To what extent was the course of Germany 1900-1914 dictated by the personality of the Kaiser?

<table>
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<th>The Kaiser was contemptuous of the Reichstag</th>
<th>The Kaiser’s constitutional role allowed him to dictate on the military</th>
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| - He looked to control it through his chancellors, Caprivi, Hohenlohe, Bulow, Bethmann-Hollweg.  
- Hated the Socialists, but could not do much about them, e.g.: Caprivi refused to re-instate the legislation against them in 1894.  
- Changed Chancellors when he liked: argued he could not have his personal rule if they did not please him.  
- Could not bypass Reichstag, but still interfered in high politics whenever he could.  
- Often spoke of a staatsstreich to overthrow Reichstag. After Caprivi talked him out of it and the Chancellor resigned (1894), the Kaiser’s government was increasingly full of men who supported his policies and views. |
| - Under Wilhelm II the influence of the military grew. (Zabern, Military legislation)  
- “A state within a state” (Bismarck) Kaiser himself was a very military man, and spent most of his time if possible in military company.  
- Voltaire once remarked “Prussia is not a state with an army, it’s an army with a state.”  
- The army answered to Kaiser alone, and since they had his sympathy, they got away with a lot.  
- Caprivi’s concessions over the Army Bill angered the military, and the bill’s rejection led to dissolution of Reichstag.  
- Once Bismarck resigned, none of the Chancellors had the charisma to stand up to military generals.  
- Combination of military zeal and aggressive foreign policy was always a major flaw in Wilhelm. |

C/A:
- The talk of staatsstreich amounted to nothing, because Wilhelm did not want civil war.  

The Kaiser was a moderniser and reformer until it suited him not to be
- In this respect he affected the course of German history (E.g. unemployment insurance, arbitration courts, limitations on child working in the Caprivi years)  
- Hated socialists and ignored them as much as possible  
- Often misjudged situations, and his views were often distorted by personal prejudices, such as the socialist reforms to stop rise in Socialism.  
- the Kaiser and the élite wanted to embrace modernity and industrialisation without making concessions that would compromise the deeply authoritarian and backward nature of Germany prior to WW1.  

C/A:
- Caprivi’s ‘socialist’ reforms were arguably solely to curb the rise of socialism.
The status quo was maintained by changing blocs or political alliances in the Reichstag.
- Bismarck had been very successful in keeping the Reichstag under control, but his successors found it increasingly difficult. To get a majority every time, blocs were formed, such as the Bulow Bloc (1907) and Blue-Black Bloc (1900-5), which were forged by the chancellor who wanted to control the Reichstag.
- Permitted tactical voting for the parties. Eg: SPD voted for the 1913 Army Bill to hold off the inheritance tax.
- Also made it easier to pass legislation. To SPD's fury, the 1902 Tariff Law was successful due to the Blue/Black/NatLib coalition that made it possible.
- Meant compromise was possible: to compensate for 1902's Tariff Law, Bulow revived Caprivi's 'New Course' reforms.

C/A:
- In imperial Germany blocs/coalitions often did not last long, because they were politically too divided to agree on what they desired to pass. Made it very hard for the Chancellor to maintain them. The Bulow Bloc only lasted a few months, because the National Liberals, Conservatives and Catholics could not agree often enough.
- Meant significant shifts in power that happened too often and ideal stability.
- The constant budget deficit undermined Bulow and B-H's governments, and further exacerbated process of passing legislation.
manner of problems. However, his approach was not applauded by all; critics were of the Right and of the Left, though more so of the former than the latter. He was seen to be a traitor to party, class and nationalism. His policy of Fulfilment was intended to return Germany to world status yet his countrymen did not see it that way.
Morally, the case of the Holocaust was similar to the ones of war crimes. The context of war brutalised and desensitized many, and for Germans especially they would help to ‘win the war’.

Arguably, the only reason Hitler did not order the systematic killing of Jews sooner was to uphold international opinion prior to war, and to keep the USA out of the conflict from 1939 onwards.

Intentionalists argue that Hitler had clear aims and means since Mein Kampf. There were economic/financial reasons to the Holocaust: the Jews were costing the occupying Germans a lot in food (and ammunition). Was the same excuse used for the euthanasia of the disabled Germans (they were a ‘burden’).

“Far from denying responsibility for the Holocaust, he would have accepted it fully.” (Alan Farmer)

Intentionalist historians: Davidowicz; Bracher; Bullock; Fleming; Hillgruber.

Hitler was an opportunist. He went where the wind blew him, threw casual remarks about and was never clear if he desired or expected his lieutenants to act on them. This trait encouraged ‘working towards the Fuhrer’ and made the Nazi state a polycratic chaos.

Leading Nazis all competed in currying Hitler’s favour, and in doing so offered up solutions from a limited scope of options that were more radical every time, leading to extreme solutions such as the Holocaust (probably initiated by Himmler or Goring).

Mommsen and Bozrat argue that the Nazi state controlled Hitler more than he controlled it, and that his reactions were knee-jerk reflexes in response to specific situations.

Considering Hitler’s entire work ethic, laziness, indecisiveness and Social Darwinist approach to any issue, it seems unlikely that he cherished a Master-plan for genocide as early as 1939, or even 1924 when he wrote Mein Kampf.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Himmler was ‘the real architect of the genocide’. Other leading Nazis were primarily responsible for the Holocaust. They had extensive influence over Hitler, and none were so vocally anti-Semitic and pushy as Heydrich, Goebbels, Goring, Himmler and Streicher.

Structuralist historians: Bozrat; Mommsen; Adam.

Thoughts on genocide, Himmler would be aware of them.

Ideas for planning:

1- Gradual anti-Semitism in 1930s
2- Working Towards the Fuhrer
3- War emergency led to hasty decisions, even if they had a façade of organisation.
4- Hitler’s personality and attitude as the Fuhrer

1- Planned: racism was the core of Hitler’s ideology and the Holocaust was what he and his leaders aimed for
2- Planned: the only reason it was gradual was because international opinion still mattered by 1939, and to keep US out of war in 1941.
3- Evolving: It’s true Hitler was still testing the waters in 1930s, but perhaps more because different leading Nazis were offering different solutions to various issues. There was no direct line towards the Holocaust.
4- Evolving: War emergencies led to Final Solution. Originally, FS had been emigration, and only the invasion of Russia and Poland changed that.