

How far were domestic policies in Germany controlled by the Chancellors in the years 1894-1914?
(24 marks)

During this period of German history, the Kaiser had ultimate political authority and had the powers of patronage. Despite this they were not always able to completely achieve the domestic policies that he aspired to impose because of the roles of the chancellors and the Reichstag.

After the fall of Caprivi in 1894, Wilhelm II appointed Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingwurst: a 75 year old Bavarian aristocrat as chancellor. This was an important step in achieving his ambitions of 'personal rule' in which he wanted to have a more significant role in politics than his predecessors had. Many historians believe that Hohenlohe was specifically chosen by the Kaiser because he posed little political threat to Wilhelm II and would always aim to receive the support of the Kaiser when implementing domestic policies. From 1897, the close advisers of the Kaiser put increasing pressure on him to appoint his own ministers which undermined the role of the Chancellor. As a result, it would be much easier for the Kaiser to push through his own political agenda. Sammlungspolitik was introduced by Wilhelm in order to unite the political and economic elite against the growing threats from socialists, and to gather support for a greater emphasis on Germany's foreign policy. Although Hohenlohe remained the German Chancellor, the Kaiser worked ever closer with his preferred chosen ministers and began to work towards a policy of Weltpolitik: world power and colonial expansion without discussions with Hohenlohe. Overall, it appears evident that Wilhelm II wanted to control domestic policies (as well as foreign policy) and therefore chose Hohenlohe because he was politically weak and only wanted the approval of the Kaiser. This means that Hohenlohe had very little control over Germany's domestic policies. By 1900, Hohenlohe felt it increasingly difficult to work alongside Wilhelm II and stood down as Germany's chancellor, claiming that his role was impossible due to the Kaisers increasing interference in politics.

Whilst Hohenlohe was chancellor, Wilhelm and his close advisers such as Eulenburg had already chosen Bernhard von Bulow as his replacement with the Kaiser often referring to Bulow as his 'Bismarck'. Bulow was a strong conservative who had absolute loyalty to the Kaiser. The anti-socialist focus of Sammlungspolitik was replaced by Bulow and replaced with a much greater emphasis on using patriotism and nationalistic feeling to counter the threats posed by socialists. This helped to fuel the Kaisers ambitions with Weltpolitik and Naval expansion. Despite a close relationship between the two leaders, Bulow led the tariff reforms which involved undoing the work of Caprivi. By removing the tariffs imposed by Caprivi, Bulow ensured a greater revenue for the German government which aimed to provide the necessary additional funding needed for naval expansion. This had done little to appease the socialists who criticised Bulow for causing a rise in food prices. As a result the chancellor implemented a series of social reforms with the aims of gaining the support of the workers. These included the 1901 compulsory arbitration courts for towns with a greater population than 20,000 and the 1903 health insurance extension to control child labour. Other domestic policies such as making German the only language spoken in Prussian schools showed how his personal political ideology (conservative nationalism) influenced the policies implemented by him. Therefore, Bulow demonstrated much greater control over domestic policy during his chancellorship in comparison to Hohenlohe. A shared ideology between Kaiser Wilhelm II and Bulow resulted in a much smoother running of domestic policy and means that the proposals made by the chancellor would face little opposition from the Kaiser. The Reichstag also created difficulties for Bulow to implement domestic policies. His ability to control the Reichstag was judged worse than that of Hohenlohe as Bulow gradually lost the support of the parties who had initially supported him. This was demonstrated after the attempts to introduce policies that would increase property and inheritance taxes in order to appease the socialists and the Liberals were blocked. The coalition known as the 'Bulow bloc' had