Historical research on the German army of the interwar period has concentrated on the development of the so-called ‘Blitzkrieg’. However, Matthias Strohn shows that until just a few years before the outbreak of the Second World War the German army, restricted by the terms of the Versailles Treaty, was too weak to launch an offensive war or even effectively repel an invader. Accordingly, the army focused instead primarily on planning a defensive war against superior enemies, especially France and Poland. Making extensive use of German archival sources, Strohn explores the development of military thought and doctrine for the defence of Germany and shows how these ideas were tested in war games and staff rides. His findings comprehensively revise our understanding of the German army in this period, shedding new light on the ideas of leading figures in the German military and how events, such as the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, influenced military planning.

Matthias Strohn teaches military history to army officer cadets and officers at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. He currently holds the rank of Captain in the German armed forces (Bundeswehr) reserve and is attached to the German staff college where he lectures on military history to international staff and German general staff officers.
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The German Army and the Defence of the Reich

Military Doctrine and the Conduct of the Defensive Battle 1918–1939

Matthias Strohn
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This book would probably never have been written if I had not had the support and help of numerous people. First of all, I would like to thank my Doktorvater from Oxford University, Prof. Hew Strachan. He was a Doktorvater in the best sense of the word; never pushy, but always available when I needed his support for my D.Phil. thesis on which this book is based. I shall never forget our very last meeting before I submitted the thesis. It started on a Friday afternoon and it was not before the early hours of the next day that I finally left his office at All Souls College. We went through the thesis page by page; by the end, I was fully exhausted, but also glad to know that my arguments were sound and that I had just experienced a prime example of Hew’s devotion to his students. His support did not stop there, and he continued to offer assistance when I turned the thesis into this book.

Secondly, I would like to thank Dr Jürgen Förster of Freiburg University. He helped me right from the start of my time as a D.Phil. student to the final draft of this book. His in-depth knowledge of the German sources proved invaluable, and the long discussions I had with him in the Militärarchiv in Freiburg helped me to see many things more clearly.

Of course, there are many more people who deserve to be thanked: Prof. Dr Rolf-Dieter Müller from the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, with whom I had many discussions in his office in Potsdam, and whose seminar on total war woke my interest in the German army in the interwar period; Prof. Jonathan Wright of Oxford University, who had to read my D.Phil. thesis under the Christmas tree; and Prof. Dr Bernd Wegner and Prof. Dr Manfred Görtemaker, with both of whom I had lengthy discussions. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the War Studies Department at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. It is one of the very few places in the world where you meet a colleague in the corridor and can quite easily commence a lengthy discussion on virtually any question on military history. This happened frequently and the ideas and arguments brought forward by my colleagues were of great assistance.
to me. In particular I would like to thank Dr Peter Lieb, especially for the fruitful discussions on military terms and definitions.

Naturally, a book like this one cannot be written without the assistance of libraries, archives and their staffs. I would therefore like to thank the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the library of the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, Potsdam; the British Library, London; the library of the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham; and the library of the Westphälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster. I would also like to say a special thank you to Andrew Orgill and his team of the library at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Not only were they willing to order the most obscure books via the inter-library loan system, but they also purchased several books that could not be obtained from other libraries.

Most of the primary sources used in this book I found in the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg. Frau Waibel and her team offered great assistance to me in the months I spent at the archives. I would also like to thank the other branches of the Bundesarchiv I visited, namely in Berlin and Koblenz. I also have to thank the Staatsarchiv in Dresden and Stuttgart and the National Archives in Kew.

Finally, it is time to express my gratitude to people who are dear to me. First of all, I would like to thank my family for their support and assistance over the years. This included moral and financial support without which it would have been virtually impossible to write this book. I would like to say a very special thank you to the Bremkamp family. Katja had to share my attention with dusty pamphlets and long-dead German generals far too long. Monika and Klaus believed in my research and offered far-reaching support in some hard times. Unfortunately, Klaus did not live to see the outcome of this assistance. This book is dedicated to his memory.
Map 1 Germany and its territorial losses after the First World War.
Map 2 The German army and its administrative structure: The Gruppenkommandos and Wehrkreise.