

IMPERIAL GERMANY

1871–1918

QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS IN HISTORY

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THE FORMATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE

BACKGROUND NARRATIVE

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election of the Frankfurt Assembly. This sought to establish a united Germany based on a progressive constitution, only to find the forces of counter-revolution, led by Austria, too strong: the scheme had therefore collapsed. A third force had been economic, with the growth of the Zollverein, or customs union, which had linked most of the smaller German states with Prussia but had excluded the whole of Austria.

There had, therefore, been long-term influences behind the emergence of a German state. But unification meant directing the cultural and economic flows into a more viable political channel. From the late 1850s the influence of Prussia increased. The impetus was accelerated rapidly by Wilhelm I of Prussia who began to think in terms of Prussian dominance over Germany in 1861. This involved doubling the Prussian army, and securing the approval of the Prussian Landtag (or parliament) for an increase of 400,000 men. The resulting constitutional conflict was won by Otto von Bismarck, appointed Minister President of Prussia in 1862. Over the next nine years Bismarck involved Prussia in three wars, during which the smaller German states were removed from the presidency of Austria, the German Confederation was dissolved and Prussia expanded to form a new and more fully integrated Germany. In retrospect the events from 1863 to 1871 seem to have led inexorably to German unity, although there has been some dispute among historians as to how much of this was intentional. This is examined in Analysis 1.

The outline chronology is as follows: the conflicts started in 1864 when Christian IX attempted to incorporate the neighbouring duchies of Schleswig and Holstein into his kingdom of Denmark. These had previously been under the rule of the Danish monarch but separate from the state of Denmark. Since Holstein was predominantly German speaking, it received the support of a number of smaller German states. Prussia and Austria quickly entered the fray and sent troops to prevent the annexation. The outcome of a one-sided conflict was the Treaty of Vienna (1864), whereby the King of Denmark renounced all claim to the duchies. By the Convention of Gastein (1865) between Austria and Prussia, the former was to administer Holstein and the latter Schleswig.

This arrangement soon produced a conflict between Prussia and Austria. Prussian rule over Schleswig was far tighter than that of

Austria over Holstein; the result was an accusation that dissidents in Holstein were seeking to undermine Schleswig. In a dispute over the future of the two duchies, Prussia declared war on Austria in 1866, most of the smaller German states siding with the Austrians. Prussian armies quickly defeated Saxony, Hesse and Hanover, while the Austrians were defeated at Sadova, or Königgratz, within six weeks. By the Treaty of Prague the German Confederation was dissolved and Austria gave up all claim to control within Germany. Prussia proceeded to annex both Schleswig and Holstein, as well as Hanover, and to convert the rest of the smaller states of north and central Germany into a new North German Confederation closely controlled by Prussia.

The three south German states of Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg were not included until 1871, when the North German Confederation was transformed into the German Empire. The catalyst for this was a third war, this time between Prussia – or the North German Confederation – and France. The traditional view is that Bismarck provoked the French Emperor, Napoleon III, into committing a series of diplomatic blunders, thereby alienating the south Germans who had initially looked to France for support against Prussia. In 1870 Bismarck rewrote and published a telegram sent to him by Wilhelm I of Prussia. In its edited version this gave the impression that Wilhelm had insulted the French government in his dealings with it about the possibility of the throne of Spain being occupied by a junior member of the house of Hohenzollern; this would have provided a link, however tenuous, with Prussia. Napoleon III, confident of victory, declared war on Prussia, only to see the French armies defeated at Metz and Sedan. He was forced to abdicate, and, by the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871), France surrendered Alsace and Lorraine to Germany.

The newly proclaimed German Empire was in theory a federation of autonomous, mostly monarchical states. In practice, it was dominated by Prussia, the king of which was also the Emperor, or Kaiser. The Minister President of Prussia was usually the Imperial Chancellor: until 1890 both positions were held by Bismarck. The extent of the liberal and authoritarian influence on the institutions of the Reich are examined in Analysis 2.

ANALYSIS (1): HOW WAS GERMANY UNITED?

The narrative answer to this question has already been provided. There are, however, two issues connected to these events which need to be analysed. First, was a united Germany actually planned by those who brought it about? And second, was Prussia necessarily the natural core for this unity?

There was for a long time a tendency to see the whole process of German unification as planned and systematic. Grant Robertson, for example, maintained that it was a 'marvellous march of events, in which each stage seems to slip into its pre-appointed place'. (1) The argument that unification was pre-planned may be summarised as follows: Bismarck helped precipitate the events which brought about unification. He involved Prussia in the war against Denmark. He insisted on the separate administration of Schleswig and Holstein which he later exploited to provoke a war with Austria in 1866. He then encouraged Napoleon III to make claims against the southern German states, Belgium and Luxembourg. At the same time, he developed a series of agreements to isolate Napoleon III, including a generous Treaty of Prague with Austria, a diplomatic accord with Russia over Polish refugees fleeing into Prussia, and an alliance with Italy (1866). He then manipulated the crisis over the Spanish candidature, knowing full well that his version of the Ems telegram would provoke Napoleon III into a declaration of war on Prussia. To an extent Bismarck himself started the myth. In 1862 he provided Disraeli with an outline of his intentions: 'When the army has been brought to such a state as to command respect, then I shall take the first opportunity to declare war with Austria, burst asunder the German Confederation, and give Germany a national union under the leadership of Prussia.' (2)

In the fullness of time this approach came to be strongly challenged as revisionist historians stressed that the whole process of unification was entirely fortuitous and not deliberately engineered by Bismarck. A.J.P. Taylor believed that German unity occurred *despite* Bismarck, who wanted no further war after that with Austria in 1866: 'In truth, the French blundered into a war which was not unwelcome to them: and Bismarck, though taken by surprise, turned their blunder to his advantage.' (3) Taylor denied that Bismarck had any blueprint or plan for German unity. It could certainly be argued that any of Bismarck's statements about his proposals for the future were sufficiently vague to lack the element of planning which a blueprint involves. That they were eventually fulfilled can therefore be seen as pure coincidence.

Additional evidence against the original 'intentionalist' argument comes from the diplomatic situation in Europe at the time. Unification was therefore due quite as much to the conjunction of uniquely favourable external factors as to the insight of Bismarck. What he did was to manipulate events as they occurred rather than shape them from the outset. The main external impediments to German unification had been the position of Austria and the attitudes of Russia and France. Austria had been severely weakened by the upheavals of the mid-nineteenth century. From 1815 her position in Germany and Italy had rested on close collaboration with Russia which, indeed, had helped put down the revolution of Hungary against Austria in 1848-49. But the Crimean War (1854-56) and consequent Russian defeat meant the withdrawal of Russia into a period of diplomatic isolation and the connection with Austria was cut. This coincided with an increase of Italian nationalism which resulted in a weakened Austria being driven from northern Italy by a combination of Piedmontese and French troops in 1860. Already undermined in Italy, Austria was not ideally placed to resist the march of Prussia in Germany. Meanwhile, France was being seen increasingly as the most likely aggressor in Europe. This was certainly the view of British statesmen like Palmerston, who were concerned at the prospect of French expansion at the expense of Belgium and Luxembourg, a scenario Palmerston had already helped to prevent while he had been Foreign Secretary during the 1830s. In the circumstances, therefore, Bismarck had to work no harder at discrediting and isolating France in Europe than he had over weakening the position of Austria in Germany. They were simply happening.

These represent the poles of interpretation. But there is a viable alternative. It is possible to combine the exigencies of the situation in Europe with the actions taken by Bismarck to develop a scenario in which unity was intended, but the measures taken were purely in response to the situations as they arose. The emphasis is therefore restored to Bismarck as interventionist – but primarily as a pragmatist and opportunist. Indeed, it seems that this is how he saw himself. He regarded events as part of an irresistible 'time stream of history'. He believed that 'One cannot make history.' It was, nevertheless, possible to be part of that time stream by understanding and manipulating events. 'Man cannot create the current of events. He can only float with it and steer.' (4) It was, however, essential to be able to pursue several strategies simultaneously. As one after the other was closed off by events the one that remained would appear to have been planned from the outset. Bismarck therefore tended to delay vital decisions until the

situation was entirely clear – this enabled him to move history into one of the channels which had always existed as a possibility. This 'strategy of alternatives' is one way of understanding his dealings with Austria and France. In the case of Austria he followed several lines. He promoted an alliance in 1864; he followed this by the Convention of Gastein which, he hoped, would induce Austria to yield to Prussia the lion's share of control in northern Germany. If it did not, then the situation in Schleswig and Holstein could be used at some time in the future to precipitate a conflict between Austria and Prussia. Similarly, Bismarck followed several courses in his diplomacy with France. He kept Napoleon III friendly by vague hints of territorial gain in the area of the southern Rhineland. At the same time, he was in no hurry to complete unification with the south, hoping that this might be accomplished through peaceful means, possibly through the establishment of a common Federal Customs Council. Eventually, however, it became clear that Baden, Württemberg and Bavaria were too friendly with France for Bismarck's liking. He therefore used the diplomatic blunders of Napoleon III to drive a wedge between France and the south German states: he publicised Napoleon's demands for the Saarland and for Bavarian and Hessian territory in the Rhine area. He was not, however, convinced until 1870 that Prussia would benefit from war with France. The Hohenzollern candidature offered him the opportunity to bring to a head a crisis with France: one of the channels he had anticipated.

It is arguable, therefore, that German unification was intended but not planned. In which case was the Prussian base its most logical form?

In some ways it was not. Almost all the smaller German states supported Austria in the Confederation Diet over the constitutional crisis concerning Schleswig and Holstein in 1866. Many mobilised against Prussia and ended up united by conquest; some states, like Hanover, lost their separate identities altogether and ended up being absorbed into Prussia itself. In a sense, therefore, unification was imposed upon the smaller German states against their preference for a looser and more traditional association with both Prussia and Austria. The parliamentary approach to the problems of the 1860s favoured Austria. The military approach was Prussia's and the smaller states had to be brought into submission to Prussia, and Austria herself defeated.

Even then the process was incomplete and Bismarck faced the suspicion, even hostility, of the southern states; hence his delay in trying to incorporate them and the need to use Napoleon III's blunders.

It is sometimes argued that the southern states' continued preference for Austria was primarily for religious reasons. This may well have been the case with Bavaria, the population of which was predominantly Catholic. But Baden and Württemberg had strong Protestant traditions going back to the sixteenth-century Reformation. We should therefore be suspicious of this line of reasoning. It seems that it was a case of the south Germans being more wary of Prussia than feeling an attachment to Austria.

All this might appear to point to the Prussian initiative for unification being one which was entirely artificial and brutally imposed. In a sense this is what Bismarck said when he warned the Prussian Landtag in the Army Bill debate of 1862 that Prussian predominance in Germany must be based on military security. 'Germany looks not to Prussia's Liberalism but to her power . . . The questions of the day will not be decided by speeches and majority decisions . . . but by blood and iron.' (5) We could see this as a continuation of a traditional approach based on Prussian expansion within Germany rather than Prussian leadership over Germany. This had certainly been the aim of Frederick the Great (1740–86), who extended Prussia by absorbing Silesia and part of Saxony. Bismarck has often been seen as his natural successor, not being a 'German' nationalist, his premise was that 'Prussians we are and Prussians we shall remain.'

Yet it is possible to move so far in this direction that we can end up with the view that unification was entirely arbitrary, based simply on the whims of a Prussian expansionist. It makes more sense to see the connection between Germany and Prussia as being part of the broader flow of influences and events. Bismarck was certainly conscious of this link, although he felt that it had become unnecessarily complicated. Hence, in his own words: 'The Gordian Knot of German circumstances was not to be untied by the gentle methods of dual policy [but] could only be cut by the sword.' (6)

There is certainly plenty of evidence of long-term connections between Prussia and the idea of a more integrated Germany. It was to Prussia that the nationalists came increasingly to look, and in 1849 the Frankfurt Parliament decided to offer the crown of a united Germany to the King of Prussia. Nor did the collapse of the Frankfurt Parliament mean the end of this connection. Bismarck may have denied that Germany looked to Prussia for her liberalism, but German liberals continued to look to Prussia in the 1850s and 1860s as the more likely source of constitutional reform and genuine integration. As will be shown in Analysis 2, Prussia had a tradition of progressive change as well as one of military power.

Also of importance was the economic link between Prussia and Germany. Some have gone so far as to argue that unification was part of a long-term economic process. The first to stress the economic base for German unity was J.M. Keynes, who wrote in 1919, 'The German Empire was created more by coal and iron than by blood and iron.' (7) Recent historians like Böhme have adopted a similar argument, pointing to the inexorable influence of economic growth, dominated by Prussia. Two factors were particularly influential.

One was the gradual integration of the economies of the German states through the Zollverein. This united the various customs unions already in existence so that, by as early as 1834, the economies of the smaller German states had been linked with that of Prussia and severed from that of Austria. The other factor was the economic growth of Prussia, which had experienced the first industrial revolution in continental Europe. The opportunity was provided by the incorporation of the Rhineland and Westphalia into Prussia by the Treaty of Vienna in 1815: in these areas were some of the largest coal and iron-ore deposits in Europe. The Prussian government made the most of the new opportunities with the policies in the 1850s of such dynamic ministers as Manteuffel, von der Heydt and Delbrück. Coal and iron production more than doubled during this decade, while steel production rapidly expanded with the use of the newly developed Bessemer process. The Zollverein's exports increased from 357 million thaler in 1853 to 455 million by 1856. During the same three-year period Austria's fell from 184 million thaler to 150 million. Understandably, Austria wanted to replace the Zollverein by a broader Danubian customs union, but this was strongly resisted by Prussia. Indeed, Böhme sees in this the catalyst for the acceleration of the unification process: 'The quarrel over the Zollverein became of central importance for the development of the German question, and it can be asserted that the kleindeutsch national state arose chiefly from the Prussian defence against the economic order conceived by Austria for the great Central European region.' (8)

In overall conclusion two points need to be emphasised. First, a united Germany was not some aberration: it was intended, although it would be too much to claim that it was planned, step by step, by a supreme architect. Second, the links the German states had with Prussia contained forces which both repelled and attracted them. The final bond was created by force but this does not mean that it was an artificial one. The influence of Prussia had been both progressive and reactionary, a combination which was to persist throughout the history of the Reich.

Questions

1. Was the unification of Germany intended?
2. Was a united Germany simply an enlarged Prussia?

ANALYSIS (2): HOW AUTHORITARIAN WAS THE REICH?

The formation of the German Empire differed from the proposed unification by the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848-49 in that it was achieved from above, and by force, rather than from below, and by consent. Nevertheless, it did involve enthusiastic support from those who had once hoped for unification by parliamentary means. The new Reich therefore had both liberal and authoritarian principles. The key question concerns the balance in which these existed.

Liberal influences had been widespread throughout the German Confederation in the first half of the nineteenth century. Many of the smaller German states had taken the initiative in the 1848 revolutions by introducing progressive constitutions drafted by middle-class lawyers. Admittedly, Prussia had failed to take the lead expected of it by the Frankfurt Parliament. Nevertheless, the constitution which was introduced in Prussia in 1850 was one of the most progressive in Europe at the time and more than capable of being adapted to future liberal changes. Prussia had also seen a wave of reform in the late 1850s as Wilhelm, acting as regent for Friedrich Wilhelm IV, introduced a liberalising programme known as the 'New Era'. Prussia had therefore continued to appeal much more than Austria to German liberals. Indeed, many of Prussia's liberals had thrown in their lot with Bismarck after the failure of the earlier attempts at constitutional unity. They had achieved partial success in the constitution of the North German Confederation. This had provided a Reichstag, or central parliament, elected by male suffrage and therefore directly in line with the proposals made at Frankfurt in 1849.

The obverse side of German unity was a strong authoritarian tradition. This had always been apparent in the Prussian system of government and was something which Bismarck continued to regard as a virtue. His view was that political change must be kept under constraint. Hence, 'in order that German patriotism should be active and effective, it needs as a rule to hang on the peg of dependence upon a dynasty'. (9) He was also socially conservative and strongly opposed to any form of revolution. There has been a long continuity in the historiography of Bismarck here, especially among German scholars like Rothfels, Bussman, and Wehler. Wolfgang J. Mommsen

summarises the general aim of Bismarck as being to 'preserve the pre-eminence of the traditional elites despite the changes which were taking place in German society. Bismarck's policies, in other words, were a defensive social strategy conducted on behalf of the ruling strata.' (10) It is hardly surprising that such influences were at their strongest in Prussia, just as it was Prussia which had so often taken the lead in introducing progressive reform.

The new Reich, therefore, had a split identity which mirrored that of Prussia. It comprised elements of liberalism and authoritarianism. How did these relate to each other in practice? Historians have differed over this. Some have argued that the constitution of the Empire was a proper consensus and that it therefore made a reality out of German unification. The alternative, suggested earlier in the twentieth century by Weber, was that the constitution was no more than a disguise for the predominance of a reactionary Prussia over the other German states. These two views provide the two ends of the spectrum. But between them come more subtle combinations of liberal and authoritarian influences.

The Second Reich was established as a federation. Each of its twenty-five states retained its own ruler and government, while being represented according to its size in the central Diet or Bundesrat. The smallest states had one seat each; Prussia, as the largest, had seventeen, which conferred the right of veto on any constitutional change proposed by the Bundesrat. On the positive side this went some way towards guaranteeing the autonomy which the smaller states felt they were losing to Prussia during the process of unification: this applied especially to the southern states of Baden, Bavaria and Württemberg. On the other hand, federalism was always a double-edged weapon. The elite within Prussia, especially the large landowners, or Junkers, actually preferred the federal system since it guaranteed the continued separate identity of Prussia, while the composition of the Bundesrat ensured Prussian control. Besides which, the members of the Bundesrat were appointed by the state rulers, not elected. In practice federalism meant that the Prussian government had indirect control over the other states without being diluted by them. For example, the King of Prussia was also the Kaiser, the Minister President of Prussia was usually also the Reich Chancellor, and the Prussian civil service set the pattern for the Reich – as opposed to individual state – administration.

The Reich executive comprised the individual state governments, the largest of which was Prussia. The Reich government was headed by the Kaiser who alone was responsible for the appointment and dismissal of the Chancellor. None of the Chancellor's cabinet was

chosen from deputies serving in the Reichstag. This structure meant that some of the aims of the liberals in the 1860s were not met. There was no arrangement for the accountability of the Chancellor to the Reichstag – no equivalent therefore to the British Prime Minister's responsibility to Parliament. On this issue, the authoritarian approach based on maintenance of an unfettered executive triumphed. The executive was also firmly in control of foreign policy, the army and navy, the Kaiser acting as Commander-in-Chief. In this way the Kaiser's government had the ultimate sanction of the use of the army – a traditional authoritarian device which nullified the intentions of the liberals in the 1860s to demilitarise the political power structure of Germany.

A more promising appearance of progressive liberalism can be seen in the Reich's legislature. As in the period of the North German Confederation, the Reichstag was elected by universal male suffrage. Any legislation needed its assent, as did the military budget. The Reichstag was responsible for enacting a range of social and constitutional reforms, even during the administration of Bismarck, and was to prove capable of mounting some opposition to Bismarck and his successors on a number of occasions. On the other hand, the Reichstag had no formal influence over the composition of the executive and there was no tradition of party government in the Reich.

This was anomalous, since Germany had a wealth of political parties, formed from the late 1860s to the early 1870s. These ranged from the Conservatives, and their offshoots the Free Conservatives, through the two liberal parties – the National Liberals and the Progressives – and the predominantly Catholic Centre, to the Social Democrats on the left, who represented part of the newly enfranchised working class. Nowhere else in Europe was there such a complete representation of the interests of the different sections of the population. And yet these parties were to be continually frustrated in the relations with the executive, as Bismarck used and abused each one in turn. Deprived of any prospect of a share in government, each tended to pursue narrow aims based on the interests of its constituents which, in turn, made it less likely that any genuinely party-based government would evolve. Mommsen correctly describes the overall political system as 'a semi-constitutional system with supplementary party-political features'. (11)

The whole structure of the Reich came under a series of economic and social strains which in turn accentuated the conflict between liberal and authoritarian principles. Industrialisation created a wealthier middle class and an ever-expanding proletariat: both were out of

sympathy with the traditional social elite, the Junker class, which was based on land ownership. There were also sectional differences based on religion or on ethnic minorities. The attempted resolution of the problems thrown up during the whole period of the Reich showed authoritarianism operating in a way which had to take account of liberal constraints. This happened in two stages. In the first Bismarck sought to maintain his authoritarian ascendancy by making various coalitions in the Reichstag in support of government policy. This is one of the themes of Chapter 2. After 1890 the regime of Wilhelm II sought to create mass support for the Reich through the pursuit of expansionist policies abroad. Both approaches – the manipulation of parties and the deliberate spread of nationalism to the lower classes – showed that while the governments of the Second Reich retained the initiative they were constrained in what they could do by pressures that they had to acknowledge and with which they had to deal.

The constrained authoritarianism which characterises the Reich was, according to Mommsen, the result of a series of 'skirted decisions'. Boldt, too, maintains that 'matters of sovereignty and government were deliberately left obscure'. (12) The underlying political culture was authoritarian but the existence of liberal influences meant that authoritarianism was never autocratic – either as in France under Bonapartism between 1852 and 1870 or as in Russia under the tsars up to 1917.

Questions

1. Did authoritarianism stifle liberal influences in the 1871 constitution?
2. 'A strong parliamentary system depends on effective political parties.' Did Germany have these?

SOURCES

1. PRUSSIA, AUSTRIA AND GERMANY

Source A: from a letter by Bismarck to Otto Manteuffel, April 1856.

Because of the policy of Vienna, Germany is clearly too small for us both: as long as an honourable arrangement concerning the influence of each cannot be concluded and carried out, we will both plough the same disputed acre, and Austria will remain the only state to whom we can permanently lose or from whom we can permanently gain. For a thousand years intermittently... the

German dualism has regularly adjusted the reciprocal relations of the powers by a thorough internal war; and in this century also no other means than this can set the clock of evolution at the right hour... In the not too distant future we shall have to fight for our existence against Austria and... it is not within our power to avoid that, since the course of events in Germany has no other solution.

Source B: from the speech by Bismarck to the Prussian Landtag, 29 September 1862.

Prussia's boundaries according to the Vienna treaties are not favourable to a healthy political life; not by means of speeches and majority verdicts will the great decisions of the time be made – that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849 – but by iron and blood.

Source C: from Bismarck's *Memoirs*, published in the 1890s.

On 23 July [1866], under the presidency of the King, a council of war was held, in which the question to be decided was whether we should make peace under the conditions offered or continue the war... On this occasion... I declared it to be my conviction that peace must be concluded on the Austrian terms, but remained alone in my opinion; the King supported the military majority... I set out the following day to explain [that] we had to avoid wounding Austria too severely; we had to avoid leaving in her any unnecessary bitterness of feeling or desire for revenge; we ought rather to reserve the possibility of becoming friends again with our adversary of the moment, and in any case to regard the Austrian State as a piece on the European chessboard and the renewal of friendly relations with her as a move open to us. If Austria were severely injured, she would become the ally of France and of every opponent of ours; she would even sacrifice her anti-Russian interests for the sake of revenge on Prussia.

Source D: from a letter from Sir Robert Morier, a British diplomat in Vienna, to Lady Salisbury, 24 June 1866.

The one thing for which... above all other things, I conceive Bismarck ought to be execrated, is his having by the impress of his own detestable individuality on the political canvas now unrolling before Europe so utterly disfigured the true outlines of the picture, that not only public opinion, but the judgement of wise and thoughtful men is almost sure to go wrong... If Bismarck succeeds the world will clap its hands and say he was the only man who knew how to bring about what the world, which always worships success, will say was a consummation it always desired. Whereas that which will be really proved is that

Prussia was so strong and so really the heart and head and lungs of Germany, that she could, by her mere natural development WITH, instead of AGAINST, the liberal and national forces of Germany, have effected what required to be done by peaceful means and without bloodshed.

Source E: an assessment of Bismarck by the German historian Heinrich von Sybel in *The Founding of the German Empire*, published between 1890 and 1898.

He was not striving for world-dominion nor for boundless power, but for the means to secure and strengthen his Prussian Fatherland. So much acquisition of power and territory as was necessary for this he laid hold of with iron grasp – so much and no more. The intoxication of victory never disordered his judgement, nor got the mastery over his fixed principles of moderation.

Questions

- *1. (i) What is meant by '... plough the same disputed acre ...' (Source A)? (2 marks)
- (ii) To which victory, over Austria in 1866, might Document E be referring? (1 mark)
- (iii) By which treaty was the 1866 war between Prussia and Austria concluded? (1 mark)
2. How effectively did Bismarck use language in Sources A and B to put across his ideas? (4 marks)
3. In what ways did Bismarck's perception of Austria in Source C differ from that in Source A? (4 marks)
4. How reliable would you consider Sources C and D as an assessment of Bismarck's aims and methods? (5 marks)
5. How far do Sources A to D, and your own knowledge, lead you to agree with the opinions cited in Source E? (8 marks)

Worked answer

*1. [Some questions on sources, usually the first, ask for an explanation of a specific reference. Where one mark is available, a word or phrase is expected; anything more than this would earn nothing extra. For two marks a slightly longer answer is required, usually containing two distinct points.]

- (i) The 'acre' represents Germany before unification, which both Austria and Prussia attempted to 'plough', or control. The result was 'dispute'.

- (ii) The Battle of Sadowa.
- (iii) The Treaty of Prague.

2. THE NATURE OF THE GERMAN CONSTITUTION SET UP IN 1871

Source F: from a speech by Benjamin Disraeli, leader of the Conservative Party, in the House of Commons, 9 February 1871.

This war represents the German revolution, a greater political event than the French revolution of the last century.

Source G: A criticism of the 1871 constitution by a political publicist, writing in 1875.

It is clear that a country containing as many different elements as Germany does, a country entwined with its neighbours on all sides and bordering on six different nationalities, a country, moreover, that has experienced a history comparable to no other in respect both of the variety of political forms created and the intrinsic importance of its events – that such a country must necessarily have achieved a constitution peculiar to itself. If this constitution was to be amended or improved, how could the appropriate forms be found except by deriving them from existing conditions? Instead an attempt was made to borrow these forms from various foreign constitutions and by means of such a compounded copy to produce a German national constitution, while at the same time proclaiming the principle of nationality which ought rather to have excluded anything foreign. What a strange contradiction!

Source H: from the writings and letters of the Prussian historian Heinrich von Treitschke.

(30 July 1866) There was a time when the ideas of French democracy dominated Germany and when those sudden and successful street battles in the capital city of a centralized state which decided the fate of a country served as models of glorious revolutions. The last decade has taught us that the great political upheavals of civilized peoples as a rule take place by other means, through the agency of orderly military forces... The German revolution, too... received its first impetus from above, from the Crown.

Source I: from a report by Bismarck to Wilhelm I, 29 March 1871.

The constitutional position of the Federal Council (Bundesrat) in the North German Confederation as well as in the German Empire derives its peculiar

character from the fact that its members are bound by the instructions issued to them by their governments and therefore do not, like the deputies to the Reichstag, represent the whole but only the state which nominated them.

Source J: a letter from Bismarck to Bray (Prime Minister of Bavaria), 4 November 1870.

As to the basis of these negotiations, I should prefer the establishment of a close Confederation to any other. The basis is, in my view, the only one which meets the wishes of the German nation. It is the only one, therefore, suitable for the foundation of permanent institutions, while it is at the same time sufficient to assure such a position to Bavaria in the Germanic Confederation, to which on account of her importance, she has a claim.

Questions

1. (i) Explain the reference to 'This war' (Source F). (2 marks)
(ii) Explain the meaning and purpose of the 'Reichstag' (Source I). (2 marks)
- *2. In what ways do the arguments of Sources F, G and H differ? (4 marks)
3. What questions should a modern historian ask about the usefulness and reliability of Sources G and H? (5 marks)
4. What do Sources I and J show of Bismarck's concept of German unity? (4 marks)
5. Do Sources A to J, and your own knowledge, show that there had been a German revolution by the end of 1871? (8 marks)

Worked answer

*2. *[This type of question is more complex than the first. It needs a combination of argument and pin-point references to the specified sources. The word 'differ' needs to be covered in a way which includes all three sources. Quotations should be brief and integrated into your own sentences.]*

In Source F the term 'revolution' is used by Disraeli in a diplomatic sense, as affecting the balance of power in Europe. By contrast, the focus of Sources G and H are on internal change. There is, however, a fundamental difference between G and H. The political publicist (Source G) argues that Germany's political change was contradictory, since borrowing from 'various foreign constitutions' had conflicted with the 'principle of nationality' which should have 'excluded anything

foreign'. Source H, by contrast, maintains that borrowing 'ideas of French democracy' had manifestly failed and that 'orderly military forces' were necessary for unification. Since the 'impetus' came 'from above', the inference is that this now excluded external influence from below.