussia. Royal Prussia, Poland and Liberty, 1569–1772* (Cambridge, 2000) as well as several articles on the Polish Prussian Enlightenment, religious conflict in Poland-Lithuania, the history of ideas, and the history of early modern Cracow and Prague. She contributed a chapter on 'Intellectual and Cultural Trends' in pre-unification Germany in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *German History Since 1800* (London, 1997). She is currently working on a two-volume *History of the Prussian Lands*, from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries for Pearson Education.

Rodney Gothelf recently received his Ph.D. in Modern History from the University of St Andrews, Scotland, where he specialised in the rise of the modern state. He has taught at St Andrews, Scotland and at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. He is currently working on a manuscript about the operation of provincial government during the reign of Frederick William I, 1713-1740.

Matthew Levinger is Assistant Professor of Modern European History at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. He is the author of *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (Oxford, 2000), and several articles on political culture in revolutionary France and nineteenth-century Prussia. He is currently at work on a study of German nationalism since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Edgar Melton is Associate Professor of History at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. He studied Russian history under Marc Raeff at Columbia University, where he received his doctorate. He has held numerous research fellowships, and was a Mellon Faculty Fellow at Harvard in 1989/90. His articles on Russian and German history have appeared in *Past & Present*, *Journal of Modern History*, *German History*, and other scholarly journals. He has also contributed chapters to several books published by Longman, including H. M. Scott (ed.), *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2 vols (London, 1995), and Tom Scott (ed.), *The Peasantries of Europe from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1998). He is presently completing a study of a serf estate in early nineteenth-century Russia.

Hagen Schulze is Chair of Modern German and European History at the Friedrich Meinecke Institute at the Freie University of Berlin. His previous books include *Nation-Building in Central Europe* (1987), *The Course of German Nationalism: From Frederick the Great to Bismarck, 1763-1867* (Cambridge, 1991), *States, Nations and Nationalism: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford, 1996) and *A New History of Germany* (1998).

H. M. Scott is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at the University of St Andrews. He is the author (with Derek McKay) of *The Rise of the Great Powers 1648-1815* (London, 1983), *British Foreign Policy in the Age of the American Revolution 1763-1783* (Oxford, 1991) and numerous articles on eighteenth-century international history, and the editor of *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1990) and *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2 vols (London, 1995). He is currently completing a study of *The Emergence of the Eastern Powers 1756-75*. He is co-editor of the 'Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dennis Showalter is Professor of History at The Colorado College, Colorado Springs. He is the author of *Railroads and Rifles: Soldiers, Technology and the Unification of Germany* (London, 1975), *What Now? Der Stürmer in the Weimar Republic* (Hamden, CT, 1982), *Tannenberg: Clash of Empires* (Hamden, CT, 1991), and *The Wars of Frederick the Great* (London, 1996), as well as numerous articles and chapters on war and the German army.

Johan van der Zande has taught in the Netherlands and at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *Bürger und Beamter: Johann Georg Sulzer, 1739–1799* (Stuttgart, 1986), and the editor (with Richard H. Popkin) of *The Skeptical Tradition Around 1800: Skepticism in Philosophy, Science, and Society* (Dordrecht/Boston/London, 1998). He has published several articles on German popular philosophy and is currently writing a study of German philosophy between Wolff and Kant.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following for permission to reproduce copyright material:

Table I.1 from André Corvisier, *Armées et sociétés en Europe de 1494 à 1789* (Paris, 1976), p. 126, Presses Universitaires de France; all maps adapted from H. W. Koch, *A History of Prussia* (1978), reproduced with permission from Pearson Education Limited.

Whilst every effort has been made to trace the owners of copyright material, in a few cases this has proved impossible and we take this opportunity to offer our apologies to any copyright holders whose rights we may have unwittingly infringed.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Prussia

PHILIP G. DWYER

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Prussia rose out of obscurity to become one of the most powerful countries in Europe. Prussia's rise took time, but it occurred over a relatively short period by contemporary standards. In 1640, there was no kingdom of Prussia at all, only the Electorate of Brandenburg, linked to disparate patches of land that were difficult to administer and even more difficult to defend. Moreover, the Electorate suffered from poor soil, declining trade and a sparse population. Its territory was often at the mercy of marauding mercenaries; this was especially the case during the Thirty Years' War. This was hardly the stuff out of which a great power was likely to be made.

The domestic and military reforms carried out by, first, the Great Elector, then Frederick III (King Frederick I from 1701), and further developed by the so-called soldier king, Frederick William I (ruled 1713–40), changed all of that. In the face of continuing military conflicts and the economic disruptions which marked the closing decades of the seventeenth century, Frederick III/I saw the need for a modern, highly trained army to protect the state.¹ To support it, he had to completely refashion both the political and the economic structures of the Electorate, emulating the absolutism of Louis XIV along the way. He transformed his state into a kingdom in 1701 and was largely responsible for the features that were to become characteristic of Prussia during the eighteenth and part of the nineteenth centuries.

¹ See Derek McKay, 'Small-power diplomacy in the age of Louis XIV: the foreign policy of the Great Elector during the 1660s and the 1670s', in Robert Oresko, G. C. Gibbs and H. M. Scott (eds), *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 189 and 191. My thanks to Dennis Showalter and Brendan Simms for their comments on various drafts of this chapter.

When Frederick II came to the throne in 1740, Prussia was on a par with its two German neighbours, Saxony and Hanover, with which it was competing for leadership in North Germany. That is, it was a second- or even a third-rate power. The economic and military reforms that had been carried out over the last two or three decades were then rudely put to the test during the Seven Years' War (1756–63). They enabled Frederick II to withstand assaults from Austria, France and Russia, whose combined populations outnumbered that of Prussia by more than fifteen to one.² Quite unexpectedly, Prussia emerged as a major player on the international scene; it did so by defeating France at the battle of Rossbach in November 1757, and Austria one month later at the battle of Leuthen. Austrian defeats were fairly run-of-the-mill, but the rout of a major French army, especially since it had enjoyed numerical superiority, was a very different affair and it accordingly made a tremendous impact on contemporary opinion. By the end of the Seven Years' War, and largely as a result of its military achievements, Prussia had entered the exclusive club of great powers, but at a tremendous cost. As Frederick the Great put it, Prussia was like 'a man with many wounds who has lost so much blood that he is on the point of death'.³ He spent much of the rest of his reign consolidating his military and territorial gains in a Europe that, fortunately for Prussia, was relatively calm. Its membership in the club of great powers seemed confirmed when, in 1787, Frederick the Great's successor, Frederick William II, marched into Holland and conquered it in a matter of weeks, accomplishing what Louis XIV had in vain attempted over a period of years.

Prussia's great-power status, however, was flawed; its power base too fragile. It had neither the population nor the economic resources, let alone the geographical coherency, needed to carry out the obligations which came with its enhanced political stature. This is perhaps no better illustrated than by the events that occurred during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. After a somewhat dismal performance during the War of the First Coalition, Prussia withdrew into the relative isolation of neutrality and was not shaken out of it until her interests were directly threatened by Napoleon's encroachments in northern Europe. When Prussia decided to stand up to France by going to war in 1806, its army, which had once been the envy of Europe, virtually collapsed after one major encounter

2 Richard L. Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 1.

3 Cited in C. B. A. Behrens, *Society, Government and the Enlightenment: The Experiences of Eighteenth-Century France and Prussia* (London, 1985), p. 81.

at Jena-Auerstedt (14 October 1806). Prussia's fate was subsequently decided on a raft in the middle of the Neva river near a town called Tilsit where, in July 1807, Napoleon met with Alexander I of Russia. The King of Prussia, Frederick William III, was left standing in the rain on the banks of the river waiting to learn his fate.

Napoleon's treatment of Frederick William III was significant. At Tilsit, Prussia was reduced to a rump state, but it came away determined to reform itself in order to regain its place as a great power in the European system. The reforms that were consequently carried out gave Prussia that chance. By the time Napoleon was exiled to St Helena in 1815, Prussia had, through its role in defeating France and after haggling at the negotiating tables at the Congress of Vienna, not only regained its former boundaries, but had added substantial new territories to its kingdom. It had survived the eighteenth century and was now prepared to lurch into the nineteenth, if not entirely reformed, then at least better prepared to meet the exigencies of the modern world than it had been before the advent of the French Revolution.

The story of Prussia's rise and fall, of its fall and its rise again is a familiar one. In telling it, historians have generally focused on a range of factors that help explain the reasons for Prussia's long-term success: the organizing and military genius of Prussia's rulers who together reigned for a period of almost one hundred and fifty years;⁴ the efficiency of the Junker-officered army and the introduction of a system of recruitment based on the local canton; the Prussian state's massive expenditure on the army; the relative decline of Prussia's neighbours in north Germany (especially Sweden and Poland) as well as the decline of imperial influence in Germany; the reforms that were pushed through at various stages of Prussia's history; and finally, sheer good luck. All of these traditional elements are discussed in a number of essays collected for this book, but it is clear that the rise of Prussia was by no means as linear as many historians have believed.⁵ A number of factors were nevertheless fundamental in shaping Prussia's political, social and economic development – geography, religion, the centralization of state power, the army and foreign policy.

4 Frederick William, the Great Elector (1640–1688), Frederick III/I (1688–1713), Frederick William I (1713–1740) and Frederick II (1740–1786). All of them were sane and able-bodied. This was a remarkable record of continuity and stability without which the House of Hohenzollern might not have been so successful.

5 Gawthrop, *Pietism*, esp. chs 2 and 3, for example, challenges the assumption of an essential continuity in Prussian history between the mid-seventeenth and the late eighteenth centuries.

The disparate nature of the Prussian state

One of the most important elements to take into consideration when explaining the development of the Prussian state and which in large part determined policy, especially foreign policy, was the disparate nature of 'Prussia' as a geographic, political entity. The rise of Prussia can be understood only in terms of the country's geopolitical position in the heart of Europe. The work of Rodney Gothelf, Hamish Scott, Dennis Showalter and Hagen Schulze, as well as my own, all point to this. At the end of the eighteenth century, the distance between the western and the eastern extremes of the monarchy exceeded 1,000 kilometres. In between, a solid block of German territories separated the western lands from the main body of the state.

This lack of geographical integrity was remarkable even by contemporary standards. The heterogeneous character of the state was reflected in the titles that preceded the Prussian king's name. He was Margrave of Brandenburg, Duke of Pommern, Magdeburg and Cleves, Prince of Minden and Halberstadt, Count of Mark and Ravensburg and Prince of Neuchatel, to name but the most important. Not only were these territories spread over a large area of northern Europe, but Prussia enjoyed no natural boundaries that helped protect it from outside aggression. Furthermore, Prussia was not a uniquely German state, but rather a religious and political hybrid, a non-national state – although not to the extent that Austria was. This was especially the case after Protestant Prussia annexed parts of Catholic Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795, but there were also enormous differences in social, economic and political traditions between provinces which also contained other ethnic and religious minorities (Danes and Lithuanians, for example).

The disparate nature of 'Prussia' as a state made the establishment of monarchical authority difficult if not problematic. It was under Frederick William I, one of the least understood kings in Prussian history, that a number of institutional and social changes were made in an attempt to draw the scattered provinces together, and to reduce the autonomy of the nobility. The end result was a state system that essentially remained intact until the defeat of the Prussian army by Napoleon in 1806, lending the state an extraordinary degree of institutional continuity throughout most of the eighteenth century. However, as Rodney Gothelf shows in his chapter on the beginnings of Prussian absolutism, the establishment of the king's authority was not as complete as the traditional historical interpretation has made out. Not only did Prussia's extraordinary geographical diversity intervene to complicate and even impede the smooth running of the king's centralizing initiatives, but so, too, did the opposition of local ruling elites to this process. This opposition

was partly the result of religious friction between two Protestant confessions. The Prussian monarchy and its administration was largely Calvinist (its bureaucrats were often of Dutch or French origin), and it inevitably ran into the opposition of entrenched local elites who were largely Lutheran and who were jealous of protecting their privileges. Mainly, however, the opposition of the nobility was an attempt to impede the encroachment of the state.

Religious and intellectual movements: Pietism and the Enlightenment

All of this was possible because of the manner in which the Prussian state was tailored to meet the needs of the army. Most aspects of Prussian society were obliged to conform to the overriding needs of the state. Social forces were deliberately harnessed by the state towards the same ends, or provision was made to accommodate social or religious groups and movements that in other countries became centres of opposition to the state. This was especially the case for religion.

Prussia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a centre of religious toleration, its rulers extending invitations to persecuted Protestants in Germany and the rest of Europe. For example, the Great Elector, Frederick William, invited over 20,000 French Huguenots to settle in Prussia after Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Christopher Clark's chapter on the Pietist movement in Prussia suggests that one of the reasons why its rulers were prepared to support other religious, especially Protestant, confessions was that toleration was 'objectively' built into the Prussian state. That is, the Prussian court was Calvinist in a largely orthodox Lutheran population (with Catholic minorities after the annexations of Silesia and Poland) and was consequently obliged to adopt a policy of peaceful coexistence. This is not to say that friction between the Calvinist state and the Lutheran population did not exist, especially towards the end of the seventeenth century, nor between Catholics and Protestants after the second and third partitions of Poland. But by the beginning of the eighteenth century, not only had toleration prevailed as official policy, but the monarchy had learnt to use religion, in the shape of the Pietist movement, to enhance its own political and cultural authority. There is, in other words, a direct connection between politics and religion in eighteenth-century Prussia.

The Pietist movement in Prussia originated as an attempt to reform the Lutheran church from within. The person generally regarded as the father of Pietism, Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), was a pastor in Frankfurt-am-Main who supported the idea of 'conventicles' (small groups within the

established church which met for Bible reading, prayer and discussion), and who exhorted people to practise piety in their everyday life. His views, summarized in his major work, *Pia Desideria*, formed the basis of the Pietist movement. Spener's ideas attracted widespread support, not only among the clergy but among the laity as well. In 1694, he played an important role in the foundation of the University of Halle, where the theological faculty became a major centre of Pietist doctrine. As a result of his growing fame, he was eventually appointed to a post in Berlin.

The other key figure in the movement, Spener's admirer and friend, August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), founded a number of institutions which provided social services, such as charities for the poor, orphanages, schools, and even a publishing house. In doing so, Pietism, which bore a close resemblance to Puritanism in England, began to play a central role in the construction of auxiliary state institutions. What started out as a missionary movement opposed by the official state church soon became absorbed into the workings of the Prussian government. A partnership developed which was mutually beneficial, especially to the state. This was in part possible because of the nature of Prussian court society. Instead of attracting and rewarding a newly domesticated court nobility, as in France, the Prussian state devoted the major proportion of its revenues to military expenditure (see Hagen Schulze's contribution). Consequently, court culture in Prussia, unlike other European courts, was committed to military service, discipline and a rather prudish morality. Contemporary Pietists did not understand the political motives behind such a style of government, but as a result felt more disposed towards working hand-in-hand with the state.

Co-operation between the monarchy and the Pietist movement reached a peak during the reign of Frederick William I when it was used in the support of specific domestic policies. During this period, most of Prussia's civil servants, clergymen and officers were trained in schools run by Pietists. By the 1730s, a Pietist education was an essential prerequisite for those wanting to enter state service. It was this development – that is, the alliance between Pietism as ideology and the state – which has led Richard Gawthrop to postulate that Frederick William I came to see policy in Pietist terms, and which has led Mary Fulbrook to suggest that Pietism was central to the successful establishment of the absolutist state.⁶

In this manner, in Prussia, religion became an instrument of social control, but the movement also left its mark on the corporate ethos of the

6 Gawthrop, *Pietism*, pp. 11-12, 211-14, and 271; Mary Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics. Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 9 and 164-7. For a discussion on why Pietism never became an explosive doctrine and was absorbed into the Prussian political mainstream, see *ibid.*, 'Religion, revolution and absolutist rule in Germany and England', *European Studies Review* 12 (1982), 301-21.

state and the army. In practical terms, Pietism inculcated in the common people habits of orderliness. The Prussian clergy as a whole, less worried about the salvation of the souls of their congregations than about establishing an 'enlightened' state, advocated virtues that were important for the maintenance of the state.⁷ Pietist chaplains and instructors also instilled a heightened sense of discipline in the lower ranks of the army. This factor may help explain the relatively low desertion rates of Prussian troops during the Silesian wars.⁸ Schooling was another area in which the influence of the movement made itself felt and in which the characteristics which became specifically associated with the Prussian 'system' – discipline, self-denial, obedience, deference to authority – were inculcated.⁹ Although one should be wary about the degree to which rules and regulations, overwhelmingly religious in character, were effective in bringing about obedience and discipline, Pietism seems to have made a significant contribution to the consolidation of the absolutist state.

By the time Frederick II came to the throne in 1740, however, the influence of Pietism had begun to wane; he was not particularly sympathetic to a movement that had enjoyed his father's support. At the same time, another cultural/intellectual trend was starting to excite educated Prussian minds and for which Pietism had helped prepare the way – the Enlightenment, or more precisely its German variant, the *Aufklärung*. Under Frederick II, Berlin, along with Halle, Königsberg, Breslau and Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, became a leading centre of the Enlightenment often associated with his reign. The king's admiration for a number of French *philosophes* in particular (the correspondence between Voltaire and the king was extensive) for a long time led to the belief that the principles of the Enlightenment prevailed in Prussia. One of Germany's greatest exponents of the Enlightenment, Christian Wolff, who was expelled from Halle in 1723 by Frederick William I, was lured back seventeen years later by Frederick II. Indeed, Frederick II, along with Catherine II of Russia and Joseph II of Austria, is usually referred to as an 'enlightened despot', although there is a debate about the relationship between these rulers and the movement.

Johan van der Zande, on the other hand, believes that, contrary to traditional interpretations, Frederick II did not have much to do with the

7 This is the view of Günter Birtsch, 'The Christian as subject: the worldly mind of Prussian Protestant theologians in the late Enlightenment period', in Eckhart Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (London, 1990), pp. 309–26.

8 Gawthrop, *Pietism*, p. 228.

9 For the influence of Pietism on compulsory schooling in Prussia, see James van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the Eighteenth Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria* (Cambridge, 1988), esp. ch. 2.

Enlightenment.¹⁰ The impetus for reform in these countries, he argues, was political; it was part of the process of consolidating monarchical state power that had begun at the end of the seventeenth century. Frederick II never let Enlightenment principles interfere with what he considered to be his primary function – the strengthening of the state under his personal control.

This said, van der Zande approaches the topic from an entirely different perspective. He explores the other face of the Enlightenment by focusing on the creation of a specific body of knowledge by various thinkers, and the development of a number of institutions which helped foster the emergence of a public sphere in eighteenth-century Prussia. He traces the origins of what he refers to as a ‘science of man’ – the study of human nature – which began to dominate Enlightenment thinking in the second half of the eighteenth century and whose ideas were expressed in journals designed to reach wider reading audiences. This was part of an ‘enlightenment sociability’ which helped create a public sphere independent from and critical of the state (although this did not have political consequences until well into the nineteenth century). A whole generation of Prussian bureaucrats, teachers and intellectuals was trained in the spirit of Kantian rationalism. The Enlightenment was also expressed in various institutions such as the Berlin Academy of Sciences, coffee houses, societies like the *Mittwochsgesellschaft* (Wednesday Society) and the *Montagsclub* (Monday Club), or prominent journals like the *Berlinsche Monatschrift* or the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*.¹¹ To this extent, the social forms of the Enlightenment in Prussia were no different to what was going on in other parts of Europe. The types of issues discussed and their consequences were, however.

The rural and urban environment

There were, of course, other factors regulating the relationship between the monarchy on the one hand, and the people on the other. In order to sustain the links between the monarchy and the nobility, a compromise was reached.

10 In contrast to the interpretation put forward by T. C. W. Blanning, ‘Frederick the Great and the Enlightenment’, in H. M. Scott (ed.), *Enlightened Absolutism. Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1990), pp. 265–88, who believes that the Enlightenment had a discernible influence on Frederick’s policies. On the controversial question of how faithfully Frederick II adhered to Enlightenment precepts, see Charles Ingrao, ‘The Problem of “Enlightened Absolutism” and the German States’, *Journal of Modern History* 58 (1986), 161–80.

11 For an account of Enlightenment society in Berlin, whose members were drawn mainly from the educated middle class, see Horst Müller, ‘Enlightened societies in the metropolis: The case of Berlin’, in Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture*, pp. 219–33.

In crude terms, in return for surrendering political power at the highest levels of government, the nobility was permitted to retain a number of socio-political privileges, which included their domination of the officer corps and the bureaucracy, control over government institutions at the local level, and, above all, their continued control over the peasantry.¹² The crown essentially bowed out of interfering in peasant–noble relations. However, since the peasant soldier and the noble officer were the two most significant elements in the army, and the army was fundamental for the survival of the Prussian state, Prussia's kings attempted to preserve and protect both the peasantry and the nobility. A series of royal decrees (1709, 1714, 1739, 1749) sought to protect peasants from excessive service demands from their lords in order to facilitate the smooth recruitment of peasants into the army. Peasant-tilled land, for example, could not be bought by the bourgeoisie or the nobility – this was known as *Bauernschutz*.¹³ Noble land, on the other hand, could not be bought or sold to non-nobles, while struggling landowners were provided with financial assistance. Nobles were forbidden to travel abroad without royal consent and requests to do so, except, of course, on official business, were consistently rejected. Noble officers could not even marry without the king's consent and, under Frederick II at least, requests were commonly refused; in most regiments, only between one-sixth and one-seventh of officers were married.¹⁴ The interests of the individual were always secondary to those of the state.

The end result of these arrangements was a reciprocal relationship of dependency between the monarchy and the nobility. In this manner, the Prussian kings achieved something that the French monarchs were never able to do – overcome the opposition of a potentially unruly nobility by making them dependent on the crown for their privileged status in society. This alliance between the Prussian monarchy and the nobility was to last intact, although in modified form, right up to the end of the nineteenth century.

This was not always smooth running. It is clear from Rodney Gothelf's contribution that tensions almost continually existed between the monarchy and the nobility on the one hand, and the nobility and the peasantry on the other. Edgar Melton's chapter on the rural economy in East Elbia and the

12 For a discussion of the socio-political relations between noble and peasant, see Robert Berdahl, *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility: The Development of a Conservative Ideology 1770–1848* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), esp. chs 1 and 2; and Hanna Schissler, 'The social and political power of the Prussian Junkers', in Ralph Gibson and Martin Blinkhorn (eds), *Landownership and Power in Modern Europe* (London, 1991), pp. 99–110.

13 Otto Büsch, *Military System and Social Life in Old Regime Prussia 1713–1807: The Beginnings of the Social Militarization of Prusso-German Society* (New Jersey, 1997), pp. 46–7.

14 Christopher Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great* (Newton Abbot, 1974), p. 46.

feudal relationship between lord and peasant supports that view. Within the feudal organization of rural society, the noble was dependent on the peasant for his labour, while the peasant owed his lord labour services of various kinds. The relationship, however, was often a coercive one and was often resented by the peasantry. If, for example, the estate owner pushed the peasant for more or better work, the peasant was likely to respond by various strategies, which sometimes included sabotage. Melton cites the case of peasants who, when forced to cart hay or manure for their lord, would drive so recklessly that most of the content would be lost before they reached their destination. If the reaction on the part of the landlord was punitive, it would further poison relations between the lord and peasant. The unrest fostered by labour services was so pronounced that reform became an urgent political issue for the Prussian government. Moreover, traditional relations between peasant and lord in the last third of the eighteenth century were being undermined by changing economic conditions (the feudal estate was being converted into a modern estate based on wage-labour).¹⁵ After 1807, when a concerted effort was made to dramatically transform Prussian agriculture, the nobility lost its monopoly over estate ownership, as a result of which the Prussian countryside, especially in East Elbia, began to see the emergence of a capitalist agriculture (to which, one might add, the old rural elites adapted themselves quite well).

If the relationship between the monarchy, the nobility and the peasantry was not always as smooth as tradition would have it, this does not mean to say that there was *only* opposition to the centralizing state. As Karin Friedrich shows in her chapter on the development of the Prussian town, urban elites, including the nobility, often found common ground on which to work. As much as historians might know about a few major urban centres, conditions in other towns, especially in Polish Prussia, have aroused little interest until quite recently. Karin Friedrich's contribution helps rectify this imbalance and adds another, all too often neglected, dimension to Prussian history by taking Polish Prussia into consideration. In doing so, she points to the importance of recognizing the dual roots of Prussia's history in both the Polish and the German contexts, and underlines the fact that Prussia, for

15 Hartmut Harnisch, 'Peasants and markets: the background to the agrarian reforms in feudal Prussia East of the Elbe, 1760-1807', in Richard J. Evans and W. R. Lee (eds), *The German Peasantry: Conflict and Community in Rural Society from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (London, 1986), pp. 37-70. On the breakdown of peasant-lord relations, see William W. Hagen, 'The Junkers' faithless servants: peasant insubordination and the breakdown of serfdom in Brandenburg-Prussia, 1763-1811', *ibid.*, pp. 71-101.

much of its history, was 'facing both ways'.¹⁶ Towns in Polish Prussia, for example, preserved political links with Warsaw throughout the eighteenth century, thus demonstrating, according to Friedrich, the willingness of Polish Prussian burghers to maintain a certain degree of political independence.

This, however, was a trend that towns found increasingly difficult to maintain as the eighteenth century progressed and as they were brought under the centralizing orbit of the monarchy. The development of the Prussian town was in part dictated by the administrative structures of the state. The creation of the General Directory in 1722, and the introduction of the canton system in 1733 (to which they were also subject) necessarily had an impact on the manner in which towns developed. So, too, did the introduction of an excise tax (essentially a tax on consumption) into all Prussian towns in accord with the centralizing initiatives carried out by Frederick William I and in an attempt to make the collection of taxes much more efficient. The moneys raised from this tax inevitably went into the state treasury and the army, and were never invested back into the provinces from whence they had come. The tax met with varying degrees of resistance in royal towns, but especially in those which were privately owned (more than half of Prussian towns were private – that is, they belonged to the nobility). It was one further means used by the state to interfere in almost every aspect of its citizens' lives, and it has generated a debate among historians as to how effective, or detrimental, such measures were in promoting the modernization and expansion of urban centres in eighteenth-century Prussia. Centres like Berlin and later Potsdam also received an additional – and, one might argue, artificial – impetus through the injection of large sums of money associated with the crown's building programme.

Apart from a few large urban centres like Königsberg (the largest in 1700 with a population of 40,000–45,000) and Berlin, most Prussian towns in the eighteenth century, especially in East Prussia, were very small; few towns exceeded 2,000 inhabitants. As the eighteenth century progressed, Berlin's population started to outstrip Königsberg; it grew from about 58,000 in 1730, to 113,000 in 1750, and to 145,000 on the eve of the French Revolution. It should be kept in mind, however, that the population figures for Berlin were bloated by the presence of military personnel. Depending on the period under consideration, the percentage of the population belonging to the military garrison usually varied between one-quarter and one-third of the overall population (approximately 14,000 in 1730, and 33,000 in 1789), and this did not include the families of military personnel. These figures

16 See Karin Friedrich, 'Facing Both Ways: New Works on Prussia and Polish-Prussian Relations', *German History* 15 (1997), 256–67.

could increase to as much as 50 per cent, as in the case of Potsdam where, in 1801, 9,000 soldiers lived alongside 18,000 civilians. As with the rest of Prussian society, where a symbiotic relationship existed between the military and the civilian population, the same could be said of the major urban/garrison centres.

This, as Friedrich points out, could have both beneficial as well as detrimental effects on the life of the city. When garrisons went off to war, for example, cities could find themselves depleted of a large proportion of their population overnight, with all the consequences that this would necessarily have on local markets. When garrisons were stationed in towns, their presence often proved to be a double-edged sword, providing an impetus to local economies, certainly, but also exacting arbitrary demands and even committing excesses on the civilian population that led to tensions between the two spheres. The tension was often compounded by the corrupt practices of local government officials over whom the town's burghers had no control. Indeed, the citizenry were completely excluded from participating in urban affairs at all levels. Moreover, towns like Berlin fell directly under the control of the General Directory. It was not until the urban reform regulations (*Städteordnung*) of 1808 that a certain number of rights – like control over trade, industry, the police and the judiciary – were transferred to the citizens in royal towns. Private towns were not brought under the administration of the state until much later in the nineteenth century, but the lack of participation in local politics in some towns in East Prussia and Silesia was so well ingrained that they asked to be made exempt from carrying through the reforms. Unlike the western provinces where there was already a tradition of local autonomy, political lethargy was to remain a characteristic of the burgher mentality in East Prussia for at least a generation or two.

The state and the army

As happened so often in Prussia's history, the centralizing initiatives of the state – and this includes many of the domestic reforms which were introduced in the course of the eighteenth century – received their impetus from foreign policy. It was Frederick William I's desire for foreign-political independence on the international scene that led him to pursue a policy of self-sufficiency at home. It resulted in the reform of the administration, especially in matters of finance, carried out through the creation of a new administrative body known as the General Directory. This in turn enabled the king to carry out another major reform which had enormous consequences for the

future development of Prussia: the army. The military system which was introduced under Frederick William I became one of the key means by which Prussia's society and economy were integrated into a more coherent whole. By the time Frederick William I died in 1740, the size of the army had more than doubled to over 80,000. By that time, one in twenty-five males was serving in the army, almost every nobleman was an officer in the army, and most of the Prussian state budget was devoted solely to the purpose of maintaining it.

In his chapter on the development of the Prussian state, Hagen Schulze demonstrates that the growth of the army inevitably had consequences for the manner in which both Prussian society and its political structures developed. This was especially the case for a country which was not rich in either human or natural resources. In many respects, Prussia could hardly afford to maintain an army, let alone one that was eventually to become as powerful as the largest European great power. The other European states – France, Austria, Russia and Britain – had achieved great-power status in part because of the size of their territories, their relatively large populations and the natural wealth of their kingdoms. Prussia had none of these things and achieved recognition of its position by stretching its resources to the limit, and this over lengthy periods of time.

As the eighteenth century progressed, due to the dependence of the state on the army for its survival, the military took precedence over every aspect of Prussian life. Recruitment was based upon the 'canton system' introduced in 1733 by Frederick William I. Each regiment was allocated a defined district or canton for recruitment comprising 5,000 households within which all males, from childhood on, were obliged to register on the rolls. Literally every peasant was potentially also a soldier. Every aspect of civil society was assigned a military function. As Otto Büsch pointed out in his now-classic work on the origins of the Prussian military system, this was a specifically Prussian phenomenon.¹⁷ The Prussian military organization thus became the most efficient of its time. It was also the vehicle by which Prussia increased its status within the European states-system. The canton system was replaced by conscription towards the end of the Napoleonic wars and the creation of a people's militia, the *Landwehr*, which was eventually incorporated into the active army (see Dennis Showalter's contribution), but the army continued to fulfil a socializing function, this time by creating a bond between the monarchy and the nation (see Matthew Levinger's contribution).

17 Büsch, *Military System and Social Life in Old Regime Prussia*, p. xv.

Table I.1 Relative troop strengths of the European powers¹⁸

<i>Country</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Size of army</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Percentage of population</i>
Prussia	1740	80,000	2,200,000	3.6
	1760	260,000	3,600,000	7.2
	1786	194,000	5,700,000	3.4
Austria	1705	100,000	8,000,000	1.25
	1786	240,000	23,000,000	1.04
France	1710	300,000	20,000,000	1.5
	1738	140,000	22,000,000	0.64
	1760	280,000	24,000,000	1.17
	1789	180,000	26,000,000	0.69
Great Britain	1698	24,000	10,000,000	0.24
	1710	75,000	11,000,000	0.68
	1747	120,000	12,000,000	1.00
	1783	51,000	16,000,000	0.32
Russia	1705	220,000	14,000,000	1.57
	1796	300,000	36,000,000	0.83

There has been considerable debate about just how militarized Prussian society really was, but, as Hagen Schulze and Dennis Showalter pointedly remark, the figures speak for themselves. By the time Frederick the Great died in 1786, Prussia was the thirteenth largest state in Europe in terms of population; in terms of area the tenth largest; but in terms of the size of its army, it was the third largest in Europe. The figures in Table I.1 point to the overwhelming disparity between the size of the population of Prussia and the size of its army in comparison with other European states.

Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, Prussia consistently maintained an army equivalent to about 4 per cent of the population.¹⁹ It has been calculated that if other European powers had structured their military along the same lines as Prussia in 1740, then Austria would have had an army of 600,000 men and France an army of 750,000 men.²⁰ It is misleading to think, however, that all soldiers in the army were Prussian.

18 Source: André Corvisier, *Armées et sociétés en Europe de 1494 à 1789* (Paris, 1976), p. 126, Presses Universitaires de France. The figures on the size of European armies vary from study to study. For slightly different figures for different years to those quoted above, see John Childs, *Armies and Warfare in Europe, 1648-1789* (Manchester, 1989), p. 42.

19 Behrens, *Society, Government and the Enlightenment*, p. 88.

20 Ludwig Dehio, 'Der Zusammenhang der preußisch-deutschen Geschichte 1640-1945', in Otto Büsch (ed.), *Moderne Preußische Geschichte*, 3 vols (Berlin, 1981), iii, p. 1627.

On the contrary, half the army or more might be filled with non-Prussian professionals, with prisoners of war or with deserters from other armies.²¹ Nevertheless, Prussia's disproportionately large force was all the more impressive in view of the scarcity of its economic resources in comparison to other European powers. More significant perhaps than the numbers of soldiers in relation to the size of the population of Prussia was the percentage of the nobility who were enlisted into the officer corps. As the army grew, so too did the number of officers needed to command it so that by 1806, it has been argued, the officer corps of 7,000–8,000 men represented over 90 per cent of the Prussian nobility.²²

Expansion and consolidation

The gradual but dramatic expansion of the army under Frederick William I may have led some of his neighbours to conclude that he was preparing for a large and extended military campaign outside his borders, but this was patently not the case. Not only was there no direct foreign threat to Prussia during the period when Frederick William I was building up the Prussian army to unprecedented levels, but the king was determined to pursue a policy of peace to consolidate his domestic reforms. It is misleading to assume that because Prussia had a disproportionately large army it was predisposed towards aggression on the international scene or that expansion was its primary objective. For two extended periods – from 1725 to 1740 and again from 1797 to 1812 (with the exception of 1806) – Prussia's kings did their utmost to stay out of the wars and crises that characterized European diplomacy during those years. Much of this depended on the character of the king, and on whether the international constellation was favourably disposed towards non-involvement. It was not until the death of Frederick William I in 1740 and the ascension to the throne of his son, Frederick II, that Prussia launched upon an aggressive expansionist foreign policy that was to become one of the characteristics of the 'Prussian system' and which saw Prussia emerge as an important state in Europe.

This is the subject of Hamish Scott's chapter on the rise of Prussia to great-power status in the first half of Frederick the Great's reign. At the

21 Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640–1945* (Oxford, 1955), p. 23.

22 Otto Büsch, 'Die Militarisierung von Staat und Gesellschaft', in Manfred Schlenke (ed.), *Preußen. Beiträge zu einer politischen Kultur* (Berlin, 1981), p. 55.

death of Frederick William I in 1740, Prussia had become an important regional power. Over the next twenty years, and as a result of the wars fought by Frederick II, Prussia emerged as a leading European power. This emergence was inaugurated by the Prussian invasion of Austrian Silesia in December 1740. Frederick II's reasons for invading Silesia can be summed up in two words – sheer opportunism. That is, the opportunity simply to seize these territories presented itself and was duly taken. The Prussian invasion of Saxony in August 1756, which precipitated the Seven Years' War, has also been interpreted as a blatant act of aggression. However, Hamish Scott seeks to explain it in other terms. He believes that the king was acting under the conviction that Prussia would be attacked the following year, possibly by three hostile foreign powers. It was, in other words, a pre-emptive strike. These two wars typify in many respects what Prussia is all about. On the one hand, we have an opportunistic war (the Silesian) designed to 'round off' Prussia's territories. On the other, Prussia's position in the middle of Europe, surrounded on all sides by potentially hostile and more powerful neighbours, placed it in an extremely vulnerable position. The only alternative to possible destruction was attack.

These two considerations played an important if not a determining role in the types of policy choices made. Later in life, towards the end of his reign, Frederick II reflected on his past actions and formulated a theoretical justification for them. There is a passage in his political testament which roughly reads: 'The first task of a prince is to survive [. . .] the second is to expand.' It became a maxim for all Prussian monarchs and throws light on another well-known dictum: 'a neighbouring country which rounds off our territory is a hundred times more important than a country which is separated from our borders'.²³ Indeed, Frederick II was probably most responsible for postulating a tradition that was accepted by his heirs, namely that he was prepared to expand at the cost of war. He considered all his neighbours more or less potential enemies, and to a certain extent he was perfectly right in assuming that most of his great-power neighbours meant him no good. As for the smaller states like Saxony, Polish Prussia, Swedish Pomerania, Mecklenburg and to a lesser extent Hanover, Frederick II and his successors coveted them with a frankness that justified other states' mistrust and hostility towards Prussia.²⁴

23 Gregor Schöllgen, 'Sicherheit durch Expansion? Die Aussenpolitischen Lageanalysen der Hohenzollern im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert im Lichte des Kontinuitäts problems in der Preussischen und Deutschen Geschichte', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 104 (1984), 39.

24 Frederick II, 'Testament Politique, 1752: Rêveries politiques', in G. B. Volz (ed.), *Die politischen Testamente Friedrichs des Grossen* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 59–65.

The most important precondition for the absorption of territory was the acquiescence of one or more of the other continental powers. This is what occurred, for example, when Prussia acquired Polish territory in 1772, 1793 and 1795. In 1793, Russia was in total agreement with Prussia, while Austria, France and Britain were all powerless to oppose or even delay the partition. A similar set of favourable foreign international circumstances was to occur under Bismarck, allowing him to launch upon wars of expansion without running the risk of a prolonged or a general war. Opportunities for war, and consequently expansion, as Table I.2 demonstrates, were never lacking.

As can be seen from the table, Prussia participated in every major European war in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries bar one – the Crimean War (1854–56) – as well as a number of minor European conflicts; in all, about twenty-four interventions of one type or another. There was nothing out of the ordinary about this; Britain, Russia and Austria were engaged in even more conflicts over the same period of time. What is unusual, however, is that Prussia was victorious (in that it always gained an addition of territory) in all but one major war – the War of the Fourth Coalition against France. This was remarkable odds for any power. The fact that, as a result of losing the war against Napoleonic France in 1806, Prussia came close to annihilation, lends weight to Hagen Schulze's argument that each conflict for Prussia was a matter of life and death. Dennis Showalter reminds us, however, that an essential goal of Prussian and later German policy and strategy was to keep wars from reaching that stage.²⁵ Prussia's monarchs – and that includes the somewhat erratic Frederick William II – accepted the necessity of a strategy of limited goals backed by credible force.

Also, Prussia was the aggressor in all but one of these wars (the last stage of the war against Napoleon in 1815, although one can legitimately argue that even though Prussia declared war on France in 1806, Napoleon was the real aggressor). This needs to be qualified. It would be misleading to think that Prussia was always intent on war, although there were occasions when its kings were blatantly expansionist. More often than not, however, the Prussians were anxious to avoid war, thus exposing themselves to undue danger. Nevertheless, all bar one of these wars (Prussia's participation in the Russian campaign of 1812, during which it was virtually a satellite state) were fought with specific territorial acquisitions in mind. This does not

25 Dennis E. Showalter, 'Total wars for limited objectives: an interpretation of German grand strategy', in Paul Kennedy (ed.), *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven and London, 1991), pp. 106, 120.

Table I.2 Prussian participation in European wars, 1701-1871

<i>Year</i>	<i>War</i>
1701-13	The War of the Spanish Succession (Prussian troops were deployed intermittently on the side of the Holy Roman Empire, Portugal, the Netherlands, England and Sardinia against France, Spain and Bavaria)
1700-21	The Great Northern War (Prussia participated in the war between 1713 and 1720 on the side of Russia, France, Denmark, Saxony and Hanover against Sweden, Poland and Turkey)
1733-38	The War of the Polish Succession (Prussia played a small part in the war on the side of Austria, Saxony and Russia against France, Spain, Sardinia and Bavaria)
1740-48	The War of the Austrian Succession (France, Prussia, Bavaria, Spain and Sardinia (which changed sides in 1743) against Austria, England, the Netherlands, Russia and Saxony). During its course Prussia also fought:
1740-42	The First Silesian War (against Austria), and
1744-45	The Second Silesian War (against Austria)
1756-63	The Seven Years' War (Prussia, England and Hanover against Austria, Russia, France, Saxony and Sweden) including what has been called the Third Silesian War in 1757
1772	The First Partition of Poland (Russia, Prussia and Austria against the Polish Confederates)
1778-79	The War of the Bavarian Succession, also known as the 'Potato War' (Prussia against Austria)
1780	The First Armed Neutrality (Russia, Prussia, Sweden, Denmark, Austria and Portugal against England)
1787	The Invasion of Holland (Prussia and Britain against the Dutch Patriots)
1792-95	The War of the First Coalition (Austria, Prussia and Sardinia in 1792, joined a year later by England, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and Naples against France; Prussia withdrew in March 1795)
1793	The Second Partition of Poland (Russia and Prussia against Poland)
1795	The Third Partition of Poland (Russia, Prussia and Austria against Poland)
1801	The Second Armed Neutrality (Prussia, Russia, Sweden and Denmark against England; Prussia invaded Hanover)

Table I.2 (*cont'd*)

<i>Year</i>	<i>War</i>
1806	'War' with England (declared when Prussia occupied the Electorate of Hanover, although no fighting took place)
1806-7	The War of the Fourth Coalition (Prussia, England, Saxony and Russia against France)
1812-14	The War of the Sixth Coalition (the French Empire, the Rheinbund and Prussia against Russia and England; Prussia went over to Russia and England after the retreat from Moscow and entered the Wars of Liberation)
1815	The War of the Seventh Coalition (Prussia, England, Austria, Russia and various lesser powers against Napoleon)
1848	The 'Reichskrieg' (Reich War) (Prussian troops constituted part of a larger German force fighting Denmark over Schleswig)
1864	The War of the Danish Succession (Prussia and Austria against Denmark)
1866	The Seven Weeks' War (Prussia against Austria, Hanover, Hesse, Nassau and Frankfurt)
1870-71	The Franco-Prussian War (the North German Confederation, under Prussian domination, and the South German states against France)

mean that Prussia went to war only with territorial gains in mind, but that at one stage or another territory became an important objective in whatever war was being fought.

There is nothing exceptional about Prussia's expansionist behaviour. If what Albert Sorel referred to as 'raison d'Etat' governed all states, then aggrandizement became the object of politics.²⁶ In other words, expansion and conquest were not peculiar to the Prussian state. The desire to control foreign space and resources was an attitude that prevailed in most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century states to one degree or another. Not only did Europe's statesmen generally consider it necessary to expand in order to survive, territories were considered just compensation for the cost of war outlaid by the winning power. The continued existence of the Prussian state through expansion was such an important element in Prussian politics that it became

26 Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, 8 vols (Paris, 1893-1912), i, p. 19: 'La raison d'Etat étant la règle, l'aggrandissement est l'objet de la politique.'