

German Unification

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The Unification of Germany, 1866–1871

- Prussia before 1866
- Conquered by Prussia in Austro-Prussian War, 1866
- Austrian territories excluded from North German Confederation, 1867
- Joined with Prussia to form North German Confederation, 1867
- South German states joining with Prussia to form German Empire, 1871
- Won by Prussia in Franco-Prussian War, 1871
- ✕ Major battles
- German Confederation boundary, 1815–1866
- Bismarck's German Empire, 1871

Background Information

- The German unification, the most important political development in Europe at the time, created the new determined character of the German state.
- Germany was united by the conservative army, monarchy and prime minister of Prussia, and although liberal, achieved many non-liberal acts.
- The German-speaking land's political structure was the German Confederation, which was established at the Congress of Vienna as a loose confederation of 39 states with Austria and Prussia as the strong states.
- The major states continued to trade with each other through the *Zollverein*, a tariff union, and railways linked their economies.
- Frederick William IV of Prussia gave up thoughts of German unification under Prussian.



Frederick William IV of Prussia

Background continued

- In 1858, Fredrick William IV was declared insane and the throne was passed to his brother William, known as William I.
- William I became king in 1861 and was less idealistic than his brother and more of a Prussian patriot.
- The Constitution of 1850 created the Prussian Parliament, which refused to approve the necessary taxes.
- The liberals, who dominated the body, sought to avoid placing more power with the monarchy and for two years, the monarch and Parliament were deadlocked.



William I of Prussia

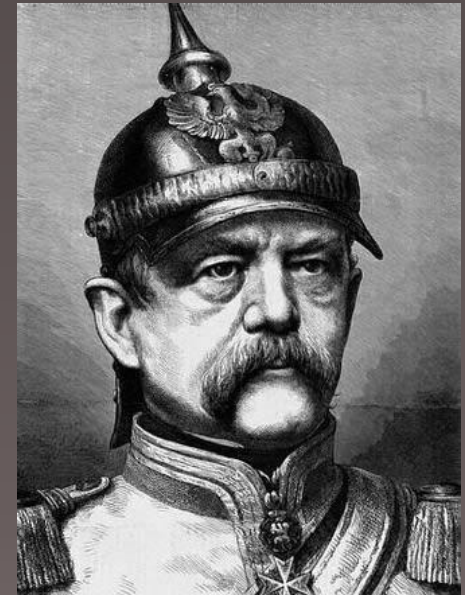
Otto von Bismarck

Who was Otto Von Bismarck?

- He came from the Junker class in Prussia, or the landed nobility.
- Even in university, he showed an interest in German unification.
- Bismarck first emerged in politics as a staunch reactionary when he was elected to the provincial diet in the 1840s. He had become more conservative by the time he was appointed by William I.
- Before becoming the Prussian Prime Minister in 1862, Bismarck served as the Prussian representative to the German Confederation. After his promotion, he became the Prussian ambassador to France and Russia.
- Bismarck himself did not support a parliamentary government, instead accepting a still powerful constitutional monarchy.

Bismarck continued

- He thought Germany needed a strong industrial base to excel, not able to survive on agriculture alone.
- He was a Pragmatist, meaning he supported the adage that actions speak louder than words when gaining support in politics.
- His best application of this was in his first speech as Prime Minister when he asserted that the other German states were, “not looking to Prussia’s liberalism but to her power...The great questions of the day will not be decided by speeches and majority decisions... but by iron and blood.”
- He supported the Kleindeutsch view of German unification, which called for the exclusion of Austria. He was hesitant to act on this, knowing it would require great diplomacy, until he knew how to adeptly execute it.



Otto von Bismarck

Bismarck's Debut as Prime Minister:

- Bismarck's first goal was to defeat the immense liberalism housed in the Prussian Parliament. He saw this as necessary because of its rejection to support increased taxes to raise the next prodigious, patriotic army of Prussia. The liberals were able to do this by clinging to the Constitution of 1850. They did not disapprove of a Prussian army per se, they just seized the opportunity to stop the expansion of monarchial power over them.
- Bismarck, however, pointed out the flaw in their argument; previous taxes had already granted the government the power to raise them in support of the army. This was successful in circumventing Parliament in that situation, however, the liberal problem did not die down after the elections of 1863.
- Bismarck then resolved the only way to quash the liberals was to gain the populace's support of the monarchy and army. He would do this through the expansion of Prussian Nationalism.



Otto von Bismarck

What methods of Bismarck were used to unify Germany?

- He was fearful that Catholics owed an allegiance to a church that extended beyond nationalism to Germany.
- He responded with an attack on the Catholic Church in which he insisted on controlling all church appointments and on gaining complete supervision over Catholic education. This is known as Kultur Kampf.

The Danish War



- The two German states, Schleswig and Holstein were in such close proximity to Denmark that their populations became a mixture of Germans and Danes.
- In 1863, the Danish Parliament began movement into annexing both states into their own kingdom. This affront to German nationalism gave Bismarck the perfect chance to initiate his plans of Prussian dominance over the unification of Germany, without Austria.
- The smaller German states proposed all joined in reclaiming their lost duchies, but Bismarck wanted only Prussia to handle it with support from Austria, the two largest German speaking territories. It was the first step in his plan to push Austria out.

Danish War continued

- They easily defeated the Danes within the year the war—though more like a skirmish—broke out in 1864. The resounding victory granted him personal prestige and strengthened place in all politics in the German Confederation.
- The Convention of Gastein in 1865, Austria, after they lost to Prussia in 1864, gave the territory Schleswig solely to Prussia, while Austria kept Holstein.
- Austria's loss inevitably undermined its dominant place in the German Confederation.
- The ending of the Austrian phase of his unification allowed Bismarck to mend diplomatic fences with the other powers: he helped squash a revolt in Poland to gain the support of Russia in 1863, persuaded Napoleon III not to choose sides in the Austro-Prussian War in 1866, and gained support in Italy by promising it Venetia if it allied with Prussia against the Austrians when the time was right.
- Bismarck had all of Europe right where he wanted it.

The Austro-Prussian War



- Bismarck continued to fuel antagonisms between the Prussians and Austrians in any way he could, even advising the Prussian soldiers to be obnoxious to the Austrians.
- On June 1st, 1866, Austria appealed to the German Confederation to stop the Prussian instigation. Bismarck then asserted that this violated their alliance and the terms of the Convention of Gastein.
- This disagreement led to the Seven Weeks' War in the 1866. Prussia won resolutely over Austria at Königgrätz in Bohemia.

The Austro-Prussian War continued



- The war was ended with the Treaty of Prague. It was lenient to Austria who only lost Venetia. It was ceded to Prussia who then ceded it to France, who made the final cession and gave it to Italy so Bismarck could fulfill his promise to the Italians for their help.
- Austria, however, refused to give it to Italy since they had already beaten them when they tried to rebel for unification in 1848.
- The outcome of this war established Prussia as the sole power throughout the German states.

The North German Confederation

- After the war with Austria, Prussia gained vast tracts of land through the annexation of Hanover, Hesse Kassel, Nassau, and the city of Frankfurt. Their rulers were deposed and inducted into the North German Confederation.
- Each member of the Confederation had its own local government but its military forces and political climate were under the domain of the Prussia. The King of Prussia served as the president of the Confederation. The local legislatures were bicameral consisting of an upper house, the Bundesrat, which was made up of appointed government officials and the lower house, the Reichstag, which was made up of members elected by universal male suffrage.

North Confederation continued

- Bismarck supported universal male suffrage for two reasons: the peasants would most likely vote conservative and the Reichstag held no real power. The Reichstag was under complete control of the monarch, not even able to originate legislation. The only power it had was to approve the military budget, but the budgets were only resubmitted after every couple years.
- The constitution of the North German Confederation eventually became the constitution of the German Empire in 1871, establishing, in effect, a military monarchy with minimal liberalism.

North Confederation continued

- Bismarck's policies of promoting the military and the monarchy throughout the German states led to the downfall of German liberals. He had split the party into deeper factions between those who supported unification and those who were dedicated to liberalism.
- Prussia was the sole power within the German states, leading to the achievement of Bismarck's greatest goal—German unification with Prussia at the helm.

The Franco-Prussian War And the German Empire (1870- 1871)

- Bismarck wanted to complete the unification of Germany by bringing the southern states of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Baden, and Hesse Darmstadt into the new confederation.
- In 1868, a military coup disposed the queen of Spain, a corrupt Bourbon known as Isabella II, and replaced her with Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern- Sigmaringen, who was a Catholic cousin of William I of Prussia.



Isabelle II of Spain

Leading Up to the War

- On July 2, 1870, the Spanish government announced Leopold's new title, so France sent its ambassador to Prussia, Count Vincent Benedetti, to consult with William I to discuss the matter.
- On July 12, Leopold's father renounced his son's candidacy for the throne in hopes of preventing a war between Prussia and France. However, Leopold was not ordered by his father to renounce.
- On July 13, the French government had Benedetti ask William I for insurance that he would tolerate no future Spanish candidacy for Leopold. William I refused but said he might take it into consideration.

The Franco- Prussian War

continued

- The peaceful agreement disappointed Bismarck who hoped a war with France would help him complete Germany's unification.
- A telegram sent to Bismarck by William I, gave Bismarck the idea to provoke a war with France by releasing an edited version of the dispatch to make it appear that William had insulted Benedetti.

The Franco- Prussian War continued



- The French government declared war on July 19, even though Napoleon III did not want war.
- Once conflict erupted, the southern German states joined Prussia against France to honor the treaties of 1866.
- On September 1, the Battle of Sedan gave the Germans a smashing victory and the capture of Napoleon III, and by late September, Paris was besieged and then capitulated on January 28, 1871. Ten days earlier, at the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, the German Empire had been proclaimed.

The Peace Settlement



- Through the peace settlement with France, Germany annexed Alsace and part of Lorraine and forced the French to pay a large indemnity.
- Because of German unification, a powerful new state had been created in north central Europe with rich natural resources and more military and economic strength than Prussia had been alone.

Outcome of German Unification

- The unification also caused a blow to European liberalism since it was conservative.
- France and Austria were the most affected by German and Italian unification, revealing the weaknesses of the French and Habsburgs.
- France had to return to a republican government and the Habsburgs had to come to terms with their Magyar subjects.



Napoleon III