



2010.II.01

Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, eds., *War Planning 1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010. Pp. ix + 269. ISBN 978-0-521-11096-9.

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The sheer scale and complexity of modern warfare put a premium on effective planning. In 1914, for instance, Europe's great powers mobilized massive forces on very short notice: Russia, 4.7 million men and 1.1 million horses, Austria 3.4 million men, and Germany 2.1 million men and 600,000 horses (86, 231-32). To move these forces into combat was a formidable task. A German-Italian agreement, signed in 1912, specified that 541 trains would move three Italian corps (80-100,000 men) to the Rhine to join German forces in the event of war (222). Of course, once in combat, these men also needed to be fed and rearmed and casualties to be carried away; the horses had to eat as well.¹ And how much coal was consumed by the locomotives required to move all those men and materials? All this falls under the purview of the science of logistics, a science intimately linked to the capacities of a modern industrial economy. Military planning staffs had to adapt modern logistical concerns to older traditions of soldiering. Needless to say, staff officers were not always popular. Sadly, the introduction of planners and plans did not improve the strategic choices of policy makers in the opening round of WWI. Though schedules proliferated, the choice of goals was too often unwise and unreasonable, largely because key parts of the system remained intractably disconnected. Failure was almost pre-ordained. Such are the conclusions reached in *War Planning 1914*.

The book collects six essays (one for each of the major belligerents at the beginning of the war) bracketed by interpretive essays by the editors. The whole stems from a conference at Ohio State University in 2005 and supplements the same editors' earlier volume, *The Origins of World War I*,² as well as *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1880-1914*, edited by Paul Kennedy.³ The authors focus on "grand strategy" (256), addressing how each nation's plan played out. They do not treat these plans as "mechanism[s] for automatic war" (227), Armageddon on autopilot; instead, they emphasize evolution and change, agency and contingency (23). The French, for instance, went to war under their Plan XVII, while Russia mobilized under Plan 19A; both were modified almost immediately by circumstances. At the last moment, Italy refused to implement any of its plans and sat out until 1915. The editors bluntly tell us that "all of the war plans of the major powers were severely flawed, some in astonishing ways" (5, 226).

Shared strategic circumstances and assumptions predetermined sad outcomes. Each nation lived in what Herwig calls a "nightmare world of threat perception" (235). Germany feared France and Russia; Austria feared Serbia, Italy, and Russia (and restive internal minorities). Italy viewed Austria with "enmity" and France with "distaste" (198). Britain was more preoccupied with India and the Suez than dangers nearer home. A generation of diplomats had not only failed to ease these threats—they had made matters worse. In addition, a common way of thinking about these dangers—Hamilton calls it "groupthink" among the coteries that ran Europe's governments in this era—existed even in the formally democratic governments (18, 23): that is, war was seen, à la Clausewitz, as an extension of political and diplomatic efforts; the relationships between nations were essentially Darwinian; any war would be massive, but short, and would be-

1. A hundred years on, matters have only become more complicated: see, e.g., Sam Dagher, "U.S. Meets Iraq Drawdown Ahead of Schedule," *Wall Street Journal* (25 Aug 2010) <www.miwsr.com/rd/1028.htm>, "the number of U.S. bases in Iraq now stands at 92, compared with more than 600 at the height of operations, according to the U.S. military. The reduction of forces has involved removing over 1.5 million pieces of equipment from Iraq between June 2009 and August 2010; transferring an additional 900,000 pieces, valued at about \$151 million, to Iraqi forces; destroying more than 32 million pounds of waste; and recycling more than 150 million pounds of material"

2. Cambridge: CUP, 2003.

3. London/Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1979.

gin with large-scale offensives (229–30). This last point was not just a German or a French concept; the Austrian General Staff had, in Gunther Kronenbitter’s phrase, an “unwavering bias toward the offensive” (39).

In addition to common responses to complex threats, the European governments were, curiously, strikingly compartmentalized when it came to issues of security. According to the authors, those governments were grossly, even criminally, inefficient and lacking internal coordination. Governing elites, beginning with Wilhelm in Germany, were arrogant and often ignorant. An obsession with “secrecy” prevented the sharing of information internally. Soldiers sneered at diplomats and politicians. Armies and navies refused to discuss their plans. Italy’s government “neither required nor encouraged cooperation” between civilians and the military; the army was not informed of treaty provisions with Italy’s ally, Germany (218, 236). Military policy in Germany was drafted in a vacuum, according to Annika Mombauer (48); Herwig points out that the General Staff did not share plans with the civilian government (253). In Russia, mobilization revealed “anomalies and dysfunctions” (81). In the absence of alternative views and rational mechanisms of governance, significant gaps appeared in planning. Thus, for instance, “none of the major powers ... went to war with clearly defined national programs of war aims or war termination” (253). No nation anticipated the financial costs of war or the consequences of withdrawing millions of men from the work force. Bankers and businessmen were *personae non gratae* among the policy-making elite. Little was done to arouse the public’s initial enthusiasm or help prepare it for the sacrifices ahead. Politicians, too, were disliked. In short, no nation was ready for “the hard reality of modern war” (245).⁴

French planning was “the most problematic of the six ... discussed,” as Hamilton puts it (6).⁵ After losing Alsace and Lorraine to Germany in 1871 after the Franco-Prussian War, the French military considered Germany its only serious opponent. The French burned to recapture the lost provinces—and feared further German ambitions. Forty years of strategizing led to Plan XVII, a scheme that, in case of war, stipulated French incursions into Alsace and Lorraine as well as attacks in the rear of German forces that were expected to invade Belgium. Military doctrine prescribed a short war to be won by the aggressive, mobile French infantry wielding the bayonet as their weapon of choice and supported by light artillery units. The fully mobilized army numbered 2.7 million men, who would be moved into position by 4278 trains (87, 232). Russian support was expected—and English troops hoped for. Yet the public remained ambivalent, unwilling to attack first or to prompt war. Political leaders remained in the dark about the Army’s plans, since the Commander-in-Chief, Joseph Joffre, feared the “meddling of the government in military operations” (238). French plans gave minimal thought to finance and “no attention to defending France’s natural resources” (159). France experienced significant reverses in the face of Germany’s invasion. Its soldiers were unprepared for modern war and the whole nation paid the price of “failures in strategy, weapons acquisition, and doctrine” (143). Robert Doughty concludes that “rarely in history has concerted, dedicated planning produced such inadequate results” (174). Fortunately, the technical services worked: the rail system allowed redeployment of the forces that defeated Germany at the Marne and gave France the chance to improvise a new strategy.

War Planning 1914 is a very worthwhile book. The individual essays, which vary somewhat in form, are well-documented. I, for one, would like to know more about how individual states organized their mobilizations and the mindset of the leadership cadres. One also wonders if any nation learned from the planning failures early in the war. Did, for instance, the United States enter the conflict with an effective war plan?⁶ Has any nation devised more successful plans since World War I? In World War II, certainly neither Ger-

4. Miranda Carter, *George, Nicholas, and Wilhelm: Three Royal Cousins and the Road to World War I* (NY: Knopf, 2010), reaches similar conclusions: looking at England, German, and Russia, she sees immaturity, weakness, corruption among the men and, consequently, governments that were “creaking mechanisms” (375, 386, 389). The outbreak of war made emperors “almost completely irrelevant” (380)—and no one remained to manage those governments in wartime.

5. Many readers will already know some of this story from Barbara Tuchman’s *The Guns of August* (NY: Macmillan, 1962).

6. Russell Weigley suggests not in his *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (NY: Macmillan, 1973).

many nor Russia, possibly the United States.⁷ As for the period after 1945, no one can read this book without thinking of U.S. planning failures in Korea, Vietnam, and, more recently, Iraq and Afghanistan. So much history—so little learned and so many bad strategies! Why can't government departments, say State and Defense in the United States, cooperate? As in 1914, twenty-first-century America can move mountains logistically, but still struggles to conceive viable strategies. Sadly, lives and treasure are wasted because modern and pre-modern attitudes still do not mesh. Looking forward, will Oplan 5030, meant to guide our response to a future North Korean invasion of South Korea,⁸ succeed like Plan Orange or fail like France's plan XVII? Let us hope we never have to find out.

7. Edward Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Inst Pr, 1991), discusses (and praises) the long-germinating and effective American plans for a war against Japan.

8. See Bruce B. Auster and Kevin Whitelaw, "Upping the Ante for Kim Jong Il: Pentagon Plan 5030, a New Blueprint for Facing Down North Korea," *U.S. News & World Report* (21 Jul 2003) <www.miwsr.com/rd/1029.htm>.