FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Myths of World War I

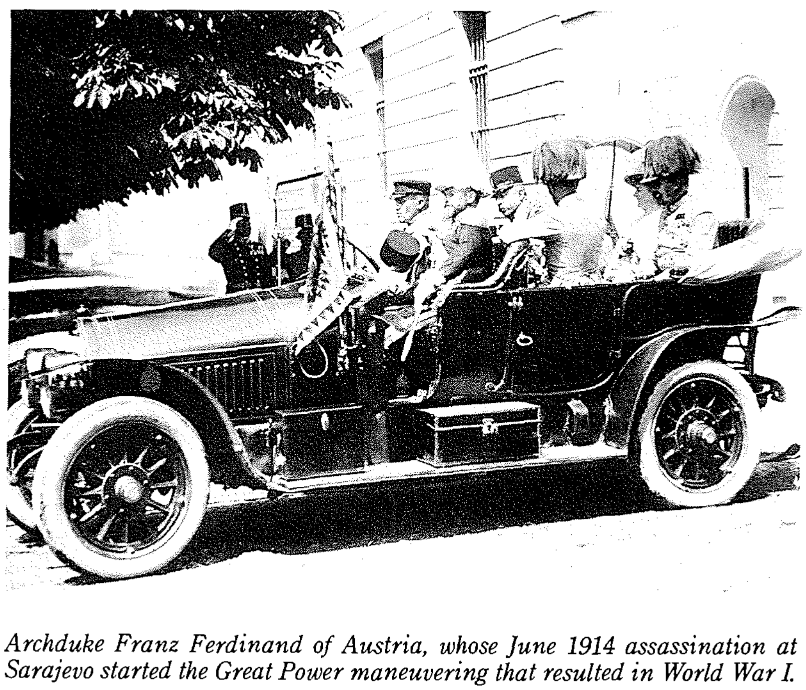
"The Sarajevo Fallacy: The Historical and Intellectual Origins of Arms Control Theology" by Patrick Glynn, in *The National Interest* (Fall 1987), 1627 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

The present Western preoccupation with arms control, argues Glynn, assistant to the director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, rests on two faulty assumptions: that arms races cause wars and that wars happen "accidentally."

Glynn believes these false lessons derive from the same source: World War I revisionist historians. "The real dividing line in modern reflection on the causes of war," he writes, "is not 1945 but 1919."

British historians of the 1920s regularly assumed that World War I resulted from an out-of-control arms race between Britain, France, and Russia (the Triple Entente) on the one hand and Germany on the other. "The moral is obvious," Sir Edward Grey, Britain's foreign secretary in 1914, wrote in his memoirs. "Great armaments lead inevitably to war . . . Each measure taken by one nation is noted, and leads to counter-measures by others."

But Germany's arms buildup was much greater than other European powers. German military spending increased 10-fold between 1870 and 1914, while comparable British spending tripled and French spending doubled during the same period. German arms spending was not due merely



Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, whose June 1914 assassination at Sarajevo started the Great Power maneuvering that resulted in World War I.

to "a simple sense of insecurity" about other nations' strength, but to the Germans' desire to tip the balance of power in Europe in their favor. Germany was "consistently the initiator" of military buildups; for example, conscription in France occurred only after Germany's Parliament passed a massive arms bill in March 1913.

World War I, Glynn contends, was not started by accident. The officers of the German General Staff were fully aware "that they were risking general war" when they urged Austria to invade Serbia. Because many of the clauses in the Triple Entente treaty were secret, German leaders thought that Britain's support for France and Russia was ambivalent, making "diplomatic and military victories all the more plausible" in the event that Britain abandoned her allies at the outbreak of a major war.

The true lesson to be drawn from the origins of World War I, Glynn concludes, is that the best way to stop an aggressive power from starting war would be to ensure "that deterrence and defensive alliances remained unambiguously strong."

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Economist's Choice

"James Buchanan & Co." by David R. Henderson, in *Reason* (Nov. 1987), 2716 Ocean Park Blvd., Ste. 1062, Santa Monica, Calif. 90405.

The award of the Nobel Prize to economist James Buchanan in 1986 was quite controversial. Critics argued that Buchanan, leader of the "public choice" school of economics, failed to display the pathfinding insight worthy of a Nobel laureate.

Henderson, a regular contributor to *Fortune*, argues that "public choice" is an important economic movement. Because of Buchanan and his followers, "ideas about government that were once considered revolutionary are now common wisdom."

"Public choice" theory offers economic analyses based on the premise that politicians, voters, and bureaucrats act to advance their self-interest rather than the public interest. The movement began in 1957, when Anthony Downs (now at Brookings) published *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Downs argued that federal programs are politically viable only if the cost of the program can be spread over large numbers of taxpayers. Consider the U.S. government program that pays dairy farmers not to produce milk. This program survives because the benefits paid to the 100,000 farmers who gain from the program cost millions of taxpayers and milk drinkers less than $50 per year each—a relatively small sum.

Buchanan, along with longtime collaborator Gordon Tullock, extended Downs's theories into a discussion of the nature of governance. Their most important book, *The Calculus of Consent* (1962), provided an economic analysis of the size and structure of political majorities. The authors also attracted the attention of such talented graduate students as James Miller III, currently director of the Office of Management and Budget.

These students, along with other followers, used public-choice tech-