1890 and Bürgerstolz und Weltmachtstreben. Deutschland unter Wilhelm II. 1890 bis 1918 (Berlin, 1993–95). Mommsen’s collection of essays, Imperial Germany 1867–1918: Politics, Culture and Society in an Authoritarian State, trans. Richard Deveson (London, 1995) was first published in German in 1990; it is rich with insight but was not intended to serve as a general introduction to the period. Whereas many of Mommsen’s essays bring domestic and foreign policy together, the latter is covered in Klaus Hildebrand, Deutsche Außenpolitik 1871–1918, 2nd edn (Munich, 1994).

David Blackbourn’s History of Germany 1780–1918: The Long Nineteenth Century (London, 1997, 2nd edn 2003) combines thematic and chronological approaches (roughly half the book is devoted to the German Empire); it is elegantly written, balanced, and up to date.

Students are well served by historiographical and interpretative surveys of the field. An outstanding guide has just been published by Matthew Jefferies, Contesting the German Empire, 1871–1918 (Oxford, 2007). Still useful is Roger Chickering (ed.), Imperial Germany: A Historiographical Companion (Westport, CT, and London, 1996). See also the essays in Part 2 of John Breuilly (ed.), Nineteenth-Century Germany: Politics, Culture and Society 1780–1918 (London, 2001). Two German books published in different series complement each other, combining brief narrative overviews with longer historiographical surveys: on the empire’s political system see Hans-Peter Ullmann, Politik im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871–1918 (Munich, 1999), which appeared as vol. 52 of the Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte; more eclectic and thought-provoking is Ewald Frie, Das Deutsche Kaiserreich (Darmstadt, 2004), one of the Kontroversen um die Geschichte titles.

An important Festschrift for Hans-Ulrich Wehler will include essays that take stock of research on Imperial Germany since the 1970s: Sven Oliver Müller and Cornelius Torp (eds), Das Deutsche Kaiserreich in der Kontroverse. Probleme und Perspektiven (forthcoming, 2008).

English readers seeking primary source materials in translation have long had to rely on slim collections such as Ian Porter and Ian D. Armour, Imperial Germany 1890–1918 (London and New York, 1991), which often combine narrative overviews and a selection of documents, mainly on diplomacy and high politics. A much broader and more accessible collection is now available on the website of the German Historical Institute, Washington, DC. For volumes 4 and 5 of a ten-volume project entitled German History in Documents and Images (covering 1500 to the present), see James Retallack (ed.), Forging an Empire: Bismarckian Germany (1866–1890) and Roger Chickering (ed.), Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War (1890–1918): the common gateway to these volumes is http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/.

Chapter 1, Bismarckian Germany

In the surveys listed above, the Bismarckian period has often received less attention than the Wilhelmine period. Bismarck remains the defining personality of the pre–1890 era and he has been well served by recent biographies. The most comprehensive is the three-volume life and vol.

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Further Reading

Biography (Oxford, 1981), offers a welcome alternative perspective to that of Bismarck’s biographers.


Chapter 2, Wilhelmine Germany

Start studying Bismarckian Germany. Learn vocabulary, terms and more with flashcards, games and other study tools. 4 political parties Bismarckian Germany. National Liberals, Socialists, Central Party, Conservatives. motivations behind Liberal electoral alliance.