

Peace and the 'Forgotten War'

Rethinking Peace in Relation to the Franco-Prussian War, 1871-1875

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The Franco-Prussian War formally ended with the Treaty of Frankfurt on May 10, 1871, however ‘peace’ was not established until 1875. The immediate isolation of France in continental Europe – both politically and economically – and the exertion of coercive hegemony by Germany indicate that while conflict no longer raged, the atmosphere was not one of peace. Rather, an ethos of hostility emerged from the settlement, characterized by French fears of invasion due to constant intimidation by Germany aimed to preserve its re-envisioning of the status quo. Ultimately, this would have lasting effects on international relations in Europe. Alsace and portions of Lorraine had been stripped from France proper, and the French metropole found itself under the repressive hand of German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Accordingly, *The New York Times* concluded that “[a] temperate use of victory would have carried with it no permanent enmity.”¹ The reality was not that conflict continued but that German political repression prevented peace from actually being realized. Indeed, a German occupation force remained in France until 1873 when reparations had been paid in full. The motive, German officials noted, was a fear of *la revanche* (trevenge) by France after paying an exorbitant toll in its loss. The result was that a hostile- or dictated-peace left France without the ability to exercise national self-determination, consequentially limiting the ability of the state to protect itself and causing an acute Germanophobia. No one in France foresaw the war as resulting as it had, greatly injuring society since the French people fought the Germans at home. This was certainly the case until a proportional revival of the concert of Europe arrived in response to the War in Sight Crisis of 1875 when France was seemingly liberated from an immediate German influence.

If we ask ‘what is peace?’ we arrive at the conclusion that its definition was and remains hotly debated, while ‘war’ retains two concrete definitions; the latter is visible and tangible, the

¹ “The War Cloud in Europe,” *The New York Times*, April 11, 1875, accessed November 15, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/93487319/fulltextPDF/141F7B5DDEB26D2465E/3>.

former is not. ‘War’ is defined either in the Clausewitzian manner as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will,” or as 1000 deaths due to conflict.² Peace, then, is referred to as the absence of war. However, in a more applicable sense ‘peace’ is a condition of the absence of war *and* non-hostility, the latter being the defining factor as it stipulates self-determination or agency. In examining the Franco-Prussian War one can reach the conclusion that peace is much more of an elusive concept than a concrete reality. In the context of this revision, peace much be achieved at all levels through the harmonization of national self-determination and political and social stability. The 1871 Treaty of Frankfurt that ended the war did not effectively facilitate ‘peace’; rather it brought about an ‘armed-peace’ characterized by stalemate and the possible resumption of hostilities at any time.³ The French people feared a revival of these most, especially in a time of recovery and when the destruction of war remained in recent memory. The threat of war, then, was especially disconcerting since Germany was constantly exercising its recently achieved hegemony over France, greatly slowing economic and social progress. In any case, Germany’s oppression of France can hardly be called a peace; instead an armed-, hostile-, or conditional-peace was established.

When the war began on July 19, 1870 – six days after the doctored Ems Dispatch was published in German newspapers – a German victory was unexpected, and fundamentally symbolic.⁴ As early as 1866, Emperor Napoleon III of France re-embarked on a path of Imperial

² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976): 178.

³ “General Results of its Commercial and Financial History,” *The Economist*, March 14, 1874, accessed November 15, 2013, <http://find.galegroup.com/econ/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECON&userGroupName=lond95336&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=GP4100862520&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>.

⁴ The Ems Dispatch was issued on 13 July 1870 after King Wilhelm of Prussia met with French ambassador Count Vincent Benedetti at Bad Ems in the Rhineland over the issue of a Hohenzollern succession of the Spanish throne. This would have seen Prince Leopold of Swabia ascend as King of Spain, thus encircling France with German houses. Prince Leopold accepted the Spanish throne on July 19; “Original and Edited Versions of the Ems

prestige, at the time of the Austro-Prussian War.⁵ However, while the conflict had bolstered French support against Prussian aggrandizement, it failed to garner public backing in favour of French involvement. Certainly, as A.J.P. Taylor noted, this was the “first time foreign policy did not merely play up to public opinion; it was dictated by public opinion.”⁶ In 1870 popular opinion remained as influential as it had four years prior. Parliamentary pressure and debates, the press, and public demonstration all pushed Napoleon and his ministers to declare war at the earliest possible opportunity. When the Ems Dispatch was issued on July 13, 1870 that moment had arrived.⁷ Prior to the publication of the dispatch Bismarck consulted with War Minister Albrecht von Roon and Chief of Staff Helmuth von Moltke, doctoring it to force the French hand.⁸ The outright rejection of French will and power – with the ascension of Prince Leopold of the Hohenzollern House to the Spanish throne – threatened France’s position on the continent. A resulting embitterment towards Ems was felt throughout the French population and amongst the majority of officials. Ironically, in 1867 Bismarck claimed that, “I shall never consent to a war that is unavoidable, much less seek it. But this war with France will surely come. It will be clearly forced upon us by the French Emperor. I see that clearly.”⁹ In 1870, however, Bismarck manipulated France, forcing them into a ‘necessary war’ with the end result being German unification. Support for war in France allowed officials in Paris, though not guilty of plotting the conflict, to interpret the reporting of a few newspapers as reflecting the mood of society as a whole.

Dispatch,” in *Documents in German History*, ed. Louis Snyder (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1958): 215-6; A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963): 203, 205-7.

⁵ The Austro-Prussian war raged from June 14 to August 23, 1866.

⁶ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 177.

⁷ Koppel Pinson, *Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961): 141-2.

⁸ “Original and Edited Versions of the Ems Dispatch,” 215-6.

⁹ Bismarck made this claim in 1867 in a conversation with US Senator Carl Schurz, predicting that war would come with France within two years; Pinson, *Modern Germany*, 143.

When Napoleon III was captured at Sedan on September 2, 1870, a state of incomprehension emerged, while calls of betrayal were abundant.¹⁰ The French Empire that had gone to war had fallen but the conflict did not end, though it continued not as a prestigious imperial mission but one for national preservation. On September 4, amidst an atmosphere of nationalist delirium, the Third Republic was pronounced at the Paris Hôtel de Ville. Accordingly, the new republican regime was entitled *Le Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*, with the defender of Paris, General Louis Jules Trochu, acting as *Président*. Léon Gambetta, the leader of the French resistance, assumed the position of Minister of the Interior.¹¹ After escaping Paris, on October 9, Gambetta issued the “Proclamation to the Army,” emphasizing the unity of all forces – soldiers, national guardsmen, *Franc-tireurs* and other irregular forces – into what he dubbed the ‘Army of France.’ Indeed, the Germans were no longer fighting France as a power, but France itself. By October 27 both the cities of Strasbourg and Metz – in Alsace and Lorraine, respectively – had been captured. In total, 293 000 French soldiers were now prisoners-of-war, and the French victory that Napoleon expected had become a fantasy. French forces were technologically and tactically out-manuevered, and were outnumbered two to three on the battlefield. Thorough planning by General Helmuth von Moltke, and fast mobilization and troop movements via a superior German rail system made French victory a distant one at best, even at the beginning of the war.¹²

A quick imperial-French loss signified a disruption in the Concert of Europe system, and it would not resume until 1875. The Russians wanted the war to be localized and promised its

¹⁰ General de Wimpffen wrote at Sedan that calls by some soldiers who were able to assess the chaos included: “We have been betrayed!” and “We have been sold out by traitors and cowards!”; E.F. de Wimpffen, “La Bataille de Sedan,” in *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940*, ed. William Fortescue (New York: Routledge, 2000): 2-3.

¹¹ E.B. Washburne, “The Proclamation of the Third Republic (4 September 1870),” in *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940*, ed. William Fortescue (New York: Routledge, 2000): 5-7.

¹² Allan Mitchell, *A Stranger in Paris: Germany's Role in Republican France, 1870-1940* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006): 7.

neutrality if Austro-Hungary remained inactive as well. Having expected a French victory, Russia was willing to tolerate the war so long as it did not threaten its own political interests, notably Polish-issue. It was believed that if Austria imposed itself it would be in the form of a Franco-Austrian Alliance.¹³ This meant that going into the war France was isolated and forced to fight a strengthened Prussia, allied with Bavaria, without international support.¹⁴ After September 2, France accepted German unity and focused its efforts on defending the integrity of national territory and people.¹⁵ French life would, for the foreseeable future, experience “a [singular and] imposing German presence in the midst.”¹⁶

The perspective soon changed: with France in disarray, their fight was no longer seen as one of aggression, but of patriotism. The Germans, on the other hand, were now viewed as the aggressors. As early as September 28 the international press was reporting that “[t]he empire that began the war is dead beyond hope of resuscitation, and Prussia now wars against a people who have but newly resumed those prerogatives for whose abuse they are but partially responsible.”¹⁷ In many respects, the war changed from a formal to informal war. During the Siege of Paris, the last major and most resilient outpost, General Trochu ordered the destruction of all roads, canals, bridges, and railways at least 50km outside of the city; as well, the razing of farms and villages, and the slaughtering of livestock in order to deny the Germans food and shelter. He even ordered the burning of the Bois de Boulogne, Sainte-Cloud, and Versailles forests in an attempt to make all of the besiegers clearly visible. These scorched-earth tactics were accompanied by a rising

¹³ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 205-7.

¹⁴ Bavaria was obligated to fight on the side of the Prussians in the event of war with France, as a result of the German Confederation's loss in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. The pact between the two German states had been secret; Pinson, *Modern Germany*, 139.

¹⁵ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 211.

¹⁶ Mitchell, *A Stranger in Paris*, 7.

¹⁷ “Ought Germany to Make Peace?” *The New York Times*, September 28, 1870, accessed November 10, 2013, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F50914FC3458147B93CAAB1782D85F448784F9>.

new class of soldier, keen on preserving French national interests: the *Franc-tireur*.¹⁸ These informal combatants were French civilians and deserters who attempted to disrupt German advance via violence and sabotage. In their efforts, the *Franc-tireurs* were viewed as “evil people wielding knives, bombs, and poison,”¹⁹ prompting swift reprisals against both them and the French population.

In the long term, exaggerated retributive justice against the *Franc-tireurs* and the population would ingrain fear and Germanophobia for the foreseeable future. The Prussians saw these informal-fighters not as soldiers but criminals, and they were to be treated accordingly. Moltke believed that the military leadership should have ultimate command in times of war, and that no war had ended until all resistance has been crushed. On the other hand, for Bismarck the army was meant to weaken the opposition to a point where they were willing to accept a political settlement.²⁰ Indeed, Bismarck’s opinion was not as Machiavellian as Moltke’s, and was the primary route taken.²¹ However, Prussia was no longer fighting a ubiquitously formal force, posing a major obstacle: in order to achieve a political weakening all resistance had to be quelled, meaning that the French population had to be subdued. Bismarck conceded that there must be “no laziness in killing” as long as opposition continued. For him, resistance took many forms: from villages refusing exactions, to children spitting on occupying soldiers, each resulting in summary executions, noting that those German soldiers who hesitated or did not preform their duty would be executed as well. However, his threats were merely that, though his troops often

¹⁸ Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 236-8.

¹⁹ In some cases ‘preventative plunder’ was even seen; that is, the plunder of the same crops and homes necessary to sustain the German Army; Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 237-8.

²⁰ Allan Mitchell, *Bismarck and the French Nation, 1848-1890* (New York: Pegasus, 1971): 62.

²¹ For both Bismarck and Moltke the Machiavellian notion that “[f]ear provides the dread of punishment that never fails” was applicable. In this way, resistance needed to be punished, and Moltke’s view was much more cynical and drastic than the pragmatic viewpoint of Bismarck; Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. W.K. Marriott (New York: Knopf Publishing, 2006): 76.

acted on them. In one case women and children scavenging for potatoes outside of Paris were fired upon and killed for – supposedly – aiding those within the city walls.²² Major acts of resistance called for greater reprisals.

Prussian efforts to crush larger resistance activities were heavy-handed, inspiring a heightened Franco-German enmity founded in fear of the aggressor. When one *Franc-tireur* fired on a Saxon cavalry patrol near Chartes the patrol bombarded the nearby village with four shells until the major begged for a ceasefire. Terms were generally unfair. In this case, the Germans demanded food and money, which the mayor collected door to door.²³ Communities did not always give in to Prussian demands. The defense of Dijon on October 30, 1870 lends itself to this notion. Defying French General Fauconnet's orders to evacuate the city upon a strong German advance was only one of a few to mount its own defense, manned a compilation of *Franc-tireurs*, professional soldiers, and citizens. However, it was only able to hold off invading forces for an extra day before capitulating.²⁴ As a general theme, German reprisals were not always lenient. In November, the villages of Varice, Ourcelle and Albis, near Orléans, were all burned to the ground after villagers cut German telegraph lines and aided *Franc-tireurs* ambushes nearby.²⁵ Similarly, in January 1871, the village of Fontenoy-sur-Moselle was burned down, and its citizens burnt to death and also impaled on Prussian bayonets after 400 ill-equipped *Franc-tireurs* overran a Prussian outpost near the village. Very few 'citizen-soldiers'

²² Bismarck's radical views were certainly not those of his wife, who claimed that the Germans should "shoot and stab all the French, down to the little babies;" Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 272.

²³ Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 264.

²⁴ Karine Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat: The War of 1870-71 in French Memory* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2008): 203-11.

²⁵ Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 272.

were found taking refuge or living there.²⁶ In memoirs and lasting mythologies, the French paint themselves as victims and martyrs.

Understandably, patriotic enthusiasm was strongest in the towns and weakest in the countryside, for it was the towns that experienced the reprisals most brutally. The war disturbed the rural way-of-life, security, and homes. Indeed, swaths of arable farmland were destroyed. Examining the dynamics of French rural life Eugen Weber has noted, “A good war aroused enthusiasm as long as it went well.” The Franco-Prussian War did not do just that. By September 1870 peasants were occasionally denouncing the guerillas to the Germans.²⁷ However, instances of this were sparse; peasants were often drawn onto the French patriotic side when scorched earth tactics, economic exploitation, plundering, destruction of farmland, and consistent violence threatened their livelihood. However, their resistance was more passive; peasants preferred to remain neutral and refused to collaborate.²⁸ While pacific involvement was not a widespread phenomenon it does highlight the desire for peace as liberty and liberation from fear – an absence of hostility – at a microcosmic level.

The war had to end, and the first sign of this arrived in January 1871. With the majority of Parisians subsisting on a ration of nine ounces of ‘bread’ a day, and whatever horsemeat and/or herring they could scrounge, *de facto* President General Trochu saw the war as having ended.²⁹ These conditions were not unique to Paris. The cost of living, and specifically food prices, had risen exorbitantly, causing a considerable drop in sustenance levels.³⁰ Jules Favre, the

²⁶ Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat*, 155.

²⁷ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976): 101-2.

²⁸ Walter Laqueur, *Guerilla: A Historical and Critical Study* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1976): 84.

²⁹ ‘Bread’ in Paris at this time was simply a concoction of flour, oatmeal, rice, peas, and beans; Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 295.

³⁰ Food prices remained comparable throughout France, however as of December 15, 1870, turkeys cost \$13USD, geese \$7, butter \$9/lb., cats from \$3-\$5, horsemeat \$1/lb., and bread was cheap and plenty. Given the economic and social disruption, everyone experienced the war – in terms of foodstuffs – on a near equal basis; “The Other Franco-

French Foreign Minister, was quick to come to the same conclusion as Trochu. Living conditions in Paris were inhospitable; the city housed 500 000 troops, and with the Prussians permanently entrenched outside the city-walls; the Siege of Paris could not continue. On January 23, Favre left Paris to meet with Bismarck at Versailles to discuss an armistice, one that went into effect on January 28 – known as the Treaty of Versailles 1871.³¹

In order to conclude the ‘peace’ Bismarck demanded that a stable administration and institution be implemented. An election was held on February 8, with the anti-war Conservatives under Adolphe Thiers (a man that refused to take part in the *Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*) being elected with an overwhelming majority on a platform promising ‘peace and liberty’. Thiers, himself, adopted the ambiguous title ‘Chief of the Executive Power of the French Republic’.³² For Bismarck, a republic was Germany’s best bet in securing the Rhine – as it eliminated the risk of French expansionism by a prestige seeking or self-interested monarch.³³ Accordingly, Thiers retained close and quasi-friendly relations with Germany.³⁴

The Treaty of Versailles, officially signed on February 26, established a preliminary settlement, but strangled France and inhibited any major recovery. The agreement was the result of negotiation between Bismarck, and Thiers and Favre, and demanded: the annexation of Alsace and portions of Lorraine, five billion francs payable within five years, withdrawal of all military units below the Loire, and the establishment of the boundaries of German-occupied areas with a

Prussian War,” *The Independent*, December 15, 1870, accessed November 10, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/90604994>.

³¹ Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 295-6.

³² Thiers won 500 of 676 seats in the new *Assemblée*; Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 302; Charles Sowerwine, *France Since 1870: Culture, Society and the Making of the Republic* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2009): 15.

³³ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 222.

³⁴ While British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli wept across the English Channel on February 9, claiming that with the destruction of the balance of power that France’s defeat brought his country was affected most, France’s inability to experience a proper peace makes Disraeli’s claim a gross exaggeration; “Benjamin Disraeli on the ‘German Revolution’ (February 9, 1871)” *German Documents in History*, accessed November 10, 2013, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1849.

military guarantee, all of which he would be granted.³⁵ However, the loss of Alsace and Lorraine had the greatest impact on the French mind, continuing into the First World War. Bismarck justified this annexation, explaining, “The French would be no less bitter, even if they emerge from this war without territorial losses at all.”³⁶ This was ingrained in the French mind upon Bismarck’s March 1 journey through Paris with the German Army, venturing through the Arc de Triomphe. France had lost its position as the first power of Europe, and while the experience of war ingrained a sense of Germanophobia in the minds of French citizens, the treaty and its stipulations symbolized that loss of greatness. An earlier report claimed that, “A nation is but an aggregate of men, and it is difficult to imagine why a course of action that would dishonor the individual should be held to be credible to the mass.”³⁷ However, the war did dishonor the French people through the German Army’s ruinous escapades, entrenching the events in social consciousness.

On March 4, Favre wrote to Bismarck, “Paris is threatened by a serious collision;”³⁸ the initial settlement was soon disrupted by the Paris Commune, lasting from March 18 until its brutal suppression on May 28. While the Commune appeared to be a hiccup in the process of French restoration, it nevertheless proved valuable for both Thiers and the people. On May 10, the Treaty of Frankfurt was signed, effectively ending the Franco-Prussian War. However, the Commune showed that Parisians were rejecting a French loss and dissociating themselves from a government that caved to German demands so easily. When *La Semaine sanglante* (The Week of Blood) arrived, with the entry of the Versailles Army, Paris burned and between 20 and 30 000

³⁵ Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 11.

³⁶ W.R. Fryer, “The Republic and the Iron Chancellor: The Pattern of Franco-German Relations, 1871-1890,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 29 (December 1979): 171.

³⁷ “Ought Germany to Make Peace,” *The New York Times*.

³⁸ This was the same day that Thiers was regained control over the civil administration, post, telegraph, rail service, and local police forces, a phenomenon that potentially foreshadowed a partial return to normality for the French people; Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 17-30; Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 12.

were killed and 45 to 70 000 arrested. The aim was the crushing of radicalism in Paris, something Bismarck allowed, however the greatest impact was the aligning of Paris with the rest of France.³⁹ When the Commune was finally defeated Thiers “flung himself in tears upon the shoulder of Marshall MacMahon, commander-in-chief” of the new, more formidable, French Army.⁴⁰ If peace was to be achieved, it would be sought as a unified French nation embodied in the Third Republic.

France, for the next two years, would experience drastic and direct social disruption due to the presence of a German force presiding over forty-three departments.⁴¹ The German occupation army was to remain in France until indemnities were paid in full. Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, in writing to his friend Friedrich von Preen in September 1870, noted that,

Logically the whole of France would have to be occupied by a million Germans for many years...What a mistake the poor German nation will make if once home it tries to put its rifle in the corner and devote itself to the arts and the pleasures of peace.⁴²

For the two men, the destruction and duration of the war was unforeseen, and neither firmly believed that the occupation would occur. Their letters are not prescient, but do indicate that the average German viewed occupation the logical course of action. For Burckhardt and von Preen the spirit of *la revanche* would surely take hold in France, and turn against Germany in the future. Indeed, a movement for this was present and led by Gambetta who subsequently published the anti-German newspaper *La République Française*.⁴³ Yet, the occupation and hegemony exercised by Berlin prevented *la revanche* from fully taking format this time.

³⁹ Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 17-30.

⁴⁰ Fryer, “The Republic and the Iron Chancellor,” 173-4.

⁴¹ Nathan Orgill, “Between Coercion and Conciliation: Franco-German Relations in the Bismarck Era, 1871-1890,” in *A History of Franco-German Relations in Europe: From ‘Hereditary Enemies’ to Partners*, eds. Carine Germond and Henning Türk (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008): 50.

⁴² “Jacob Burckhardt on German Sentiment during and after the War with France (1870-72),” *German Documents in History*, accessed November 10, 2013, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1737.

⁴³ Orgill, “Between Coercion and Conciliation,” 51.

A.J.P. Taylor has pointed out that when Gambetta first said, “Think of it always, speak of it never,” it was not directed specifically towards the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. Rather, he was referencing the loss of national unity and self-determination altogether.⁴⁴ Indemnities placed on France emphasized this to the fullest extent, and strengthened Bismarck’s control over the direction of the newly formed French Republic. Theirs’ willingness to complicitly work towards national liberation in accordance with German will was something Bismarck admired. The German Chancellor had made it clear to Kaiser Wilhelm I that his aim was to apply constant pressure on Thiers while helping him to survive politically. Aside from the reparations, France was obligated to censure anti-German comments and outbursts in French newspapers, suppress anti-German organizations (notably the *Ligue de deliverance d’Alsace et Lorraine* in Paris and the *Ligue anti-Prussienne* in Lyon), and to prosecute all acts committed against and considered hostile to the German occupation army. Reluctance to comply brought the threat of harsh reprisals: anything from the taking of hostages, reoccupation of liberated territory, to the “resumption of armed conflict.”⁴⁵ So long as the full-payment of reparations remained incomplete, Thiers thought, the self-determination of France could not be fulfilled and a proper peace established.⁴⁶

A drive to complete reparations payments began immediately; it was thought that the full repayment of reparations would free France from the German grip. In 1871 and 1872 two massive ‘liberation loans’ to fund these payments to Germany were provided by the international banking syndicate headed by Alphonse de Rothschild, allowing installments to begin almost

⁴⁴ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 223.

⁴⁵ Indeed, Allan Mitchell’s use of this phrasing indicates that within historiography a sense that ‘peace’ has not been established does exist; Mitchell, *Bismarck and the French Nation*, 78-80.

⁴⁶ In fact, Thiers refused to concede that - in the condition that France was in - the Republic was not yet existent, but that he presided over a provisional government, reflecting the notion that peace was not yet achieved; Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 26.

immediately.⁴⁷ Progress on this front was seen when – at an October 12, 1871 Berlin meeting – Thiers and Bismarck agreed that when France had paid two billion francs, the German garrison would be reduced by 50 000 men, and six departments would be released from occupation. However, German control would remain; this pact also included the addendum that Germany still retained the right to reoccupy these areas if deemed necessary.⁴⁸ Molke even publically addressed his concern of renewed hostilities should another public loan be used for other purposes than repayment. Reacting immediately, Thiers informed the German ambassador, Harry von Arnim, that the French people would not support war and that France would not be able to seek *la revanche* for many years, as the desperation of the war (especially at home) remained in recent memory.⁴⁹

Precautionary measures were still taken, isolating France on the continent, both diplomatically and militarily, for the near future while indemnities continued to be paid off. Efforts included the formation the Three Emperors' League between Russia, Austria, and Germany in September. The only potential-ally left was England.⁵⁰ By mid-November 1872, Thiers reported that half of the war indemnities had been paid; having thanked the commercial and financial community he alluded to the notion of France as victim.⁵¹ With the cost of the war reaching 12 billion francs in France alone, on top of war indemnities, Bismarck believed that he had “crippled France for thirty to thirty-five years.”⁵² However, this was soon proved to be false.

⁴⁷ JP Morgan of Wall Street was a major contributor to this banking syndicate; Orgill, “Between Coercion and Conciliation,” 51; Sowerwine, *France Since 1870*, 27.

⁴⁸ Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 34.

⁴⁹ Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 37; Fryer, “The Republic and the Iron Chancellor,” 176.

⁵⁰ The Three Emperor's League was officially formed in September 1872 at a Berlin meeting, but ratified in 1873; Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 42-3.

⁵¹ Thiers reported that 800 million francs had been paid since August, and another 200 million francs would be paid by December; “Message of President Thiers to the National Assembly,” *The New York Times*, November 14, 1872, accessed November 22, 2013,

<http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/93203623/141F7D3FCE76D7C3903/4>.

⁵² Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War*, 310.

As the indemnities were progressively paid off, subversive anti-German activities in France increased. This emphasized the prevalence of Germanophobia and the notion of peace as security of person and livelihood, even at the most basic level. On November 13, 1872, Adolphe Thiers pronounced to the Chamber of Deputies in Paris that “France cannot live in a state of continual alarms: France wants to be able to live peacefully, so as to work to feed itself and face up to its immense responsibilities.” Governments that fail to provide peace – being essential – will not be tolerated for long.⁵³ This created a problem with policing. After the *Ligue de deliverance d’Alsace et Lorraine* and the *Ligue anti-Prussienne* were shut down, as well as the anti-German newspaper *Le châitiment* in Lyon, anti-German agitation ensued *en masse*. Clandestine pamphlets were an outlet of expression that when limited caused general frustration that was often directed elsewhere.⁵⁴ In many cases, especially in the countryside, people found it easy to conveniently re-label an existing object of hatred in times of high tension. The outcome was that – even during the war – priests were attacked and seen as Prussian agents, as well as local noblemen. A later example, in 1873 a nobleman from Haute-faye, in Dordogne, was seized in the local marketplace; accused of having Prussian sympathies, he was tortured, and burned alive.⁵⁵ Not only was the German the ‘Other’, but he also played the role of the oppressor, and was often subject to violent reactions out of fear.

A shift in the fortunes of France both socially and politically took place in 1873, when – it can be seen – greater agency was achieved. On January 1, the first military reform of the Third

⁵³ Adolphe Thiers, “Adolphe Thiers and the Conservative Republic (13 November 1872),” in *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940*, ed. William Fortescue (New York: Routledge, 2000): 26-8.

⁵⁴ Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 33.

⁵⁵ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 251.

Republic was carried out, replacing substitution with five-year universal service.⁵⁶ This was widely supported, being viewed as promoting the reestablishment of authority and the universalization of the French language in a recovering and increasingly patriotic France. The March 15 Berlin meeting between Thiers and Bismarck, however, proved to have a much larger and immediate impact. It concluded that the final financial transaction was to be made on September 5. The entire war indemnity of five billion francs plus interest would be paid off,⁵⁷ and a graduated exit of German forces from French soil would be seen by September 16.⁵⁸ However, while the French people were attempting to dissociate themselves from the Germans, Thiers was more concerned with improving relations. While in government, he experienced a slow political decline, and one official in Gers pointed out that, “Most people vote for a man...not necessarily against the government.”⁵⁹ Thiers had concluded his great aim – that is the removal of German forces from French soil – and though he remained popular, he was no longer the great man that France needed in order to assure peace. Though the Treaty of Frankfurt placed no restrictions on creating outside alliances, throughout the first two years of the Third Republic no international security pacts were made. Instead, trade – as was stipulated in the 1871 treaty – was focused primarily on Germany, notably products from Alsace and Lorraine were those exchanged between the two nations.⁶⁰ Feeding off of the legacy of Napoleon III, who continued

⁵⁶ This was not entirely universal, as Eugen Weber noted, wealth and class dispensations that ranged from a modest buy-out to a ‘voluntary’ one-year tour-of-duty with the payment of 1500 francs; Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 293.

⁵⁷ When the Germans purchased the railways of Alsace and Lorraine the French war indemnities were reduced by the cost of total repayment, by 325 million francs. The total repayment, with interest, was five billion and two hundred and forty-five million francs. However, France did maintain the highest national debt in Europe well into the 1880s; “Receipt of Monies from France and Expenditures in Germany from the French War Indemnity,” *German Documents in History*.

⁵⁸ Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 47; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 223.

⁵⁹ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 256.

⁶⁰ In 1872, 49 percent of French imports from Germany originated in Alsace-Lorraine. This forces a restructuring of the trade-classification system, in which the new category ‘Alsace-Lorraine goods’ was created; Béatrice Dedinger, “The Franco-German trade puzzle: an analysis of the economic consequences of the Franco-Prussian war,” *The Economic History Review* 65, no. 3 (2012): 1039-1054.

to be seen as the man who brought fine harvests, the French people desired a ‘strong-man’, someone who could ‘heal’ France and provide security – two things that had yet to be realized.⁶¹

On May 23, 1873, Thiers was voted out of office and Marshal Patrice de MacMahon was sworn in as President. Not since the Ems Dispatch had Bismarck devoted so much attention to French politics. He demanded that the European community approve the transition of power. However, Russia, Austria, and England all rejected this call, claiming that this was a domestic affair. Any forced revision of French leadership by a foreign power would alienate French sovereignty.⁶² As *The Economist* concluded, “The most significant fact relative to the future is the increasing burden of the Armed Peace maintained by France and Germany, and as a necessary consequence, by their neighbours, Italy, Austria, and Russia.”⁶³ Significant as it was, the Three Emperors’ League did not deem this an issue that threatened the European status quo; nor did it signify that France was becoming increasingly aggressive. Neither England nor Russia had any interest in restoring France to a position relative to that which it held before 1870.⁶⁴ While France proved to have greater agency in its internal affairs, the state was still occupied by German forces and limited internationally. When MacMahon restructured his cabinet (after the German withdrawal) on November 25, accepting the resignation of all his ministers, no major qualm was held on the part of Bismarck.⁶⁵ The government was exactly what the German Chancellor wanted: one that represented the people and posed no threat to Germany. The last thing he wanted, and feared most, was another continental war with France. Indeed, the cabinet

⁶¹ Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 256-7.

⁶² Mitchell, *Bismarck and the French Nation*, 83.

⁶³ “General Results of its Commercial and Financial History,” *The Economist*.

⁶⁴ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 227.

⁶⁵ “Another Crisis in the French Cabinet, MacMahon Accepts the Resignation of All the Ministers,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 26, 1873, accessed November 22, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/171444357/141E6A7A70A156B798A/2>.

restructuring set afoot what in time would reveal itself as the regime of the radicals: “democratic, secularist, and anti-socialist.”⁶⁶

However, structural changes in the French military in 1874 alarmed Bismarck, who saw them as indicating a growing French power. Fearing *la revanche* it is understandable why Bismarck would reject military reform. Indeed, in January 1874, French Foreign Minister Louis de Decazes alerted the Europe powers that Bismarck was planning a preventative war in reaction to this. With Russia and Austria maintaining the belief that Bismarck was politically moderate, they merely expressed sympathy for France and remained passive on the issue. The only state to respond was England with Queen Victoria writing to Wilhelm on February 10 urging him “to be magnanimous,” doing so without any French pleas.⁶⁷ Tensions soon died down. All of this came as a response to the new Military Law that had inflated France’s standing army to 404 859 men.⁶⁸ However, the law did allow for the circumstantial recruitment of between 1 000 000 and 1 500 000 men in peace or war.⁶⁹ Moltke, speaking in the German Reichstag on February 16, identified that France claimed its armies aimed to maintain order at home, and went on to question the viability of the armed-peace in place.⁷⁰

The war-scare ineffectively influenced military reorganization, which continued unabated in France. The French military structure soon reflected the German model. This event entertained the notion that equality between states had to be achieved in order for security initiatives to be effective. The most significant organizational alteration was that each army corps would now

⁶⁶ Robert Tombs, *France, 1814-1914* (New York: Longman, 1996): 439.

⁶⁷ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 224.

⁶⁸ This was originally published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of London, England; “General Results of its Commercial and Financial History,” *The Economist*.

⁶⁹ The New Military Law was originally proposed by Adolphe Thiers and General Ernest Courtot de Cisse (who would later act as Prime Minister from May 22, 1874-March 10, 1875) in March 1873; “The French Army – A New Plan for its Reorganization, Paris (March 19) Correspondence of the London Telegraph,” *The New York Times*, April 7, 1873, accessed November 3, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/93342827/141F7D8B4DA38FC271C/1>.

⁷⁰ “General Results of its Commercial and Financial History,” *The Economist*.

contain one battalion of chasseurs, or light-armoured regiments, and would be based on the “principle of uniformity.” This meant that military training would be standardized and regulated.⁷¹ In 1874 the Gras rifle became the soldiers’ tool; in 1875, the steel canon was introduced, and the *Ecole supérieure de Guerre* established.⁷² As Friedrich Nietzsche pointed out, “Germany’s decisive advantage is laid in the more extensive knowledge possessed by its officers, in the superior training of its troops, and in the greater science of its conduct of war,” and the French have been the judge of this.⁷³ This initiative to strengthen security of the French Republic was not done outside of the Germans’ watchful eye. As one *New York Times* correspondent noted, according to officials and the local population Prussian spies were clandestinely monitoring the exercises at Saint-Omer, at traditional site of French military training.⁷⁴

With a keen eye being kept on developments, it was well known that France was in no condition to fight a war, nor willed it.⁷⁵ However, in early 1875 this was disregarded and increasingly the idea of a preemptive strike was favoured in Germany. The people of France still kept the fresh image of the horrors experienced at the beginning of the decade, fearing a renewed conflict, and French politicians knew that a war would discredit any efforts to stabilize and provide peace for a recovering nation. If war was on the horizon, for Germany, it was unsubstantiated. On January 30, a new constitution was adopted, granting universal male

⁷¹ “The French Army: Details of its Organization. Adoption of German Ideas – the System of Requisitions – Recent Manoeuvres. Special Correspondence from St. Omer,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 1874, accessed November 3, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/93371301/141F7D9C4B64AB0E770/8>.

⁷² Fryer, “The Republic and the Iron Chancellor,” 174.

⁷³ “Friedrich Nietzsche on Germany’s Victory over France and the ‘Cultural Philistine’: Untimely Meditations (1873-6),” *German Documents in History*, accessed November 10, 2013, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1771.

⁷⁴ “The French Army: Details of its Organization,” *The New York Times*.

⁷⁵ Mitchell, *Bismarck and the French Nation*, 86.

suffrage, as well as making the president “ultimately responsible for the armed forces.”⁷⁶ Not only did the President maintain the sole decision to declare war, it was in essence a reflection of an undivided popular will. The situation was exacerbated when in March the military structure was reorganized under cadre-law. However, given the condition France was in, a war – in any fashion – would not have been beneficial for any party. This does not, however, indicate that peace had, yet, been achieved.

German officials, especially Bismarck, saw developments in France – interpreted through a fogged lens – as cause for concern. In January, France ordered 9000 horses from Eastern Europe, to arrive in mid-February via transport through Italy. Traditionally, if a state requested large quantities of steed it was seen as an act of war-preparation. However, given the fact that France was modernizing its army in the open such an event should have been glossed over. The horses were meant to support a recovering agricultural industry composed mainly of small farmers; one that had seen one-third of its arable land destroyed by the 1870-1 war.⁷⁷ As well, France had even requested a large quantity farm-horses from Germany several months earlier; 10 000 had even been ordered from Bohemia, to be fulfilled by June 1876.⁷⁸ Similarly, previously, in January Bismarck was alerted that France had ordered the printing of 600 million francs in 20-franc bills. Voicing worry, he believed that the loans were meant to fund military expansion and by association *la revanche*. However, as Allan Mitchell explained, rumours surrounding the funds were most associated with the competing banking houses: Rothschild and Pereire. In

⁷⁶ “The Constitution of 1875,” in *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940*, ed. William Fortescue (New York: Routledge, 2000): 28-30.

⁷⁷ Small farmers in France rely on numerous horses to run threshing machines, necessary for agricultural production of grains; “Our Paris Letter, October 30, 1875,” *Ohio Farmer*, December 4, 1875, accessed November 23, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/137239873/141EB7C22F22831685E/20>.

⁷⁸ “France: Purchase of Horses by the Government Agents,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 1875, accessed November 23, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/93479764/141EB7A3A856C27B16/101>.

attempts to solicit business via the granting of state loans in Western Europe they created panic.⁷⁹ French officials contended that Bismarck was reacting on false-information and that there was no desire for war in France.

Yet, Bismarck stirred German sentiments in an April 5 *Kölnische Zeitung* article, and three days later in the *Berlin Post* under the headline “Is War-in-Sight?” Both emphasized the Bismarckian notion that France was preparing for war against Germany; that *la revanche* was, indeed, ‘in-sight’.⁸⁰ The notion was held strongly by Joseph von Radowitz, Bismarck’s subaltern in Russia, who attempted to garner Austrian and Russian support for Germany if hostilities commenced. A.J.P. Taylor posits that on April 21, the French “had a stroke of luck,” when Radowitz openly defended the doctrine of preventative war, thus raising alarm in Russia and England.⁸¹ Prince Hohenlohe, the German ambassador to Paris, emphasized this on May 5 when he identified that “[t]he General Staff considered that war was their ultimate object ‘and looks forward to their consequences’.”⁸² However, Decazes had already been alerted of Russia’s support for France – after the former claimed to be the European arbiter of power – as well as England, which offered to support France as well as its services as an international mediator. Austria remained neutral, but the *London Times* and *New York Times* both reported that it had been drawn to Russia’s side on the matter; the *London Times* placing blame for the crisis solely on Germany. By May 10 Berlin had given its assurances of peace.⁸³

⁷⁹ Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 124-7.

⁸⁰ Allan Mitchell, in an apologist manner, argues that given the stress experienced by an ordinarily-cautious Bismarck, he is not entirely to blame; Orgill, “Between Coercion and Conciliation,” 53; Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 127.

⁸¹ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 226.

⁸² “The War Scare of 1875,” *The New York Times*, January 12, 1919, accessed November 12, 2013, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F20B15FB385910738DDDAB0994D9405B898DF1D3/>.

⁸³ Mitchell, *Bismarck and the French Nation*, 87; Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 224-7; “The War Scare of 1875,” *The New York Times*.

The 'War-in-Sight Crisis' renewed the balance-of-power in Europe. Neither Russia nor Britain wanted German or French supremacy, and reacted against it. As was shown, times had changed since the era of Napoleon I. European powers were no longer tolerant of the overwhelming supremacy of one single state. However, this seemed to only apply to those considered 'powers'. Bismarck was painted as the bully of Europe, at least in the early years of his chancellorship, who would risk preventative war in order to hold on to a recently achieved hegemony.⁸⁴ However, the broader implication was that with the reestablishing of the balance-of-power France was no longer completely isolated on the continent, and that it was granted near-free agency in the conduct of state matters. That is, if they did not threaten the sovereignty of any other state. If the crisis assured France that a preemptive German attack would not be tolerated, it also meant that *la revanche* could not be pursued.⁸⁵ The resumption of a status quo in Western Europe signified that peace had finally been achieved. France was now able to express self-determination in internal matters and embark on security arrangements without the risk of hostilities. It signified that above all else there was a growing sympathy for France in the international sphere and a distancing from German influence, allowing for self-determined growth. As a gesture of appeasement and rapprochement, in 1876 Decazes cancelled a new state loan for 800 million francs, and reduced the military budget by 35 million.⁸⁶

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "Human nature finds it harder to endure a victory than a defeat; indeed, it seems to be easier to achieve a victory than to endure it in such a way that it

⁸⁴ Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 130-1.

⁸⁵ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 226-7.

⁸⁶ It is possible to posit that this move was meant to hide or delay the motive for war, however I do not take this route, rather seeing it as in-fact a gesture of appeasement and rapprochement; Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870*, 129.

does not in fact turn into a defeat.”⁸⁷ The hegemony that Bismarck had achieved in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1 was, perhaps, exaggerated. Germany may have been able to completely dictate the course of European power politics, but not for long. The drastic altering of the status-quo that followed the war meant that not only was social stability not attainable in France, but that prospects of peaceful living could not be realized until some portion of pre-war normality resumed and allowed for a sense of security and prospects of growth. Surely this was the case in the First World War as well, when a realignment of Europe was experienced and one – albeit unified – power dictated the course of European politics at the expense of another. While circumstantially different, as fear through defeat was not inspired inside of the German state in 1919, the lesson remains: peace cannot be established after a war until self-determination is accomplished. ‘Peace’ in this regard is harder to arrive at than anticipated. It not only stipulates the absence of conflict, but also necessitates non-hostility. In post-Franco-Prussian War France, given that a state of national ubiquity had been established with the loss, hostility toward the nation from the outside equated to hostility against the people. There is no room for hegemonic coercion in peace after war, and this has been the tradition since.

⁸⁷ “Friedrich Nietzsche on Germany’s Victory over France and the ‘Cultural Philistine’: Untimely Meditations (1873-6),” *German Documents in History*.

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