

Institution: University of Cambridge
Unit of Assessment: UoA30
Title of case study: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Prof Christopher Clark's book <i>Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947</i> has had a broad impact both on academic debate and on public discussion. It served as the foundation for an hour-long documentary which aired on BBC4 and was awarded numerous prizes, including the Wolfson Prize. It was widely discussed in the German media. The author was invited to Bellevue Palace, Berlin to brief the then President of the German Federal Republic, Horst Köhler, on the issues raised by it. There were numerous podium discussions, public lectures and radio and newspaper interviews. <i>Der Spiegel</i> ran a four-page interview with the author and the book was credited with shifting the public mood in Germany on what had traditionally been a controversial subject matter.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research, presented in <i>Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947</i> [ref 3A], was conducted by Professor Christopher Clark between 1999 and 2006. During this time Professor Clark was a University Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, and then Reader in Modern European History at the University of Cambridge. Clark consulted archives in Berlin and London, and read widely across the secondary literature and the corpus of printed primary sources.</p> <p>The book offered a major re-interpretation of its subject matter. As one reviewer (William Hagen, author of several standard works in the field) put it in the journal <i>Central European History</i> in 2008: 'Clark's Herculean reading endows him with an historiographical command unmatched east or west of the Rhine and enables him to offer a synthesis of Prussian history that, in substantive breadth and interpretative freshness, towers above all others. . . There emerges from Clark's work a mapping or modelling of Prussian history such as no overarching work has offered before now.'</p> <p>The fresh findings generated by the underpinning research can be summed up as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) A new emphasis on the role of religion as a constitutive factor in state-building processes, the emergence of a distinctively Prussian political culture and the formation of horizontal collective identities across the population. (ii) A departure from the old 'compromise' theory, by which it was argued that state and nobility allied in the state-building project at the expense of the peasantry and the townsfolk. By contrast, <i>Iron Kingdom</i> argued that an increasingly bureaucratic state 'cohabited' with old-agrarian-aristocratic and guild-bound urban authorities, 'disciplining' them to advance its military fiscal interests, but otherwise leaving them intact. The state was in any case far too weak to counter the economic forces that had begun to transform Prussian society long before the upheavals that followed the French revolution. (iii) A new interpretation of Prussian political culture after Napoleon: rather than separating liberal sheep from reactionary goats – a time-honoured practice in the Prussia literature – <i>Iron Kingdom</i> focused on Hegelian liberalism, Christian statism, anti-statist religious revivalism and dissent and proletarian mobilisation, drawing out their interactions and synergies and showing how they became the crucible in which the ideological politics of modernity caught fire. (iv) <i>Iron Kingdom</i> was the first general history of Prussia to integrate the history of the Prussian minorities – Jews, Poles, Masurians, Philipponen etc. – and to incorporate into the spinal narrative the problem of Prussia's constantly changing boundaries, which

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- imposed on each new generation the task of integrating 'new Prussians' into the fabric of state, economy and society.
- (v) The book placed at the centre of the narrative the process by which the Prussian state acquired a sense of its own historicity – beginning with Pufendorf and Frederick the Great and moving the story forward via Hegel and Marx to Fontane. In doing so it offered novel insights into the self-reflexive character of the state's political evolution.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- A. Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom. The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600-1947* (777 pp., Allen Lane: London, 2006).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The book was favourably received by the daily and weekly press in Britain and the USA. It served as the foundation in 2011 for a 55-minute documentary programme entitled 'Frederick the Great and the Enigma of Prussia', presented by the author, directed by Chris Wilson and produced by Adam Kemp for Aenon and Fresh One Productions [ref 5A], last aired on BBC4 on Saturday 22 October 2011. The book was also translated into French, Czech and Polish.

But it is in Germany (*Preussen. Aufstieg und Niedergang, 1600-1947*, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt: Munich, 2007) that its impact was broadest and deepest. Sales exceeded 100,000 (the book was no. 1 on the *Spiegel* non-fiction bestseller list for several weeks and remained on the list for several months). There were numerous full-page reviews in the daily and weekly press and many radio interviews (Bayerischer Rundfunk, Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, Hessischer Rundfunk). *Der Spiegel* ran a four-page author-interview and there were hundreds of reviews in the metropolitan, provincial and regional papers. The author was invited to the Palace of Bellevue, residence of the President of the Federal Republic in Berlin, for an interview with the then Federal President Horst Köhler, in which the author was asked to brief the President on the issues raised by the book. In a speech he gave a week later, President Köhler cited remarks made in the interview on the renewed public interest in the history of Prussia, as exemplified by Clark's book.

This immediate reception occurred after German hardcover and paperback publication in 2007-8, but the book has continued to receive intensive publicity and discussion in Germany throughout the period currently under review: for example, an interview with *DeutschlandRadio Wissen* (5 Nov. 2010), an invited contribution to *Tagesspiegel* (15 Jun. 2011), and a tribute in a speech by Minister of Culture Bernd Neumann (20 Mar. 2012). Subsidiary rights were procured by the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, so that a special edition could be produced for subsidised distribution to 'mediators in political education and interested parties in tertiary education and at schools' [5J]. The author was interviewed on the subject of Prussia for one hour on the bi-weekly programme 'Klassik à la Carte' (Norddeutscher Rundfunk – est. audience 850,000) on 23 January 2012, and contributed interview material to the RBB Docudrama 'Friedrich: Ein deutscher König' starring Anna and Katharina Thalbach, and broadcast on 7 Jan 2012. The author also contributed interview material relating to Prussia for the Gebrüder Beetz docudrama 'Die Akte Kleist', broadcast by ARTE on 24 March 2011 [5B] and for the Credo Film docudrama 'Rahel – eine preußische Affäre' [5C], broadcast by ARTE on 5 December 2009.

On 27 November 2011, *Die Zeit* printed a debate on Frederick II between the author and the Polish journalist Adam Krzeminski [5D] and on 7 December 2011, *Stern-Magazin* published an interview with the author [5E].

On 6 November 2010, the author became the first person from outside German-speaking Europe to receive the triannual 'Deutscher Historikerpreis' awarded by the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. The prize was presented by Federal President Christian Wulf (Köhler's successor) who spoke of the book's importance in transforming public perceptions of Prussia and inaugurating a different way of conceptualising the relationship between present and past in

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Germany. The event received wide media coverage [5F, 5G].

On 23 January 2012, the author was asked to deliver the keynote address on the occasion of the official anniversary marking the 300th birthday of Frederick II in the Konzerthaus in central Berlin. The other speakers were Federal President Wulff, the Lord Mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, the Minister-President of Brandenburg, Matthias Platzeck and the Prince of Prussia. The event was broadcast live by Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg and the author's address was reprinted in *Berliner Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and reviewed in over one hundred newspapers [5H].

In short: the impact of this book has been felt far beyond the usual academic milieux. It is seen as having helped to transform contemporary German engagements with the country's past. In 2008, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* cited the book prominently in a 4-page comment piece entitled 'Prussia is Sexy Again', and in a book-length conversation with the former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, published this year, the American emigré German-Jewish historian Fritz Stern spoke of the 'Prussian renaissance' (Preußen-Renaissance) triggered by the book [5I].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- A. <http://www.freshone.tv/programmes/program/16/Frederick%20the%20Great%20&%20the%20Enigma%20of%20Prussia>
- B. <http://www.gebrueder-beetz.de/produktionen/die-akte-kleist>
- C. <http://www.credofilm.de/english/filme/rahel.html>
- D. <http://www.zeit.de/2011/48/Interview-Friedrich>
- E. <http://www.stern.de/magazin/emagazine/stern-nr-502011-der-alte-fritz-und-die-nazis-1760049.html>
- F. <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/wulff-ehrt-friedrich-den-grossen-das-streben-nach-ehre-11622654.html>
<http://www.bild.de/regional/muenchen/muenchen-regional/wulff-verleiht-historikerpreis-an-australier-14554284.bild.html>
<http://www.augsburger-allgemeine.de/kultur/Wulff-verleiht-Historikerpreis-an-Australier-Clark-id7731826.html>
- G. http://www.historischeskolleg.de/fileadmin/pdf/dokumentationen_historikerpreis_pdf
- H. Full text of the address at http://www.perspectivia.net/content/publikationen/friedrich300-studien/clark_friedrich; full publicity file available from DVA Munich.
- I. *Gegen den Strom. Ein Gespräch über Geschichte und Politik*, by Fischer, Joschka and Stern, Fritz [C.H. Beck, 2013]
- J. <http://www.bpb.de/shop/buecher/schriftenreihe/>