On July 23, 1914, the Habsburg monarchy of Austria-Hungary presented an ultimatum to the neighboring kingdom of Serbia that was designed to be unacceptable. The fundamental issue in the international crisis that followed was whether the Austro-Serbian standoff would trigger a showdown between the two great European blocs: the Central Powers of Austria-Hungary and Germany, and the Triple Entente of Russia, France, and Britain. The events of 1914 remain a crucial test for any theory of the origins of modern wars, and pivotal among the issues that they raise is that of how far technical military considerations determine security policy. With this in mind, scholars have focused their attention on the thesis propounded at the time by German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, namely, that the July 1914 crisis got "out of
control."3 None of the European states, in other words, desired a great war, but they fought one nonetheless because of misperception and miscalculation, because military professionals had excessive influence, and because the imperatives of war preparation overrode those of war avoidance. If this interpretation is correct—as many strategic theorists have assumed—what happened once might happen again, perhaps between nuclear powers.

That World War I was in some measure inadvertent was accepted by Luigi Albertini, whose three volumes are the fullest history of its origins.4 A.J.P. Taylor, in his best-selling history of the conflict, further popularized the notion of a "war by timetable," into which all the powers were propelled unwillingly by railway mobilization schedules.5 In contrast, Fritz Fischer and his followers have insisted that the war was the deliberate outcome of German policy. Although Fischer no longer maintains that the Berlin government had been planning to launch a European war since the so-called War Council of December 8, 1912, his research has underlined that elements in the German leadership increasingly viewed one as an option.6 Marc Trachtenberg and Jack S. Levy have exposed further evidential and analytical weaknesses in the thesis of inadvertent war. Trachtenberg has reasserted that in all the European capitals sovereigns and civilian politicians rather than the military were in charge, and that they understood the implications of mobilization. Levy has clarified how the political preferences with which the civilian leaders entered the crisis made a peaceful outcome unlikely from the outset.7

In this article I build on Trachtenberg's and Levy's arguments about the origins of World War I, and broaden the basis of discussion. Much work on the

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problem still focuses on the events of 1914, and grounds generalizations about prewar diplomacy on one test case. I consider the larger process of destabilization since 1905, and focus on the militarization of international politics. I do so by analyzing the interaction between diplomacy and extraordinary military measures during international crises. Presumably influenced by Clausewitz, Alexander L. George has argued that the key to successful “crisis management” (in the sense of achieving the maximum political gain while avoiding undesired hostilities) lies in coordinating policy with military measures. Politicians may use such measures to support diplomacy by carrying out faits accomplis, signaling resolve, and deterring a resort to force. Military measures ensure preparedness if war breaks out. Yet implementing them may conflict with the diplomatic requirements of not humiliating, panicking, or provoking the antagonist. The political authorities therefore should control military deployments, and those deployments be kept to a minimum.⁸

Following George’s approach, and drawing on my own research in the diplomatic documents and military archives, I reexamine not only the events of 1914 but also the four previous major international crises: those occurring over Morocco in 1905–06 and 1911 and over the Balkans in 1908–09 and 1912–13.⁹ Historians of the period have concurred in viewing the crises selected as the most serious of the prewar decade. Each witnessed extensive military preparations. Further, each prefigured July 1914 in being a confrontation between the opposing coalitions of the Central Powers and the Triple Entente rather than between two states in isolation.¹⁰ I consider the interaction between

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⁹. The bulk of the new primary research on which this article is based is detailed in Stevenson, Armaments and the Coming of War. In addition, I draw on the reevaluation of the prewar decade in David G. Herrmann, The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). I refer in the notes to these books where appropriate rather than giving extensive archival citations here. Stevenson’s Armaments is a broad study of the role of competitive military preparedness in the origins of World War I. In this article I focus on the theme of extraordinary military measures in the pre-1914 international crises of 1905–14, and provide a more explicit framework for conceptualizing the phenomenon of militarization in international politics.
¹⁰. I have excluded bilateral conflicts such as the Austro-Italian war scare of 1904, the Anglo-Russian Dogger Bank incident of the same year, and the Casablanca deserters incident (France versus Germany) of 1909. The Liman von Sanders incident of November 1913–January 1914 was more of an interbloc conflict, but was unaccompanied by extraordinary military measures. In examining the 1912–13 Balkan wars I have concentrated on the international tension in the winter of 1912–13 caused by the first Balkan war. I have not examined in detail the Scutari crisis (Austria-Hungary versus Montenegro) of April–May 1913 or the Albanian border crisis (Austria-Hungary versus Serbia) of October 1913, as these were more localized bilateral standoffs whose
the two blocs in each of these episodes and the processes by which confrontation first escalated and was subsequently contained.

I consider each crisis in the light of the following sets of questions. Who were the decision makers in each capital, and what was the relative importance of the military and of civilians? How accurate were perceptions of others’ military measures, and to what extent was there misperception and miscalculation? Finally, what measures did leaders implement, and how can these be categorized? Surprisingly often, governments took no special military steps. In cases when they did, because of the notorious difficulty of categorizing such preparatory measures as intrinsically aggressive or defensive, I classify them according to the surviving evidence about the intentions of those who initiated them:

- D1: measures taken as defensive precautions against an attack considered a possible crisis outcome although not imminent;
- D2L: measures taken urgently against an attack seen as potentially imminent in a localized war;
- D2G: measures taken urgently against an attack seen as potentially imminent in a general war;
- O1: measures taken not as preparations for military operations but to support diplomatic demands (i.e., “compellence,” whereas D1 and D2 are varieties of deterrence. Categories D1 and O1 need not be mutually exclusive);
- O2L: measures taken as preparations for an offensive localized war;
- O2G: measures taken as preparations for an offensive general war.

Apart from questions specific to each crisis, there is a broader problem. Should we see the 1914 mobilizations as the culmination of a “crisis slide,” that is, of a cumulative militarization process that developed over a ten-year period? Or was the character of the 1914 events unique?

I argue that from 1905 onward military measures became more extensive and more directed toward compellence. To this extent European diplomacy became more militarized, and this development encouraged leaders to run greater peaceful outcome was largely predetermined by the successful resolution of the initial conflict. Michael Brecher's International Crisis Behavior Project, which tabulates crises from 1929 to 1985, excludes pre-1914 crises. Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, Crisis, Conflict, and Instability (Oxford, U.K.: Pergamon, 1989). However, a major new study of nineteenth-century crises has just appeared: Jost Düffler, Martin Kröger, and Rolf-Harald Wippich, Vermiedene Kriege: Deeskalation von Konflikten der Grossmächte zwischen Krimkrieg und Erstem Weltkrieg (1856–1914) [Avoided Wars: Deescalation of Great Power Conflicts between the Crimean War and the First World War (1856–1914)] (Munich, Germany: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997).
risks, fueled competition in armaments, and familiarized public opinion with
the possibility of war.\textsuperscript{11} On the other hand, civilian politicians and officials
retained control of policy, and governments had fairly accurate information
about their opponents. The possibility of inadvertent escalation was widely
accepted, and all the powers practiced both unilateral and concerted restraint.
The implication—that George's principle was applied and that military meas-
ures were harmonized with diplomatic imperatives—may seem incompatible
with interpretations of July 1914 as an outstanding failure to achieve precisely
such coordination. The explanation of the paradox is in part that restraint was
weakened as crisis succeeded crisis, but also, as Levy says, that the irreducible
political objectives of the two sides in 1914 diverged more radically than before.
The increased propensity to take military steps resulted from a change of mood
not only among the military but also among their civilian superiors, who
resorted to them to support diplomatic positions and when they feared diplo-
macy might fail. I discuss the reasons for this change of mood—strategic
considerations looming large among them—in the conclusion.

\textit{First Morocco: Diplomatic Boldness, Military Restraint}

\textbf{CRISIS ESCALATION}

The first Moroccan crisis of 1905-06 terminated a twenty-year period charac-
terized by bilateral confrontations over extra-European issues between Britain
on the one hand and France, Germany, and Russia on the other. During these
crises the British resorted repeatedly to extraordinary (O1) naval
measures.\textsuperscript{12}

On the European mainland, in contrast, no militarized confrontation between
the continental blocs occurred between the 1880s and the Moroccan crisis.\textsuperscript{13} In

\textsuperscript{11} I therefore distinguish between a militarization of diplomacy and a broader underlying mili-
tarization of international politics. Defense budgets rose, armies and navies moved to higher levels
of peacetime readiness, and governments and public opinion became more bellicose. The more
specific and the broader trends toward militarization reinforced each other, but I concentrate on
the former.

\textsuperscript{12} The main examples are the Kruger telegram affair (Britain and Germany) in 1895-96, the
Fashoda crisis (Britain and France) in 1898, and the Dogger Bank incident (Britain and Russia) in
1904. In 1896 the British organized a naval "flying squadron"; in 1898 they readied the reserve
fleet; and in 1904, after the Russian Baltic fleet shelled Hull trawlers, the British Gibraltar squadron
shadowed it until Russia agreed to arbitration. Ronald Bobroff, "Diplomacy Enhanced: British
Diplomacy and Military Measures after the Dogger Bank Incident, October–November 1904,"

\textsuperscript{13} Alfred Vagts, \textit{Defense and Diplomacy: The Soldier and the Conduct of Foreign Relations} (New York:
King's Crown Press, 1956), chaps. 7 and 10.
part because of this, at the turn of the century both the Austro-German and the Franco-Russian alliances were neglecting strategic coordination and were holding down their army budgets. The strategic position of the Central Powers was relatively favorable, and in 1904-05 became even more favorable when defeat by Japan and revolutionary unrest crippled Russia's military might.

In the Moroccan crisis Berlin tried to profit from Russia's weakness by separating the French from Britain and forcing them to negotiate over North Africa. Yet although this crisis began the deterioration in relations between the continental powers, it was less militarized than its successors. In its opening phase, down to the summer of 1905, the French avoided military measures because they feared provoking a disastrous armed conflict; the Germans because they did not need them. In the second phase, in contrast, during the autumn and winter, both looked to a trial of strength at a forthcoming international conference on Morocco, which met at Algeciras in January–April 1906. But whereas the French and their potential allies, Belgium and Britain, now belatedly began D1 military preparations, Germany refrained from them, eventually acquiescing in a humiliating setback.

Throughout the contest the Germans aimed at a diplomatic victory, rather than to provoke a war. Thus when in May 1905 the Chief of the Great General Staff (GGS), Count Alfred von Schlieffen, proposed a preventive strike against France, Emperor Wilhelm II rejected it. Wilhelm's Tangier speech in March 1905, which launched the first phase of the crisis by declaring solidarity with the Moroccan sultan against French encroachment, was selected as a less provocative option than a naval demonstration. Germany limited its military preparations to accelerating its army's reequipment with quick-firing field guns and magazine rifles, which would still remain incomplete until June 1906. But German Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow knew that he was running no risks. According to Schlieffen, the French government had instructed its armed services to take no steps that Germany might interpret as war preparations: the French explained away their exercises and maneuvers as routine and instructed their frontier units to observe caution. France was indeed avoiding preparatory

steps, because it considered its alliance with Russia valueless and believed its army to be demoralized and ill-equipped. France's premier, Maurice Rouvier, intimated to the German ambassador that fighting was out of the question. Bülow responded by urging and obtaining the resignation of the French foreign minister, Théophile Delcassé, who found himself alone in wanting to resist Berlin's pressure, and by extracting France's reluctant agreement to an international conference on Morocco.15

During the second phase of the crisis, British, French, and Belgian intelligence accurately revealed that Germany was still doing little beyond making military purchases, recalling some reservists, and revising mobilization procedures.16 In France, in contrast, immediately after Delcassé resigned in June, Rouvier issued orders to ready the army and the frontier without delay. Supplies were gathered, leave was curtailed, and a trial mobilization conducted. During the winter frontier units were reinforced, reservists trained intensively, and over 200 million francs were secretly authorized for reequipment. In addition, Belgium reinforced the Liège and Namur fortresses that barred the path to German invasion, while Britain concentrated all of its available submarines and torpedo boats at Dover on the pretext of a training exercise and held the Atlantic squadron in home ports. Although concerned to protect themselves and rally the French, the British wished to reassure Berlin of their peaceful intentions. The foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, asked the admiralty to consult him before authorizing unusual naval movements, and told the German ambassador that Britain would undertake (D1) "precautions" rather than "aggressive preparations" and trusted Germany would do the same.17

CRISIS CONTAINMENT
The Germans' military intelligence soon detected the heightened activity of their potential enemies, and in the army leadership's judgment the balance was moving to Germany's disadvantage.18 Yet once the French began repairing their defenses Bülow showed no desire to race for readiness: for example, he permitted German firms to sell France arms. His communications with the Ger-

16. On the second phase of the crisis, see Stevenson, Armaments, pp. 70–76, and the sources cited there.
man military illuminate his motives. When Schlieffen reported that Paris was calling up reservists, Bülow's closest adviser, Friedrich von Holstein, noted that "the Chancellor wishes . . . still to prevent countermeasures, as if that once begins both sides will increase them reciprocally . . . and we hope for a good outcome." German imperturbability was shaken only by a (subsequently discredited) report of a French trial mobilization on the common border. Bülow drafted a warning that such action would increase the risk of "an unnecessary great crisis," and he briefed his ambassador in Paris that "such a French military measure must necessarily lead to a sequence of further events." Yet Germany had no intention of attacking, and "no special military measures of any kind have been ordered, as the French General Staff will certainly well know." Bülow saw the danger of a spiral of escalation and was determined to forestall it. Moreover, although the incomplete army reequipment was a major reason why Wilhelm II consistently opposed war during the crisis, no further effort was made to hasten it, the war minister Karl von Einem advising that drawing in private firms might be noticed and "cause war at a moment when we do not want it." This caution was in keeping with Bülow's crisis management, as by spring 1906 he was determined to avoid war and hesitated to threaten it. He gambled that his other negotiating assets would secure a diplomatic victory at the Algeciras conference. Even when they proved inadequate he yielded at Algeciras over the organization of the police and the state bank, the two most contentious topics. In short, both sides in the crisis seem to have been accurately appraised that their opponents' measures were limited and defensive (D1). Perhaps precisely because Russia was not a credible threat, moreover, Bülow and Wilhelm II disregarded Schlieffen's preventive war promptings, especially as Morocco intrinsically scarcely justified hostilities. Conversely, the German battlefleet, expanding under the leadership of Navy Secretary Alfred von Tirpitz since the construction laws of 1898 and 1900, was still too small to risk a clash with Britain. A recovery of French confidence combined with military firmness and British solidarity persuaded Bülow to halt his diplomatic offensive, neither side risking provocative preparations because neither regarded war as an acceptable outcome. Although the crisis witnessed the first extraordinary measures by European continental armies in

almost a generation, there was no sign at this stage of militarization escaping from civilian control.

**Bosnia: Compellence without War**

**Crisis Escalation: Austria-Hungary and the Balkans**

Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 1908 inaugurated the next big trial of strength. Administered from Vienna for thirty years, the two provinces in contention had stayed nominally under Ottoman Turkish sovereignty. Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal, who as foreign minister was the guiding influence on Austrian diplomacy, wanted to secure the annexation without fighting. He rejected a proposal from the Austro-Hungarian war minister, Franz von Schönaiach, to accompany the annexation with a partial mobilization, because to do so would cost money, raise domestic anxiety, and appear provocative.

Because Aehrenthal had complacently discounted serious opposition from Serbia and Montenegro, the Austrians were surprised when Belgrade and Cetinje, objecting to the annexation of fellow South Slavs, resorted to emergency measures. Montenegro mobilized, garrisoned its frontier with the Dual Monarchy, and positioned artillery overlooking the Austrian naval installations at Cattaro. Serbia called up reservists and trebled its army from a normal winter strength of 10–12,000 to some 30,000. Vienna responded with a phased escalation in which Aehrenthal—rather than the CGS, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, a proponent of force—set the pace in liaison with Schönaiach and Emperor Franz Joseph. Thus Aehrenthal ordered Austrian warships to pull back from the Montenegrin coast, once it was clear that Montenegro's measures were primarily "demonstrative." The Montenegrin prince must "be deprived of any basis for the assertion that through our measures he is . . . obliged to take special precautions." Against Serbia, likewise, Franz Joseph told the British ambassador that he had taken "no military measures whatsoever. . . . I have preferred to run the risk [of unpreparedness] rather than take measures which might cause excitement or offer a pretext for aggression." Even when

in mid-November 1908 the Austrians moved fifteen infantry battalions into Bosnia-Herzegovina, they justified this action to the other European powers as necessary for border security, and they seem genuinely to have feared surprise attack. Conrad advised that the existing garrison of 20,000 could be reinforced only by one narrow-gauge railway, whereas Montenegro could concentrate 25,000 soldiers on the frontier within days.

Thus far Austrian military measures had been precautionary (D1), calculated not to panic the public, antagonize other governments, or encourage Serb aggression. But by spring 1909 Aehrenthal was looking ahead to when the weather had cleared, when he planned to break the deadlock by coercive diplomacy (thus proceeding from D1 to O1 preparedness). In mid-February he agreed in principle to move south another fourteen infantry battalions, which would raise the Bosnia-Herzegovina garrison to 50–60,000 above its precrisis size (i.e., nearly treble it). True, the reinforcement was described as “spring exercises” rather than as mobilization, the authorities would not display call-up placards, and letters sent to the draftees’ homes avoided the phrase “up to war strength” in order to prevent “unnecessary anxiety to the public and financial circles.” But whereas previously the Austrians had intended by such secrecy to avoid provoking Serbia, they aimed now to disguise their preparations for a showdown.

As the crisis reached its climax, on March 26 the Austro-Hungarian authorities called up all Bosnia-Herzegovina reservists, and on March 29 the joint council of ministers in Vienna recommended a “yellow” mobilization (full mobilization for Balkan operations) against Serbia and Montenegro. But even at this stage, to Conrad’s chagrin, Aehrenthal was willing to settle for a mutual stand-down and a Serbian pledge of good behavior. Although tempted to use force, Aehrenthal was worried about the expense and unpredictability of a mountain campaign, and feared a hostile Russo-Turkish-Italian alliance. Austria-Hungary had advanced from D1 to O1 measures, but not quite to O2L.

CRISIS CONTAINMENT: RUSSIA AND THE CENTRAL POWERS
The key question now was whether the struggle would spread beyond the Balkans and square off Austria-Hungary against Serbia’s great power patron Russia, respectively supported by Germany and France. Neither side wanted this to happen, and Aehrenthal’s affirmation to the Russians that Austria-Hungary was making no preparations on the common frontier in Galicia seems to

have been correct. The Russians ordered wire for their fortresses and returned one infantry division and one artillery brigade from the Caucasus to the Kiev military district. But their foreign minister, Alexander Izvolsky, told the Austrian ambassador that Russia would stay absolutely quiet even if Habsburg forces occupied Belgrade; and although in March 1909 Izvolsky proposed as a (D1) security measure a partial mobilization of the Kiev district, the czarist military rejected it. They insisted that Russia had not sufficiently recovered from defeat and revolution in 1904-05 to fight even a defensive war, and admitted as much to the Central Powers' representatives. Meanwhile France and Britain both urged Russia to show restraint and themselves took only minor precautions.

Germany too remained militarily inactive despite assuring Aehrenthal in January 1909 that if the czar mobilized against an Austrian invasion of Serbia, Wilhelm II would declare war on Russia and France. The Germans knew that this eventuality was improbable. Schlieffen's successor as CGS, Helmuth von Moltke the younger, advised that in a European war Germany had "full prospects of success,"26 but given Berlin's accurate appraisal of Russia's vulnerability, and the submissive signals from St. Petersburg, Bülow could push Izvolsky to the wall with no need for threatening OI preparations. On March 21 Bülow made clear to Russia that Berlin would support Vienna in using force in the Balkans, leaving Izvolsky little alternative but participation in a warning by the European powers to Belgrade to recognize the annexation and restore Serbia's precrisis troop strengths and deployments. German diplomatic intervention thus sufficed to make Serbia and Russia give way. Although a Balkan military campaign in 1909 would have been unlikely to escalate into a European conflict, Aehrenthal still judged one inexpedient, and resisted Conrad's pressure for it.

In 1909, as in 1906, the more militarized side prevailed. The trend would continue in 1911 and 1912. But whereas the annexation crisis became highly militarized at the Balkan level, it was even less militarized than the first Moroccan crisis had been among the great powers. Austria-Hungary went further in its preparations than had any state three years before, but Russia's weakness still made war scarcely conceivable for the Triple Entente and unnecessary for their enemies. Nor did the military take over policy: Aehrenthal restrained Conrad as Bülow had Schlieffen. A trend toward destabilization was still only beginning to be evident.

Agadir: Backstairs Limitation

CRISIS ESCALATION
By the time of the second Moroccan, or Agadir, crisis in 1911 the Central Powers and the Triple Entente were more evenly matched. A law passed in 1909 raised France’s field artillery to approximate numerical parity with Germany’s, and in 1910 the Russians reorganized their army to enable faster mobilization. The German authorities were becoming apprehensive about the balance between the two blocs. Nevertheless, the state secretary (i.e., foreign minister), Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter, who with support from the new chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, was primarily responsible for crisis management in 1911, again began with limited objectives rather than seeking an occasion for preventive war; and both he and Bethmann were consistently reluctant to support their diplomatic demands with extraordinary naval and military measures.

The crisis opened when Germany dispatched a gunboat, the Panther, to anchor off Agadir on July 1, 1911. This gesture was dramatic, but its strategic significance was negligible. The armed services were not consulted before the Panther sailed, it was among the smallest warships in the German fleet, and Kiderlen had rejected proposals to send two vessels. Moreover, Berlin once again was reacting to France’s drive for preponderance in Morocco, culminating in the advance in May 1911 of 15,000 French troops to the capital, Fez.

Kiderlen wanted to acquire French colonial territory in compensation for abandoning Morocco, and to demonstrate that German rights could not be trampled on. Unfortunately for Germany, he underestimated his antagonists. His initial failure to spell out his requirements, followed on July 15 by his claiming without warning the entire French Congo, incited fears in Paris and London that his aims were more radical than they appeared, and the situation became far graver than he had expected. Not only did France reject Kiderlen’s demands, but in a speech delivered in the City of London at the Mansion House on July 21, Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George,

included (with the approval of Foreign Secretary Edward Grey and Prime Minister Herbert Asquith) a stern warning that London's vital interests must be respected.

After Lloyd George's declaration, militarization went much further in the second Moroccan crisis than it had in the first, but again it was more in evidence in the Triple Entente and the Low Countries than it was in Germany. The Mansion House speech was followed by a panic in Whitehall when the admiralty lost track of the German fleet. Grey advised that the latter might fall at any moment upon the Royal Navy, which had taken few precautions and was dispersed. British naval forces therefore moved to high readiness, Grey asking the admiralty to keep them "in such a condition and position that they should welcome a German attack." This was a D2G alert, although its defensive purpose must be emphasized, Lloyd George informing Grey that war "is so much in the reckoning as to render it urgently necessary for us to take any step which would render the issue of war more favourable, always providing that such a step does not include the chance of precipitating war."28

Unprecedented steps were taken on land as well. The British canceled cavalry maneuvers, citing drought; the Belgians and French canceled maneuvers on the pretext of equine foot-and-mouth disease; Brussels kept on the 1909 conscript class, which would normally have been released in September; and the new French CGS, General Joseph Joffre, told the British attache in Paris that France had made intensive military preparations. In late September Franco-German negotiations achieved the outlines of an African settlement, but only after weeks of heightened readiness and gnawing tension.

CRISIS CONTAINMENT

Although the Triple Entente's land-based measures in 1911 exceeded those of 1905-06 and 1908-09, they remained in the D1 category. The Entente powers did not fear imminent aggression, the British military attaché in Berlin witnessing nothing abnormal there, and his French counterpart, Lieutenant Colonel Pellé, reporting no visible preparations beyond grain purchases. In Paris Joffre advised that France could not assume the 70 percent likelihood of victory supposedly sought by Napoleon before battle, and France's premier, Joseph Caillaux, wanted a negotiated outcome. Thus Caillaux rejected suggestions to

send a French warship to Agadir, while Grey feared that dispatching Entente vessels to shadow the Panther would cause Germany to mobilize.

But Germany too wished to limit the crisis, as a conversation between Kiderlen and the British ambassador on July 14 testifies. Kiderlen warned that there was a prospect of British and German naval squadrons meeting on July 29 off the coast of Norway, and that each side might try to overawe the other. He urged the Royal Navy to postpone its Norwegian visit, and the British foreign office agreed. After the Mansion House speech Kiderlen's initial instinct was to bluff his way out of trouble by threatening France with hostilities, but Wilhelm II overruled him, setting war avoidance as imperative. Thus in July 1911 Wilhelm accepted a recommendation from his admiralty staff that although the German navy was dispersed (not concentrated, as London feared), there was no need to reassemble it before the prescheduled date. Naval action was limited to summoning a few reservists, Kiderlen telling Tirpitz's deputy that anything that could be presented as a mobilization measure was in the highest degree undesirable. In September the German fleet commander warned that after October 1 the incorporation of the new conscript cohort (especially of untrained stokers) would leave his ships no longer operational, while the Royal Navy remained at high readiness. According to the chief of the naval staff, more visible and costly steps would soon be required. But Bethmann, gambling on the success of the negotiations, decided against them. Kiderlen's undersecretary, Arthur Zimmermann, commented in retrospect: "That it was possible to lead the Moroccan crisis to a peaceful outcome I attribute in the first instance to the fact that . . . we refrained from any military preparations."29

On land as well, the autumn changeover between conscript classes imposed a time limit on policymakers before preparedness waned, and the Germans took a similar gamble to that at sea. At the end of August 1911 Wilhelm II ruled, with the consent of Moltke and the war minister, Josias von Heeringen, that the annual maneuvers should go ahead. Bethmann and Kiderlen confirmed the decision even though the maneuvers would temporarily leave the western frontier "militarily almost defenceless."30 The German leaders feared that suppressing the maneuvers might cause war. In addition, Wilhelm II and the foreign ministry agreed to send home the senior conscript class (i.e., the

men who had completed their two-year term of service), Kiderlen telling France’s ambassador that he trusted that Paris would see this as a symbol of Germany’s confidence in a peaceful outcome. Once French intelligence had confirmed that the release was going ahead, the French foreign ministry undertook that France’s own senior class would be discharged, an assurance that Moltke’s intelligence corroborated.

Both Grey and Caillaux wanted to avoid hostilities and thus cooperated with Kiderlen’s efforts to impose restraint. The Germans ran risks with their security both at sea and on land, reaching agreement on Morocco at a most disadvantageous time before maneuvers ended. Senior German army officials urged a strike before Russia consolidated its 1910 military reorganization, but neither Heeringen nor Moltke wanted war without a persuasive reason for it, and both felt Germany must not seem the aggressor. Heeringen considered that half-measures, such as recalling reservists and canceling maneuvers, would look menacing to the outside world while adding little to readiness, although, he qualified, “if it is serious, then full mobilization straightaway.” Nor did Moltke seek to unleash a war, on the contrary minuting on September 1 how in crises since 1905 the German authorities had received a tide of reports on enemy measures that were often exaggerated and could cause unnecessary alarm. He wanted all such intelligence to be processed in the General Staff, whose expertise best equipped it to form an accurate overall view. The regular digests that the GGS issued as a result (and which it repeated in 1912–13 and July–August 1914) were sober and cautious, and minimized the significance of French activity. Furthermore, under an agreement reached between the agencies concerned in June 1911, stronger civilian control had already been imposed on mobilization preparations, which were to be preceded by full discussion between the navy, war, and foreign ministries, and authorized by imperial command. During the Agadir crisis signs of German army restiveness were evident, and both the British and German navies may temporarily have feared attack. Militarization, in the shape of D2G measures for the Royal Navy and D1 measures for the British, French, and Belgian armies, proceeded much further than in the first Moroccan crisis. However, once Wilhelm II had ruled that war must be avoided, Germany again accepted a

diplomatic setback in preference to provoking hostilities or to bluffing with the support of O1 preparatory steps.

The First Balkan War: Restraint under Strain

Crisis Escalation: The Balkans and the Triple Entente

The most highly militarized of all the prewar crises resulted from the first Balkan war in the winter of 1912–13. Excluding the combatant armies, up to 750,000 men were called out (three times as many as in 1908–09); and, far more than in the Bosnian crisis, Eastern European friction led the Western European states to take military precautions. Unlike in the annexation crisis, moreover, two great power players were now in the militarization game, the Habsburg monarchy reacting while Russia set the pace. The tilt against the Central Powers in Eastern Europe was a new development, to which in 1912–13 they responded cautiously, although the consequences made it unlikely that they would do so again.

Russia could take the initiative because of a spectacular upturn in its economy and rapid progress in rebuilding its armed forces. Furthermore, czarist diplomatic mediation facilitated the conclusion in early 1912 of a Serbian-Bulgarian alliance. This combination, later joined by Greece and Montenegro, became the nucleus of the Balkan League, whose armies in October 1912 smashed the Ottoman Turkish forces and drove the Turks back almost to the Bosphorus, thus dramatically shifting the Balkan (and therefore continental) military balance in favor of the Franco-Russian bloc. At the same time as Austria-Hungary faced the expansion of its Balkan enemies on its southern flank, to its north the Russians carried out a trial mobilization and retained their most senior cohort of conscripts.

Russia's trial mobilization was announced on September 30, and took place in four western military districts. Although St. Petersburg denied all connection with the Balkan crisis—and the exercise was indeed preplanned—the Central Powers were disquieted that it was not canceled because of the war. They

accepted assurances, however, that the men would soon go home, which by the end of October their intelligence confirmed was happening. Much more alarming, and certainly not preplanned, was St. Petersburg's decision not to release its senior conscript class, in contrast to France's and Germany's mutual stand-down in 1911. Once the new levies had been incorporated, the Russian standing forces grew (from their usual size of approximately 1.3 million) by some 350,000, of whom 150,000 stood on the western borders. Although strictly speaking this was not mobilization, keeping on seasoned troops was arguably more formidable than calling up reservists, and several infantry companies were raised from 140 or 150 to 200 men, little short of their wartime strengths of 215. In addition, the army was reprovisioned, and some units moved closer to the Austrian border.

The evidence suggests that Russia was embarking on an OI foray into armed diplomacy. It was not reacting defensively (D1) against the Central Powers, as it acknowledged to the French that Germany had done little and that Austria-Hungary's measures were a "bluff." Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov wrote to Premier Vladimir Kokovtsov that he could defend Russia's national interests while preserving peace only with support from the armed forces. He told Izvolsky, now Russia's ambassador in Paris, that evident military preparedness could support peaceful pressure and diplomatic intervention. True, in a dramatic exchange at Tsarskoe Selo on November 23, Sazonov and Kokovtsov blocked proposals for more drastic steps. According to Kokovtsov's memoirs the war minister, Vladimir Sukhomlinov, had persuaded Nicholas II to mobilize all of the Kiev and part of the Warsaw military districts. Kokovtsov remonstrated that to do so would risk a war for which Russia was unprepared, causing the czar to annul the measure. Yet Russia's council of ministers still

34. An unofficial contemporary estimate calculated peacetime army strengths in 1912 (officers and men) as: Russia 1.33 million, Germany 0.65 million, France 0.61 million, Austria-Hungary 0.39 million, Italy 0.26 million, and Britain 1.19 million. Herrmann, Arming, p. 234.
agreed in December 1912 to reinforce further the units already stationed in the Kiev and Warsaw districts, although not to raise them to war strength. Later in December Sazonov contemplated after all a mobilization on the Austrian border, and in January 1913 General Tatischev, Russia’s plenipotentiary in Berlin, revealed to the Germans that mobilizing the Kiev district was being considered. Although Kokovtsov again prevented further action, by February 1913 the Russian military chiefs feared that army discipline was crumbling and wanted either to go to war or to release the senior cohort, but no further prolongation of the impasse.

Not only did Russia’s O1 military readiness reach an unprecedented level, but Britain and France did much more than in 1909. German observers reported that the Royal Navy reached the highest stage of alert short of mobilization. The French army released its senior conscript class, but intensified its training and carried out border reinforcements and a trial mobilization. In contrast to 1909, moreover, the French urged Russia to heighten its readiness, fearing that Russia would be outmatched by Austro-Hungarian preparations. As the French premier, Raymond Poincaré, was assuring St. Petersburg that it could count on French backing if it intervened in an Austro-Serb conflict and Berlin supported Vienna, the Russians had good grounds for confidence not only in their own readiness but also in support from their ally.

THE CENTRAL POWERS AND CRISIS CONTAINMENT

In comparison with the Moroccan and Bosnian crises, the tables were turned. Yet, although the Austrians responded to their adversaries’ challenge with far larger and more costly measures than in 1908–09, the Germans did so only minimally. In both Central Powers, moreover, the political leadership still held back the military and worked to avoid war, albeit with increasing ambivalence.

Even after fighting began in the Balkans, Aehrenthal’s successor as Austrian foreign minister, Leopold Count Berchtold, agreed only to a very limited frontier reinforcement and reservist call-up, in part for fear of upsetting the public and the money markets. But in addition, according to War Minister Moritz von Auffenberg-Komarów, “mobilizations, even if implemented partially, can easily start the wheel rolling—often against one’s intention—and in any case are extremely expensive.”

“because he well knew that one step in this direction from Austria-Hungary’s side would lead to the same on the other side and then the ball would start rolling.”40 He refrained from protesting the Russian trial mobilization, and on October 15 Franz Joseph released Austria-Hungary’s senior conscript class.

As the crisis developed the Austrians moved toward much greater readiness, but reactively and defensively, rather than taking the lead as the Russians were doing, or as Aehrenthal had done in 1909. The first stimulus was the rout of the Turkish armies in late October, which again left Bosnia and Herzegovina vulnerable to Serb attack. Berchtold agreed to add 16,400 men to the southeastern army corps.41 The second stimulus was the retention of the czarist conscripts, which Conrad’s successor as CGS, Blasius Schemua, warned could allow a Russian standing-start offensive before the Habsburg couverture (or protective screen for mobilization) was installed. Meanwhile Serb forces arrived on the Adriatic, despite Vienna’s warning that it would not tolerate Serbia’s acquiring sea access. At a conference on November 19 Franz Joseph and his advisers rejected Schemua’s wish to send an ultimatum to Belgrade to halt its march to the coast. At the same meeting, however, Berchtold agreed to reinforce Galicia, both against a surprise attack and to avoid taking decisions under the shadow of czarist military preponderance.

By calling out four classes of reservists, Austria-Hungary increased its three Galician corps from 57,000 to 97,000 men. Other steps on the frontier with Russia soon followed, including moving in extra cavalry and creating seventy-five new field-gun batteries. In addition, following reports in December 1912 that Serbian forces were returning northward to the Austro-Serbian border, Austria-Hungary raised its Balkan corps approximately to war strength (c. 100,000 men). By now the Austrians had added at least 86,000 soldiers to their standing forces in Galicia and as many again in the Balkans, plus 50,000 in the interior.42 Also in December Conrad was reinstated as CGS, renewing his 1908–09 advocacy of war against Serbia, while Alexander Krobatin, who shared Conrad’s views, replaced Auffenberg. Yet the records of two crown councils convened by Franz Joseph with his senior officials on December 11 and 23 make clear that even the December measures were more defensive (D1) than coercive (O1). A conference of the European powers’ ambassadors to discuss the Balkan situation was about to open in London, and Berchtold

40. Berchtold in Joint Council of Ministers, October 8 and 9, 1912, HHStA 310 PA XL, and Stevenson, Armaments, p. 255.
41. Ibid., p. 256.
42. Ibid., pp. 258–259.
informed the participants at the first crown council that the London conference would support Austria-Hungary unless Vienna discredited itself by "warlike measures." The new steps in Bosnia had "a purely defensive character," Governor-General Oskar Potiorek being given only a quarter of the horses needed for field operations, and "considerations of supporting [Austria's] diplomatic demands come only in second place" to insurance against the "nationalist high tide." Berchtold told the German ambassador that he could arrange hostilities in twenty-four hours if he wanted, but preferred to extricate himself peacefully. Given this preference, and given that the Serbs (in the absence of Russian backing) had now dropped their claim to an Adriatic port, both Berchtold and Franz Joseph rejected Conrad's pleas for additional steps.43

In March 1913 Vienna and St. Petersburg concluded a disengagement agreement, thus ending the greatest risk of continental escalation from the Austro-Serb conflict. As part of a deal over the frontiers of Albania, the Russians released their senior class and the Austrians sent home 40,000 men from Galicia. The standoff was straining government finances and draftees' morale on both sides. The Russians' OI preparations had safeguarded their Balkan protégés' expansion, but Sazonov respected Austria-Hungary's insistence on establishing a viable independent Albania and on preventing Serbian sea access. These considerations suffice to explain the peaceful outcome of the crisis; but in addition the German leaders, with some wavering, had decided not to use the Balkans to force a European conflict, and again held back from taking extraordinary measures.

In view of the tense Balkan situation in the autumn of 1912, the German military authorities placed the frontier railways and the Rhine bridges under guard. On the eastern border they intensified surveillance of Russia, requisitioned horses, and equipped officers for winter campaigning. They secretly purchased fodder and stepped up output of tinned food. But as of late November the German army had released its senior conscript class and had not increased its standing forces. The Russian general staff correctly reported that there had been "no measure of [German] mobilization strictly defined," and French military intelligence briefed Joffre that "nothing alarming is reported in Germany."44

Germany’s military activity remained low-key compared with that of Russia, Austria-Hungary, or France. A first reason for this, as in Austria-Hungary, was the government’s fear of alarming the public and the Bourse. Second and more significant was the German military’s conviction that they could already move quickly into operational readiness. In October 1912, according to the Bavarian plenipotentiary in Berlin, the GGS was still “quite cool” about Russia’s measures, and “ready” with nothing to be done. Kiderlen agreed that Berlin would not let itself be disturbed by the “multiplying reports of Russian armaments . . . and will take no countermeasures. We have matters in order, and if God wills that it starts, within six days our army, even without ‘preparatory measures,’ will stand where it should.”45 Third, and most important, the low level of militarization stemmed from the relatively calm German assessments of the political situation. Kiderlen considered Russia’s trial mobilization maladroit, but not worrying. The GGS was determinedly unsensationalist, and Moltke reported on November 12 that although the Russians had made numerous preparations that would facilitate mobilization, they had done nothing that marked its commencement. Moltke remained anxious to avoid an inadvertent war, while Kiderlen was determined that the Austrians should not involve Germany in needless hostilities.

That this third factor—the political assessment—was the most important is shown by Kiderlen’s maintenance of his line even after Moltke grew more alarmist and a fissure opened between civilians and military. On November 19 the CGS suddenly advised that Russia had reached such a pitch of readiness that any further steps—such as trial mobilizations, reservist call-ups, or movements of units—would have to be seen as the beginning of mobilization. Wilhelm II himself, who initially had been more moderate than his advisers, became increasingly belligerent. When an Austrian delegation visited Berlin on November 22, Wilhelm advised that as soon as Austria-Hungary’s prestige demanded, it should take “energetic action” against Belgrade, and would be assured of his support.46 In contrast, Kiderlen’s and Bethmann’s approach was to try to limit the Balkan conflict by convening a great power conference. Thus in a telegram on November 26 to his ambassador in London, Kiderlen refused to see aggressive intentions in Russia’s latest moves:

45. Wenninger to von Stetten, October 25, 1912, KAM MKr. 44; Kiderlen to Pourtalès, November 23, 1912, PAAA Pourtalès MSS, and Stevenson, Armaments, pp. 247–248.
We could not criticize Austria-Hungary if it took certain purely defensive counter-measures. We ourselves, however, in spite of the possible threat to our security, should abstain from such measures, in order not even to seem to exacerbate the situation. . . . It would be regrettable if merely because of reciprocal military measures, which admittedly Russia has started, there should arise a serious threat to European peace.47

The result was that although Berlin did not press the Austrians to stand down their forces, neither did the Germans heighten their own preparedness. By the eve of the “war council” convened by Wilhelm II on December 8 after Britain had infuriated the emperor by warning that it would assist France in a European conflict, Kiderlen’s diplomacy was yielding fruit. The great powers had agreed in principle to manage the Balkan crisis through the proposed London conference of ambassadors, and Serbia was no longer pressing for sea access. When Wilhelm clamored at the war council for an immediate Austrian attack on Serbia—even if it escalated into conflict with the Triple Entente—his fury was therefore being overtaken by events. Moltke’s call at the same meeting for early war with France and Russia was made redundant by the lack of a suitable pretext.48 Only one week after the war council Bethmann ruled that the army could safely lift the border railway guard and grant Christmas leave to the troops. Wilhelm II’s and Moltke’s disquiet suggests that further Russian steps toward a partial mobilization, such as St. Petersburg contemplated in November 1912 and January 1913, would have made it difficult for the German civilians to continue their restraint. But as long as Russia’s readiness remained below this threshold, and Austria-Hungary’s prestige was upheld, Kiderlen

could prevail. Russia’s new willingness for brinkmanship and the growing impatience felt by the German military made the European crisis caused by the first Balkan war more dangerous than those of 1905–11. Nonetheless, the czar settled for limited gains for Serbia and stopped just short of mobilization, while a hallmark of Berlin’s style of crisis management remained the avoidance of military half-measures. As late as 1912–13 this all-or-nothing approach still essentially meant doing nothing, whatever the levels of militarization elsewhere.

Restraint Breaks Down: The July 1914 Crisis

CRISIS ESCALATION: THE CENTRAL POWERS’ INITIATIVE
In the 1914 crisis the Central Powers resumed the offensive. As before their coups of March 1905, October 1908, and July 1911, they abstained from precautionary military steps, but this time with the crucial difference that they wanted not simply a diplomatic triumph but a Balkan blitzkrieg.49 Vienna’s leaders quickly saw the Sarajevo assassinations of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife as an opportunity to force a showdown with Belgrade. The secret promise of support whatever the consequences (the “Potsdam blank check”) delivered by Wilhelm II and Bethmann to envoys from Vienna on July 5–6 confirms that the Berlin government also desired an Austro-Serb war. Down to Austria-Hungary’s ultimatum to Serbia on July 23, however, the Central Powers deliberately avoided high-profile military preparations, in order to lull their potential enemies and keep the forthcoming Balkan operation localized. But after July 23, while the Austrians prepared overtly for a Balkan offensive, Serbia and the Triple Entente faced drastic challenges to their interests, with scant time to decide their response. As a result of Russia’s options first for (D1) premobilization measures and then for (O1) partial and (D2G) general mobilization, both Central Powers authorized (O2G) preparations for immediate continental war. Central though the extraordinary military measures were in the unfolding of events, like its predecessors the July 1914 crisis was impressive for the extent

to which military measures remained under political control. The unprecedented polarization between the political objectives of the opposing coalitions radicalized military developments, rather than the other way around.

Austria-Hungary’s conduct of the July crisis was in glaring contrast to the graduated escalations of 1908–09 and 1912. After the Sarajevo assassinations Governor-General Potiorek recalled the Habsburg troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina from maneuvers and alerted the frontier security detachments and gendarmerie. Thereafter Austria-Hungary did little on the Balkan frontier before delivering the July 23 ultimatum. In Galicia, too, on German advice, and so as not to alert the Russians, no action was taken. But following Belgrade’s unsatisfactory reply of July 25 to the ultimatum, Austria-Hungary abruptly mobilized two-fifths of its army before declaring war on Serbia on July 28. Yet even now the Austrians implemented a partial (O2L) mobilization with a view to invading Serbia rather than fighting Russia, probably the main reason being Conrad’s determination not to be distracted from his long-awaited Balkan campaign. For a while, all the same, Conrad’s military strategy meshed with Vienna’s and Berlin’s diplomatic aim of localizing the conflict, Moltke advising as late as July 30 that in the face of St. Petersburg’s recently announced partial mobilization, Austria-Hungary should simply wait defensively for Russia’s attack.

Similarly, after issuing the Potsdam blank check, Wilhelm II told his new war minister, Erich von Falkenhayn, that no preparations were needed. As in 1911 and 1912 the German political leaders opposed special military precautions because they were anxious to contain the conflict, while the army was confident that it was ready without such steps. Wilhelm authorized the navy office to make only unobtrusive preparations that entailed no extraordinary expense, and as late as July 22 the Berlin foreign ministry authorized a visit by the German fleet to Norway, at the very moment when Britain’s navy was carrying out a test mobilization. In the interest of their political imperatives, Bethmann and Gottlieb von Jagow (Kiderlen’s successor as state secretary) accepted the risk of vulnerability at sea.

Even after Austria-Hungary’s ultimatum Germany at first took only minor (D1) steps. None of these steps down to July 29 fell even into the “political tension” category, the second of the German army’s stages of alert, intermediate

between winter troop increases and the two levels of *Kriegsgefahrzustand* or "condition of danger of war."\(^{51}\) On July 29, moreover, Bethmann tried to put the whole process into reverse, after Grey warned him of the danger of a war with Britain as well as with Russia and France.\(^{52}\) He pressed the Austrians to limit themselves to occupying the Serbian capital as a surety, the so-called Halt in Belgrade. As far as Germany is concerned, only events from this point on create a prima facie case in favor of the inadvertency thesis. When it implemented the *Kriegsgefahrzustand* on July 31, and general mobilization on August 1, Berlin switched suddenly and savagely from D1 precautionary steps to O2G preparations for an immediate all-out offensive. Falkenhayn had urged the former step from July 29, Bethmann resisting on the ground that to proclaim it might cause similar steps elsewhere and "set the stone rolling."\(^{53}\) But on July 30 Moltke came to Falkenhayn's aid, and undermined Bethmann's representations in Vienna by urging Conrad to concentrate after all on a primary offensive against Russia. That evening Bethmann called off his last-ditch efforts to restrain Berchtold, citing as his principal reason that the GGS had notified him that Russian military preparations were "driving us to speedy decisions if we do not wish to be exposed to surprises."\(^{54}\) He was resigned to European war even before the news arrived on the morning of July 31 of Russia's general mobilization.

An examination of Germany's military measures thus supports the contention of Fischer's critics that a localized Austro-Serb conflict was the crisis outcome that the Berlin leaders—possibly except for Moltke—would have preferred. Bethmann's comments show that he, like Bülow and Kiderlen before him, was sensitive to the danger of a runaway escalation. Nevertheless, as Trachtenberg has argued, the chancellor's efforts to portray the crisis as getting out of control were probably designed to obscure his own responsibility.\(^{55}\) With Bethmann's and Wilhelm II's full authority, Germany not only supported Austria-Hungary's Balkan aggression against Serbia but also initiated continent-wide hostilities between July 31 and August 3 by sending ultimata to

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Russia, France, and Belgium, declaring war on them, and invading foreign territory. The emperor and the chancellor underestimated the risk of a confrontation with Britain, but by issuing the Potsdam blank check they courted one with Russia in full awareness of the menace that Russian preparations would pose to Germany's strategic plans, and in this sense they went into the crisis with their eyes open. Moltke's behavior on July 30 gives credence to the argument that the military exceeded its role: yet Wilhelm had said as early as July 6 that he would mobilize at once if Russia did, and Bethmann's position was similar. The German government abandoned its goal of localized Balkan operations not because Moltke dictated policy but because the Triple Entente's military preparations (promptly and accurately reported by the GGS) persuaded the emperor and officials such as Jagow and Bethmann that they had to choose between entering a general war and backing down. Having resolved on July 5-6 to risk a European conflagration by giving assurances to the Austrians, after July 31 they resolved to start one.

CRISIS ESCALATION: THE TRIPPE ENTENTE'S RESPONSE

If Germany and Austria-Hungary preferred a Balkan blitzkrieg, it was for the Triple Entente to decide whether to acquiesce in one. Although all the Entente's members would have preferred a peaceful compromise, if forced to choose, the Russian government was ready to accept a European war rather than see Serbia overrun, France to fight rather than to abandon its ally, and Britain to intervene rather than see Belgium invaded and France overwhelmed. An earlier declaration of London's intentions might have made Berlin hesitate while there was still time to pursue a negotiated solution. No more for the Triple Entente than for the Central Powers, however, are there good grounds for saying that general staffs took over from civilians or that misjudged decisions about military measures drove governments into an inadvertent war. Such misjudgments did occur, especially in Russia, as Thomas Christensen and others have shown; but even so, their contribution to Russia's decisions was secondary.

To start with the British, the London cabinet resisted pressure from its army's director of military operations to recall units who were away from base for training, so anxious was it to avoid the appearance of war preparation. Nor is

56. This paragraph summarizes a huge body of controversial evidence. For contrasting recent assessments, see Trachtenberg, History and Strategy, pp. 49-57, and John C.G. Rohl's chapter on Germany in Keith M. Wilson, ed., Decisions for War, 1914 (London: University College Press, 1995).
there much evidence of a destabilizing spiral of reciprocal precautions between Britain and Germany at sea. True, the Royal Navy was fortuitously placed at unprecedented readiness by the prescheduled test mobilization and exercises that began on July 15. At the end of the exercises on July 28 the admiralty left the First Fleet concentrated at Portland and stationed the ships of the Second Fleet in close proximity to their balance crews. These measures, however, were intended in part for the political purpose of delivering an O1 warning to Berlin, which Grey hoped would sober the Central Powers. As for the German side, on July 25, Wilhelm II had recalled his fleet from Norwegian waters, finally overriding Bethmann's continuing objections. But the emperor's concern was less a British preemptive strike in the North Sea than to secure the Baltic against the Russians. The Berlin naval staff agreed with him, as they knew that in previous crises the British admiralty had always taken extensive precautions. So far from being panicked into preemptive action, the Germans ignored the British naval measures, and it was not until Grey's diplomatic warning on July 29 that Bethmann drew back. The chancellor agreed on July 30 to safety measures in the North Sea, but far more significant for German policy were developments on land.

As in London, so in Paris the civilians kept control and were anxious not to be provocative. The EMA (French General Staff)'s schedule of “Measures That May Be Prescribed in Cases of Political Tension” was divided into measures of precaution, surveillance, and protection, as well as measures needed for mobilization and operations. France's war minister, Adolphe-Marie Messimy, refused to authorize preparations in the latter category unless Germany had already approved the same steps. He ordered regiments to return to their garrisons only if they could avoid traveling by rail, as train transports might be mistaken for mobilization. The government rejected applications from Joffre to implement the couverture and general mobilization until July 30 and August 1 respectively, and even then it ordered the troops to remain ten kilometers behind the frontiers. The policy of shadowing the enemy may have been undermined by French military intelligence's tendency to overstate what Germany was doing, and in the end the French began mobilizing slightly ahead of Germany. But Berlin seems to have been impressed by French caution. As late as July 28 the GGS discerned no trace of mobilization in France and little desire to fight. French preparations were not the main cause of the brutal hardening in Germany's attitude at the end of July.

The crucial changes came elsewhere. Events in Belgium were significant. On July 29, 1914, Brussels called up three classes of reservists, which would more than double the Belgian standing army to some 100,000 men. By so doing, King Albert's government set a time bomb ticking under the German "Schlieffen plan" for outflanking the French eastern fortresses by seizing Liège and storming through the Low Countries. By July 30 the GGS had already noted that Brussels was calling up reservists and placing the Liège garrison in readiness. Nonetheless, it was above all Russia's measures that shifted the crisis from the Balkan level to new heights of militarization. The first point here must be to stress the significance of the "Period Preparatory to War" approved in principle by the St. Petersburg council of ministers on July 24 for implementation beginning July 26. The Preparatory Period regulations were applied in the military districts opposite Germany as well as opposite Austria-Hungary, and to the Baltic as well as the Black Sea fleet. According to the regulations, the relevant agencies were to check mobilization and concentration arrangements, purchase horses, food, and fodder, and ban their export. They were to guard bridges, clear frontier railways of rolling stock, and under the guise of maneuvers to move up extra forces to the border. They should distribute munitions and accelerate reservist training.59 The regulations were very extensive and had O2G as well as D1 elements, because not only could they speed a later mobilization but to some extent they were mobilization. From July 26 reservists and draught animals were being added to the standing army, even if the troops were supposedly being called up for exercises and the horses purchased rather than requisitioned. The GGS understood this, and quickly guessed that the Preparatory Period regulations (of which it had obtained a copy) were being implemented. By July 28–29 the GGS had evidence that Russian frontier garrisons were being reinforced, rolling stock was being assembled, and units were on the move.

Developments after July 26 suggest that the premobilization measures alone were enough to cause war between Germany and Russia, and that they started the events that led to the breach. On July 26 Bethmann informed his ambassador in St. Petersburg, Count Friedrich von Pourtales, that "Russian preparatory measures that were in any way directed against us would compel us to take

countermeasures, which must comprise the mobilization of the army. But mobilization would mean war... [against Russia and France]."\( ^{60} \) Furthermore, in a memorandum to the chancellor on July 28 Moltke alleged that St. Petersburg was cunningly preparing mobilization without declaring what it was doing. Russia might be able to wrongfoot the Central Powers by provoking them into mobilizing first, and then itself mobilize all the faster because of its preliminary steps. The situation, Moltke counseled, was worsening daily, and Germany must force its enemies to show their hand. As a result, on July 29 Pourtalès conveyed a blunt warning from Bethmann to Foreign Minister Sazonov that, even if Russia did not proclaim mobilization, for it to carry on with the Preparatory Period would oblige Germany to mobilize and take the offensive.

 Bethmann's warning on July 29, however, coupled with news on the same day that Austria-Hungary had followed up its declaration of war on Serbia by shelling Belgrade, hardened Sazonov in the conviction (which he was moving toward anyway) that continental war was inevitable. At its July 24 meeting Russia's council of ministers had proposed that if Serbia were invaded, Russia would carry out a partial (O1) mobilization against Austria-Hungary alone, thus seeking to pressure Vienna without a confrontation with Berlin. But without awaiting this eventuality Sazonov joined the Russian military after July 29 in urging Nicholas II to opt instead for O2G general mobilization against both Central Powers. Discarding the prudential arguments he had used in 1912, in a decisive meeting on July 30 Sazonov won the czar's authorization.

 The Russian Preparatory Period measures and general mobilization were the most important proximate cause of Germany's decision to start a European war. At first sight Russia fits much better than does Germany the model of inadvertent war entry occasioned by ill-thought military steps. This is particularly true for the Preparatory Period regulations, whose purpose was to satisfy demands from the army and from Russia's powerful agriculture minister, Alexander Krivoshein, for ensuring military preparedness whatever the diplomatic consequences. General N.N. Janushkevich, the CGS, ordered the regulations to be applied fully and energetically and even exceeded, although as of July 26 the Russians had no evidence of extraordinary precautions in Germany. Nicholas II and Sazonov failed to foresee that Bethmann and Moltke would be willing to fight rather than allow Russia to gain the advantage through implementing the Preparatory Period regulations, and to this extent St. Petersburg's

\( ^{60} \) Bethmann to Pourtalès, July 26, 1914, DDK, Vol. 1, doc. 219, in Stevenson, Armaments, p. 400.
diplomacy (which aimed for a peaceful outcome) and its military policy were mismatched. Russia's decision of July 30 for general mobilization rested on an additional misunderstanding in that Sazonov's crucial argument with the czar was that "war was becoming inevitable as it was clear to everybody that Germany had decided to bring about a collision. . . . It was better to put away any fears that our warlike preparation would bring about a war, and to continue those preparations carefully rather than by reason of such fears to be taken unawares." Yet, as has been seen, Germany's preference was not to start a European conflict.

Even in the Russian case, however, the inadvertent war thesis has only partial validity. It was the Russian civilian leaders who approved the Preparatory Period in the council of ministers on July 24 and in a crown council on July 25. Similarly, it was the civilian foreign minister Sazonov who won over Nicholas II to general mobilization after the czar had refused to listen to Janushkevich. The record of Sazonov's and Nicholas's meeting on July 30 supports Trachtenberg's assertion that even if general mobilization was technically distinct from opening hostilities, the Russian leaders authorized it in the expectation that they were, as Nicholas put it, sending thousands and thousands of men to their deaths. And although in principle the czar had the alternative option of avoiding war by abandoning Serbia to its fate, this choice was highly unattractive. To have taken it would have spelled catastrophe for Russia's international standing and perhaps for its internal stability, and for these reasons Sazonov and his colleagues ruled it out. Except possibly during the few brief hours when Bethmann wavered after Grey's warning to Germany on July 29, little scope existed for compromise between Berlin and Vienna's determination to crush Serbia and Russia's willingness to fight rather than let them do so. By July 30 Bethmann may have been trapped in a logic of his own making, but for Sazonov too his own choices made war inescapable.

**Why 1914 Was Different: Implications**

This article has argued that to concentrate exclusively on the events of 1914 provides too narrow a basis for understanding early-twentieth-century crisis behavior. We need to study the confrontations that did not end in fighting as well as the one that did. Many of the preconditions identified by theorists such

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as George as being necessary for successful crisis management existed in Europe before 1914. Civilian statesmen rather than military professionals controlled the powers’ policies. They had generally accurate information about trends in the strategic balance and about other governments’ crisis measures. They understood the need for caution and feared that militarization would exacerbate tension. Thus Germany, France, and Britain covertly cooperated to minimize the risks of escalation in 1911, and Austria-Hungary and Russia agreed to disengage in 1913. In 1914 this prudential tradition remained alive in Paris and London, and even the Germans tried to localize the Balkan conflict by limiting their security measures.

Nonetheless, the war happened. A drive toward militarization overwhelmed the habits of prudence. Between the 1880s and 1904 extraordinary military preparations and implicit and explicit war threats were absent from relations between the power blocs within Europe (although not from conflicts over African and Asian issues). After 1904 diplomacy became rougher. In 1905-06 France, Britain, and Belgium confined themselves to D1 defensive precautions, and Germany did even less; but in 1908-09 Austria-Hungary graduated through D1 to O1 preparations against Serbia and Montenegro, and in 1911 the Royal Navy moved briefly to a D2G alert. The autumn of 1912 saw the most extensive preparations yet: Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany implementing D1 steps while Russia introduced O1 measures and Austria-Hungary took D1 precautions on its Galician border and again advanced from D1 to O1 readiness in Bosnia. There appears to have been a progressive escalation through to the O2G mobilizations of 1914.

Yet although the July 1914 crisis resembled the earlier Moroccan and Balkan affairs in important ways, it was not simply the continuation of a trend. Miscalculation over Britain there may have been, but the July crisis saw a willingness from the start to play for higher stakes and run greater risks than before. Had it not been for this brinkmanship, European peace would never have depended on the timing of Grey’s July 29 démarche. The succession of militarized confrontations between 1905 and 1912 encouraged a growing reck-

63. On intelligence, Ernest R. May, ed., Knowing One’s Enemies: Intelligence before the Two World Wars (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), and Ulrich Trumpener, “War Premeditated? German Intelligence Operations in July 1914,” Central European History, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 1976), pp. 58-85, are fundamental, and also conclude that pre-1914 intelligence was relatively accurate. 64. In 1904 there was a war scare between Austria-Hungary and Italy, in which Rome called up reservists (D1). See Stevenson, Armaments, pp. 83-84, 87.
lessness among European leaders, which is essential for an understanding of
the outbreak of war.65

The new recklessness was evident in both Russia and the Central Powers. Serbia’s independence and integrity had not been threatened in 1908-09, and
the issue in 1912-13 had been how far Austria-Hungary would permit Serbia
and Montenegro to expand. Austria-Hungary’s July 23, 1914, ultimatum pre-
sented Russia with a much more drastic challenge than it had faced in the
earlier Balkan crises. In addition, St. Petersburg was more disposed than
previously to respond to the challenge by taking military steps. In 1909 it had
yielded to the menace of Austrian coercive action, although even then Izvolsky
had consoled himself with the thought that once rearmament was more ad-
vanced he could act differently. In the spring of 1912 Russia flexed its muscles
by concentrating forces on the Turkish border during an Ottoman-Persian
territorial dispute,66 and in the autumn 1912 crisis over the first Balkan war
St. Petersburg startled Europe with its willingness to deploy its revived armed
might. In November 1912 at Tsarskoe Selo, Kokovtsov blocked a mobilization
against Vienna, but in December Sazonov was willing to contemplate one after
all. During the dispute with Berlin in the winter of 1913–14, caused by the
dispatch to Turkey of a reinforced German military mission under General
Liman von Sanders, Sazonov advocated occupying Ottoman territory as a
sanction.67 Although Kokovtsov still urged prudence, Nicholas II replaced the
premier in February 1914 with the less effective Ivan Goremykin, and in the
July crisis much would turn on the impulsive foreign minister. Some writers
have stressed the misleading advice given by the Russian military about the
technical feasibility of partial mobilization, but it is questionable how much
this mattered.68 As early as July 18, before consulting the army, Sazonov
thought that Russia might have to take military precautions if Austria-
Hungary sent Serbia an ultimatum; and, as has been seen, even implementing
the Preparatory Period regulations brought relations with Germany to the
breaking point. Not only this, but in the winter of 1912–13 Russia’s French ally
urged higher levels of military preparedness on St. Petersburg, in contrast to

65. On the psychology of risk-taking, see Avner Offer, “Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honour,”
66. This little-known episode is known as the Urmia dispute.
Review, Vol. 6, No. 16 (June 1927), pp. 12–27, No. 17 (December 1927), pp. 344–363, No. 18 (March
París’s insistence in 1908–09 on restraint. In July 1914, although the French showed caution on their own border, their ambassador in St. Petersburg, Maurice Paléologue, pledged full support for whatever Russia decided and their army chiefs told the Russian attaché in Paris of their optimism about winning a European war. Although on July 30 the French president and prime minister urged Russia to do nothing that might encourage German mobilization, this plea came too late.

While the Russians gravitated with French encouragement toward O1 armed diplomacy, in Vienna there was a still more radical trend. Berchtold was willing in 1912 to refer the Balkan crisis to a great power conference. But when in spring 1913 the London conference of ambassadors ruled that the town of Scutari should be ceded to Albania rather than to Montenegro, only a threat of imminent Habsburg military action forced Montenegro to evacuate Scutari in May. In another crisis in October 1913, the Serbs evacuated territory assigned by the London conference to eastern Albania only after Austria-Hungary sent Belgrade an ultimatum. As well as becoming impatient with conference procedures and tending toward unilateral initiatives, the Austrians were increasingly disillusioned with O1 measures as a milder alternative to using force. Between November 1912 and August 1913, their troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina remained well above normal strengths for almost a year. The expense far exceeded what their financial authorities thought tolerable. In January 1913 the Austro-Hungarian Common Finance Minister Leo Ritter von Bilínski suggested that military operations might be a preferable alternative, at not much greater cost, to endless alerts.69 The Scutari crisis, in which the Bosnian units were fully equipped with men and horses and raised to O2L readiness, was a psychological Rubicon, a growing opinion in Vienna now preferring fighting to less drastic military measures that yielded no lasting resolution. In the October 1913 ultimatum crisis Berchtold took no special precautions, but he intended, if Serbia resisted, to strike without delay. The Habsburgs were adopting Germany’s all-or-nothing posture.70

German leaders continued into July 1914 to recognize that military measures might cause unintended escalation. Their diplomacy, however, was frequently provocative, even if the Tangier and Agadir incidents were arguably responses

69. A common finance minister in Vienna was responsible for the Dual Monarchy’s central affairs, in addition to finance ministers in the governments of the Austrian and Hungarian “halves” of Austria-Hungary.
70. On the 1913 Balkan crises, see Williamson, Austria-Hungary, pp. 135–156, and Stevenson, Armaments, pp. 266–278.
to French provocation. And in 1914 German backing allowed the Austrians to force a local war that was much more dangerous to European peace than either Moroccan crisis. If not a tendency to militarization, German policy certainly shared in the propensity to run increasing risks. By 1914 both Germany and Austria-Hungary and France and Russia were willing to court and if need be to accept a general war. The question remains: Where did this willingness come from?

The answer differs at the Balkan and continental levels. As for the first, the Habsburg Monarchy's South Slav problem had intensified for over a decade, and peaceful solutions to it seemed exhausted. As for the second, Germany too was drawn increasingly to violent answers to its security dilemmas. With a faltering Austria-Hungary as its one reliable great power ally, it faced encirclement by the British-French-Russian combination. Its efforts to split the latter by diplomacy had failed, and the bonds of solidarity within the two blocs were tightening. Meanwhile the Anglo-German naval race lost impetus after 1912 and a land race between the armies of the Franco-Russian and the Austro-German alliances became the dominant feature of the European armaments scene. The Germans faced both diplomatic isolation and the prospect by 1917 of losing all hope of victory in a general European war, as their internal political deadlock over tax increases was likely to prevent them from raising the revenue needed to maintain their edge over their competitors.71 A final element undermining European stability was a growing popular awareness of heightened danger, which accentuated patriotic and warlike feeling. Political discourse contained more frequent references to an inevitable "next" war.72 All three developments—tightening alliances, armaments competition, and popular militarism—interacted after about 1911, and the Moroccan and Balkan crises intensified them.

This role of the crises was crucial. None of the prewar diplomatic confrontations in isolation could have exercised so powerful a galvanizing effect as did a succession of them, following on ever more closely, and each more acute than its predecessor. By 1914 it seemed that great power relations had become permanently more dangerous, and the short-term precautions taken during each crisis were paralleled by an underlying movement toward greater prepar-

edness. The first Moroccan crisis accelerated French and German reequipment. The Bosnian crisis sharpened armaments competition between Austria-Hungary and its South Slav neighbors. In Russia the legacy of the Bosnia crisis resembled the "Munich complex" evident in the Western powers after 1938, and once czarist military strength recovered, St. Petersburg was determined never to show such weakness again. As for the Agadir crisis, it came at a pivotal moment when Russian and French military revival was already leading Berlin toward reorientating its armaments policy. In the aftermath of the crisis both Germany and Britain began to keep much higher proportions of their battlefleets fully manned and permanently ready for action. But the new emphasis of the vast increase in German military spending that followed 1912 came on land. Finally, the first Balkan war led directly to a succession of major army laws in all the continental powers, directed primarily to raising the manpower of their standing armies and thereby the armies' strength and readiness. The purpose was not merely to safeguard against the danger of surprise attack but also to facilitate crisis management. Austria-Hungary's military law of March 1914, for example, originated in the rise in Galician troop strengths implemented during the winter of 1912–13, which necessitated extra manpower. Following the Tsarskoe Selo conference of November 1912, Russia introduced legislation to make permanent the extended service of the senior class from October to March, thus covering the annual winter gap while new recruits were being broken in. Germany's enormous 1913 army bill was intended to redress the shift in the strategic balance caused by Turkey's collapse in the first Balkan war and ensure that Germany's eastern frontiers would never again be so exposed as in the autumn of 1912. Both France's three-year military service law of August 1913 and Russia's so-called Great Program of army expansion, approved on the eve of war in July 1914, were responses to the German bill. By 1914 all the continental military establishments felt readier to fight than they had a decade earlier, and whereas the Germans and Austrians felt pressured to act before the Balkan and European power ratios moved irrevocably against them, the French and Russians no longer felt that military weakness impelled them to back down. Instead of strengthening deterrence, the advent of something closer to equality between the two alliances made crisis management more complex and war more probable.73

73. On the land arms race, see Stevenson, Armaments, chaps. 3–5, and Herrmann, Arming, chaps. 4–6.
The breakdown of peace should therefore be seen as cumulative. It is true that July 1914 differed from previous crises because the Central Powers challenged the Triple Entente more radically and the differences between the blocs were harder to resolve by compromise. But the origin of the willingness to take such risks must be traced through the preceding decay in Balkan and in continental European stability, to which the earlier crises had powerfully contributed. The prewar shift to more offensive strategic planning identified by Snyder and Stephen Van Evera must be located in the context of a broader complex of intensifying tension; and the total process must be understood if we seek analogies for the present.74

One benefit of studying these questions is diagnostic. "Great commotions," in Winston Churchill's words, "arise out of small things, but not necessarily concerning small things."75 Despite the fears of early-twentieth-century leaders that war would arrive unintentionally, as a "rolling stone," extraordinary military measures did not lead to fighting until international political antagonisms had become almost irreconcilable. A similar complex of interrelated phenomena—recurrent crises involving D1 and O1 measures, competitive armaments, changing popular mentalities, and more offensive strategies—characterized European international relations in the late 1930s, which have not normally been analyzed as a systemic degeneration like that of 1905–14. Many of the same elements reappeared during the peaks of Cold War tension between c. 1948 and 1953, 1958 and 1962, and 1979 and 1983. The implication is that a sequence of militarizing shocks, rather than single episodes, will be needed if the comparatively benign international situation of the late 1990s is to deteriorate as it did eighty years ago. Great wars resemble volcanic eruptions rather than earthquakes: warning signs precede them.

A further benefit of redirecting attention away from July 1914 to the crisis sequence after 1905 is to broaden the agenda for studies of war prevention. It is hard to overstate the difference in the character of relations between the United States, Japan, and the Western European governments after 1945, when war threats and special military measures have been entirely absent, from their character before. Yet at the beginning of the twentieth century too, although the possibility of war was always present, relations between the European


states were much less militarized than they were between 1912 and 1914. Research is needed into how militarization cycles in international politics begin and intensify as well as into the moments at which wars break out. So far as special military measures are concerned, the obvious if trite conclusion from the pre-1914 experience is that it is best for all participants in the international system to refrain from them, although they should also refrain from provocative diplomacy such as Germany's in 1905. Once a relationship has become more militarized, however, D1 precautions, if accompanied by diplomatic reassurances, are less destabilizing than O1 measures intended to back up political positions such as Austria-Hungary's in 1909 or Russia's in 1912. But the case of Austria-Hungary also draws attention to the financial and political costs of extraordinary measures, which may encourage statesmen to explore the more dangerous option of localized war. A relationship in which powers repeatedly resort to military measures is inherently unstable and likely to deteriorate further. In short, the dynamics of crisis militarization can go far to explain not so much why governments will major wars (they do so rarely) as why they risk them.