

Title – Learning from Their Mistakes: From Schlieffen to Manstein in Approaching France

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Abstract: This paper examines the similarities and differences between the Schlieffen Plan of 1906 and the Manstein Plan of 1940. These two plans for invading France were followed with varying degrees of faithfulness by Germany in World War I and II respectively. Alfred von Schlieffen enjoyed a long and successful military career in the young German state that emerged from the long Prussian, military tradition. He penned many theoretical writings that were influential in the years leading up to the Great War of 1914. Schlieffen died in 1913, and therefore did not lead the German army in its invasion of France the following year. His plan was attempted by Helmuth von Moltke in the invasion, despite some historians' arguments that it had little bearing on the decision-making process that went into the invasion. Germany failed in subduing France as Schlieffen had called for, and eventually lost the war. During the interwar period however, German military thinkers innovated their tactics to successfully accommodate the principles that Schlieffen employed in his plan. With the ascension of Adolf Hitler and the opening of hostilities in Europe, Germany looked to invade France once again. In that conflict, Eric von Manstein was the strategist that developed the final plan for invasion. While Manstein believed he was radically departing from the outdated Schlieffen Plan, this paper show that his plan was actually a modern continuation of Schlieffen's strategic imperatives. Beyond their

plans for invasion, the paper will compare and contrast the two men as individuals. Their backgrounds were different in many ways, but they were both engrossed in a rich tradition that manifested itself in their strategic writings.