

Section 4: The Unification of the German States, 1815-1871



TOPICS:

- THE CONTAINMENT OF NATIONALISM UP TO 1848
- THE GERMAN CONFEDERATION AND THE ZOLLVEREIN
- THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1848-9 AND THEIR LEGACY
- AUSTRO-GERMAN RELATIONS, AUSTRO-PRUSSIAN RELATIONS 1849-63
- THE EMERGENCE OF PRUSSIA, ITS STRENGTHS
- THE POLICIES AND ACTIONS OF BISMARCK TO 1871 – POLITICAL, DIPLOMATIC, MILITARY – AND THE ACTIONS OF OTHER GROUPS
- THE WARS OF 1864, 1866, 1870-1
- NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS, THE NORTH GERMAN CONFEDERATION, THE CREATION OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE

Past paper questions:

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| 2010 | How important was German nationalism in the unification of Germany in the period 1848-71? |
| 2011 | Assess the view that Bismarck's contribution to German Unification has been exaggerated. |
| 2012 | How important were economic factors in the creation of a unified Germany in the period 1862 to 1871? |
| 2013 | No question on German Unification |
| 2014 | Why was a united Germany not achieved before 1871? |
| 2015 | How much did the unification of Germany owe to the growth of German nationalism? |
| 2016 | How much did Bismarck's success in unifying Germany by 1871 depend on the weaknesses of his opponents? |
| 2017 | How important was Bismarck's diplomacy in securing German Unification by 1871? |

Further reading

The activities in this pack are designed to teach you everything you need to know to succeed in the exam. However, it is always excellent practice to conduct further reading and read around the subject – particularly if you are aiming for D3 or higher! Below is a list of books and articles on section 4 for you to explore in your own time. Most are available in the school library or online.

A-level textbooks (NB – much of the information in this pack has been adapted from these textbooks)

Farmer, Alan and Stiles, Andrina, *The Unification of Germany and the Challenge of Nationalism, 1789-1919*, (Hodder Education, 2015) – The go-to textbook for this course (you have a copy yourselves!). Also very (arguably, too) detailed on period between 1815 and 1849, if you want to improve your understanding of this period (although you are unlikely to be asked a question directly about this).

Kitson, Alison, *Germany 1858-1990: Hope, Terror, and Revival*, (OUP, 2001) – Lacking in the detail needed for Pre-U, but a very useful textbook to pick up if you require a quick and general overview of the period.

Morris, T.A., *European History 1848-1945* (Collins, 1995) – An old-school textbook: less accessible than the others on this list, but tackles some of the more complicated ideas in more depth. Also a useful chapter on the ideas of the time – nationalism, liberalism and conservatism.

Whitfield, Bob, *Germany 1848-1914*, (Heinemann, 2000) – An excellent textbook with some very useful detail. Split into AS (narrative and explanation) and A2 (analysis and interpretation) sections. Its chapter on German Unification (pp. 127-142) is well worth looking at.

Eddy, Steve, and Lancaster, Tony, *European History for AS Level: Germany 1866-1945*, (Causeway Press, 2002) – A little sparse on unification, but still worth getting your hands on if you can (there's always a couple used copies going cheap on Amazon).

Academic books

Carr, William, *A History of Germany 1815-1990*, (Arnold, 1991) – An excellent book, and highly recommended for students who want to study this period in more depth. Academic, but relatively easy to follow and avoids getting bogged down in too much detail. Mr Simmons's go-to text!

Carr, William, *The Origins of the Wars of German Unification*, (Longman, 1991) – A very detailed account of the origins of all three wars of German unification, that deals with Bismarck's dealings and the general causes of the wars very clearly. But a word of warning: do not get bogged down in the origins of the Schleswig-Holstein problem – life is too short.

Craig, Gordon A., *Germany 1866-1945*, (OUP, 1978) – extremely detailed and comprehensive. Not the easiest of reads at this level but very worthwhile.

Feuchtwanger, Edgar, *Bismarck* (Routledge, 2002) – a thoroughly researched biography on Bismarck.

Fulbrook, Mary (ed.), *German History since 1800*, (Hodder Education, 1997) – a collection of useful essays on Germany that covers our whole period. The same collection of essays is also available in **Breuilly, John (ed.), *19th Century Germany: Politics, Culture and Society, 1780-1918*, (Arnold, 2001)** [N.B. The Breuilly version has an extra chapter on Germany during the First World War, but only goes up to 1918 and so does not include chapters on the Weimar Republic, which will be useful for later units of study. The Fulbrook version is available in the school library.]

Kitchen, Martin, *A History of Modern Germany 1800-2000* (Blackwell, 2006) – Probably the most accessible academic text on this list, but lacking in the detail you might want from further reading.

Steinberg, Jonathan, *Bismarck: A Life* (OUP, 2012) – a deeply researched but still accessible guide to Bismarck.

Williamson, David G., *Bismarck and Germany 1862-1890* (Routledge, 2011) – One of the must-have books for students wanting to expand their knowledge of this period. A very good middle-ground between Pre-U level and University undergraduate level. In spite of the title, the book does also cover the background on the period 1815-1862.

Academic articles

Breuilly, John, 'Revolution to Unification' in Fulbrook, Mary (ed.), *German History since 1800*, (Hodder Education, 1997)

Feuchtwanger, Edgar, 'Bismarck, Prussia and German nationalism', *History Review*, 39 (2001)

Steinberg, Jonathan, 'How did Bismarck do it?', *History Today*, 61:2 (2011)

Waller, Bruce, 'The Bismarck Debate', *History Review*, 30 (1998)

Lesson 1: An introduction to Germany at the start of the 19th Century

On 18 January 1871, the Second German Empire was proclaimed in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, creating a unified Germany for the first time in history. However, just a century before, the prospect of a unified German nation appeared extremely unlikely.

TASK: What is meant by the term 'nation'?

TASK: Read the text and answer the question below. As you read the text, highlight extracts that help explain why Germany cannot be seen as a unified country at the start of the 19th Century.

The situation in Germany in 1789

In 1789 some 22 million Germans were divided into 314 states, varying in size from the 300,000km² of the Habsburg monarchy (the ruling family of the Austrian Empire) to the 85km² of Schwartzburg-Sonderhausen. Another 1400 towns, cities and territories had a degree of autonomy. Each state had its own ruling class, its own traditions, its own laws and its own nobility determined to maintain their prerogatives.

Since 1512 the multitude of states had been loosely united within the Holy Roman Empire, whose nominal emperor was the Habsburg emperor of Austria. According to French writer Voltaire, the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy, Roman, nor even an empire. It certainly lacked any real power. What power it had was essentially Austrian power.

Although the Empire did have a permanent Imperial *Diet* (an assembly/parliament), the conflicting interests of the states rarely achieved a unified position. The empire had no central political administration, no common tax system and no standing army. While the Imperial *Diet* could call up an army, there was no guarantee that the states would send the predetermined quota of troops or pay their financial contributions for the army's upkeep.

Furthermore, Germany lacked clear natural frontiers, especially in the east and south. Nor was it possible to define Germany's extent on ethnic grounds. The Holy Roman Empire included land peopled by French, Dutch, Danish, Polish and Czech speakers. It also excluded sizeable territories with a predominantly German population – not least of all large parts of Prussia, the only other German state apart from Austria that counted for anything in international affairs.

Germans in the south German states were overwhelmingly Catholic. Those in the north were mainly Protestant. Religious hostility between Protestants and Catholics made political unification difficult.

German economic and social development also lagged far behind that of Britain and Western Europe, and was retarded by several factors:

- The feudal system survived almost intact in many states. This meant that there were strict divisions in society: a large class of peasantry, a small number of urban workers, an even smaller middle class and a privileged aristocracy
- Over 80% of Germans lived and worked on the land
- There were great varieties in currencies and weights and measures, innumerable customs barriers and internal taxes, and poor communications, all of which restricted commercial growth
- Most skilled workers in the towns belonged to powerful guilds. Determined to retain their privileges, the guilds prevented free competitions and blocked economic progress
- The aristocracy owned most of the land and held all the key posts in the various courts, armies and administrations

QUESTION (answer in full sentences)

Why was Germany not a meaningful concept in 1789?

In 1789, there was very little impetus to German Unification. Concerted calls for the unification of the German states only developed following the French Revolution of that year and the subsequent conquest of many of the German states by the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

HWK: Read pp. 3-10 – complete questions/worksheet on the Treaty of Vienna and the German Confederation

The Holy Roman Empire in 1789



HOMEWORK: Germany 1789-1815 and the foundation of the German Confederation

TASK: Read pp.3-10 in Farmer and Stiles *The Unification of Germany* and answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. How did French occupation of German territory (pp. 4-5) and 'German' victory in the War of Liberation (pp. 6-7) play a part in creating a sense of German national identity?

Write the title, 'The Vienna Peace Settlement and the foundation of the German Confederation, 1815'

2. List the 'Great Powers' who drew up the Vienna Peace Settlement
3. Copy and complete the following table using the information on p.9

Territorial gains from the Congress of Vienna	
Austrian gains	Prussian gains

Write the title 'The German Confederation'

4. Complete a fact sheet about the German Confederation based on the pointer questions below:
 - a. How many states were included in the Confederation?
 - b. How were boundaries modelled?
 - c. What different ethnicities were included within the boundaries of the Confederation?
 - d. What significant territories were not included within the boundaries of the Confederation?
 - e. What was the role of the Bundestag and what were its limitations?
5. Why did Metternich seek to uphold the *status quo* in independent German states? (What was in it for Austria?)

Map of the German Confederation



Lesson 2: Nationalism and reaction 1815-1848

The German Confederation

Below are quotes from Farmer and Stiles that you will have read for homework. Review these and make a note below of all of the barriers to unification mentioned in the extracts.

The Confederation was not concerned with promoting a united Germany. In fact, its aim was exactly the opposite, for none of the rulers of the separate states wished to see their independence limited by the establishment of a strong central German government. [...] The boundaries of the Confederation were modelled on those of the old Holy Roman Empire rather than on ones that would encourage the development of a German nation-state. Areas peopled by Poles, Czechs, Danes and French were included and provinces with largely German-speaking populations were excluded. States such as Luxembourg, Hanover and Holstein, which were ruled by foreign monarchs, were within the Confederation while parts of German-speaking Austria and Prussia were not.

The Confederation had only one executive body, the Bundestag (or Federal Council). [...] Given that the agreement of every state government was required before any measure could be passed, little was ever achieved. Representatives were more concerned with safeguarding the interests of their own states than working for the Confederation as a whole.

The Constitution of the Confederation, the Federal Act, had empowered the Bundestag to organise a federal army and to develop commercial and economic cooperation between the states, but local jealousies and fiercely guarded independence meant that nothing of importance was done to unify the Confederation militarily or economically. The defence of the Confederation depended on the continued cooperation of Austria and Prussia.

BARRIERS TO UNIFICATION 1815

Conservative forces

One of the strongest barriers to unification was the strength of conservatism in the German Confederation. Conservatives are committed to the maintenance of the **status quo** (that is, the established political order). In most of the German states, **absolute rule** was restored in 1815. The majority of German rulers, especially in Prussia and Austria, clung obstinately to their absolute power. They were opposed to liberal and democratic reforms that might limit their powers, which many rulers believed had been given to them by God. One of the key proponents of **reactionary** and conservative politics in the German Confederation was **Prince Clemens von Metternich**, Chief Minister of Austria. He believed that the maintenance of international peace was directly linked with the prevention of revolution in individual states. What happened inside one state was of concern to other states, and entitled them to intervene if they considered it necessary. The social order had to be defended against the forces of destruction. For Metternich these forces were liberalism and nationalism. If these – in his view – revolutionary ideas spread, they could lead to the overthrow of absolute monarchy and the end of the **multinational Austrian Empire**. He, therefore, opposed any constitutional change, however modest.



German liberalism and nationalism

Conservatives like Metternich were concerned by the growth of **nationalism** and **liberalism**. **Nationalists** desired the establishment of a unified **nation-state**: a state based on shared language, culture and experiences (e.g. a land for German speakers). Most **liberals** wanted a constitution which would enshrine in law certain fundamental rights and liberties, including:

- Parliamentary rule
- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of the press
- Freedom of worship
- Freedom to form political associations and hold political meetings
- A united Germany

Virtually all German liberals were nationalists. They were opposed to absolute power and wanted to establish a strong German state. Historian William Carr explains why: “One of the main reasons why liberals demanded national unification was their conviction that only in a united state could these individual rights and liberties be effectively protected against arbitrary interference from petty princes.”¹

Liberals were almost exclusively well-educated, well-to-do members of the middle class who, fearful of the excesses of the French Revolution, had no wish to bring about radical changes in the structure of society. Very few supported a **universal franchise** – they believed that only men of property should be allowed to vote. Most were opposed to violence and hoped to achieve their aims by intellectual argument and peaceful persuasion.

¹ William Carr, *The Origins of the Wars of German Unification* (1991)

Liberalism and nationalism in Germany had its origins in the French Revolution, which preached a message of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity', and the writings of nationalist German intellectuals such as Johann Herder, Johann Fichte and George Hegel, who developed the view that the German people were a unique *volk* who should belong to the same state.

The development and repression of liberal nationalism, 1815-1848

In the three decades after the establishment of the German Confederation, nationalism and liberalism grew in force. An important development was the foundation of student societies called *Burschenschaften*, first founded in 1815. Thousands of young middle- and upper-class Germans, hoping to give practical form to their romantic sense of national identity, joined these societies and campaigned for a united Germany and the abolition of absolutist forms of government.

This increase in nationalist activity was met with repression by the conservative forces in power, who fought to maintain their control and suppress these 'revolutionary' ideas.

TASK: Below is a timeline of activity between 1815 and 1848. Using two different colours, highlight examples of **nationalist activity and **conservative reaction**.**

Date	Event	Description
1817	Wartburg Festival	Student societies (<i>Burschenschaften</i>) start to gain support in Germany. In 1817, 500 nationalist students turn the Wartburg Festival, a celebration of the 300 th anniversary of Luther's 95 theses, into a nationalist demonstration.
1819 (March)	Murder of August von Kotzebue	Karl Sand, a nationalist student, stabbed reactionary (conservative) dramatist August von Kotzebue to death. Sand was subsequently executed and became a liberal hero and martyr.
1819 (September)	Carlsbad Decrees	In response to the murder of Kotzebue, Austrian Prince Clemens von Metternich issued the Carlsbad Decrees . These: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided inspectors for universities (to seek out any nationalist activities among teachers and students) • Ensured that student societies were disbanded • Threatened radical university lecturers with dismissal • Introduced press censorship • Essentially turned many states in the German Confederation into police states
1820	Congress of Troppau	In a meeting in Troppau between Russia, Prussia and Austria, the three major powers agree to ' never recognise the rights of the people to restrict the powers of their king ' and agree to act jointly to restore any government overthrown by revolutionary action.
1820s	Repression in the 1820s	Under the guidance of Metternich, the Confederation was turned into a police state. Newspapers and books were censored; post offices were set up with mail-opening departments; waiters and doormen were

		trained to inform authorities of any suspicious (i.e. nationalist/revolutionary) discussions.
1832 (May)	Nationalist Festival at Hambach	30,000 artisans, peasants and students meet at the Hambach Festival in the Palatinate to talk, listen to nationalist orators and plan revolution...
1832 (June)	Establishment of the Six Articles	<p>...This panics Metternich, who passes the Six Articles. These:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Bundestag's control over states' affairs • Impose more sanctions for universities and the press • Encourage the use of military force to break up demonstrations <p>As a result of these, the Prussian Army quickly subdue the Palatinate violently.</p>
1840	1840 Rhine Crisis	In 1840 the French revived their claims to the Rhine territory and threatened to overturn the 1815 Vienna settlement. This caused an upsurge in nationalist feeling and sparked a flurry of nationalistic songs and poems – including 'Deutschland Uber Alles'. France backed down, but not before much nationalistic feeling had been generated throughout Germany in the face of a threat from the 'old enemy'.
1846	Schleswig-Holstein Affair	When the Danish King appears to try to incorporate Holstein into the Danish kingdom, there is huge German nationalist outcry. The nationalist sentiment is so strong that the Danish King abandons his plans.
1847	Hippenhelm meeting	<p>Representatives of the south western states met at Hippenhelm demanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An elected national assembly • Liberation of the press • Open judicial proceedings with juries • End of feudal restrictions • Reform of the taxation system

HOMEWORK – Using information from the timeline above, and following the paragraph guidance given in class, write a paragraph answering the question 'How successfully did conservative forces contain the threat of nationalism before 1848?'

Lesson 3: Why did economic developments 1815-48 encourage German unification?

As we have seen, power in the German Confederation lay with Austria. Although Prussia had been included alongside Austria as a 'Great Power' at the Congress of Vienna, her territory and population scarcely fitted her to play this role. As Metternich put it in 1833, "[Prussia] shares in the duties of the leading powers, but her geographical boundaries, combined with a lack of certain essential internal resources, force her back into the second rank" (quoted in M. S. Anderson, *The Ascendancy of Europe*). Furthermore, along with Austria, Prussia was one of the most reactionary of the German states. For these reasons, few liberal-nationalists in the period 1815-48 could have foreseen that the political unification of Germany would eventually be brought about by Prussia. Nevertheless, one of the foundations of German Unification was laid by Prussia before 1840, which also greatly improved Prussia's diplomatic position within the Confederation. That foundation was the Zollverein.

The German Question: *Großdeutschland* or *Kleindeutschland*?

A question that concerned all nationalists and liberals who sought unification was the question of which territories would be included and excluded in a unified German state, and which state would hold the most political power. The two options that would dominate discussions until the 1860s were *Grossdeutschland* and *Kleindeutschland*. Through discussion in class, complete the following table.

	<u><i>Grossdeutschland</i></u>	<u><i>Kleindeutschland</i></u>
Translation		
Territories included/ excluded		
Political power held by...		
Limitations /problems		

The Zollverein, 1834

The complicated organisation of Germany with its many independent states did little to promote internal trade within the Confederation. There was no common currency and no common system of weights and measures. Furthermore, import duties were placed on goods transported from one state to another, and tolls were charged within the states themselves. In 1818, Prussian leaders, keen to expand Prussia's trade and industry, established the Prussian Custom's Union. A single, low tariff was charged at Prussia's border and internal duties were abolished. Soon afterwards neighbouring states joined this union, prompting other states to form their own unions elsewhere in Germany.

However, the Prussian Union remained the strongest and gradually absorbed its rivals. In 1834, with the absorption of Bavaria and Wurttemberg, the union became known as the *Zollverein* (Customs Union). By 1836, the Zollverein included 25 states and a population of 26 million.

Significantly, the Zollverein excluded Austria. In fact, Austria was invited to join it in the early years but it refused, as it supported high tariffs, and in any case had a large home market of its own. Prussia, it has been argued, saw its opportunity to establish economic control over the Confederation and alienate Austria in its first step towards dominance over Germany. Certainly, the Zollverein greatly enhanced Prussia's influence over German affairs, to the extent that Austria later tried to join it. The Zollverein became a focal point for German nationalism. If, nationalists argued, economic unity worked to everyone's advantage, why not go the next step and secure political unity as well? Whilst most historians acknowledge the important contribution the Zollverein made towards unification, not all of them believe that it inevitably led to such a development. The member states of the Zollverein remained protective of their own political independence, which was, if anything, increased by the boost to their revenues after 1834. In addition, many were still hostile to Prussia, and indeed fought against her in 1866.

Task: Read the passage above, and make notes on the following on a separate piece of paper.

1. What was the Zollverein?
2. What were the economic barriers to unification in Germany before the Zollverein was set up? Explain briefly how these affected trade and prosperity.
3. Why was the exclusion of Austria from the Zollverein significant?
4. How might nationalists view the Zollverein, and how might this affect their views towards the 'German Question'?
5. In what ways has the Zollverein's role in unifying Germany been exaggerated?

CLASS DISCUSSION: What helped the growth of nationalism before 1848? What were the limitations to nationalism?

Homework: see next page.

Lesson 4: The 1848 Revolutions

Homework: In preparation for next lesson, read the passage below, which provides important background information on the 1848 Revolutions and introduces the topic of the Frankfurt Parliament.

1848 was a year of revolution in Europe. It started in France, where the French king, Louis Philippe, fled to England after students and workers took to the streets in Paris. News of the February Revolution spread quickly and provided the spark which ignited the passions of those in Germany who wanted change. The violent protests came from peasants and workers who demanded improvements in their daily lives. Hardship was common. In the Prussian countryside, much of the land was owned by the Junkers (Prussian landed aristocracy), who exploited their peasant labourers. Even where the peasants were able to rent land, the cost was high. Bad harvests in 1846 and 1847 had not helped, and proved particularly disastrous in the context of a rising population.

Workers in towns fared no better. The rising population led to overcrowded and unhygienic living conditions and conditions in the factories were equally squalid. The poor harvests raised the price of food and a recession in the textile industry in 1847 led to further difficulties. In such conditions, protests were by no means uncommon, even before 1848, but they were given more impetus by the events in France.

Rulers throughout Germany hastily made concessions to the revolutionaries. The Revolution in Austria got so out of hand that Metternich fled to Britain and the army was withdrawn from the capital. Soon, Austrian rule was under attack in northern Italy, Hungary and Prague. Faced with serious revolts in Italy, Hungary and Bohemia, Austria was too engrossed in its own affairs in the spring and summer of 1848 to exert its customary influence on Germany. There were similar disturbances in Prussia, which prompted the Prussian King Frederick Wilhelm to grant a series of reforms, and appoint a liberal ministry. By late March 1848 most German rulers had lost their nerve. Almost everywhere in Germany, new elections were held, liberal ministries appointed and constitutional changes set in train.



However, it was a different group that exploited the violence for political ends. The middle classes had grown in numbers and wealth by 1848, but were denied greater political power by the nobility who were fiercely protective of their privileges. Therefore it was among the middle classes that liberalism and nationalism had developed and the time seemed ripe to pursue these aims more actively. Calls for an assembly to discuss and prepare for German unification were successful. The Diet of the Confederation agreed to be replaced by a 'Vorparlament' or 'pre-

parliament' and this body of 596 men met at Frankfurt in May 1848. Their common backgrounds and broadly common aims, however concealed many different shades of opinion.

Why did the Frankfurt Parliament fail?

The 1848 Revolutions appeared to bring about enormous change. Previously reactionary rulers of German states, including Prussia, made concessions in the face of revolutionary opposition, and for the first time in history, the political unification of Germany was being openly discussed by politicians in the Frankfurt Parliament. However, by mid-1849 it was obvious that the 1848 Revolutions, and the Frankfurt Parliament, had failed to bring about any significant change. Germany was not unified. The German Confederation remained intact, and set about undoing most of the liberal achievements of 1848. Constitutional reforms in many individual states were revoked and new constitutions introduced that were far less liberal than those in effect before 1848. Radicals all over Germany were arrested and imprisoned. Some were executed. Why did the first attempt to unify Germany fail so miserably, and what lessons were there to learn for the future?

Task: Read the extract from T. A. Morris (handout in class), then in groups identify as many reasons as possible which explain why the Frankfurt Parliament failed in its attempt to unify Germany. Create a detailed spider diagram to demonstrate this.

Turn over for a timeline of the Revolutions in Germany.

Lessons from 1848

What lessons might liberals and nationalists have learnt from their failure in 1848?

Timeline -- Revolutions of 1848

1846-1849: Economic depression was spread throughout Europe. It was marked by rising food prices after a poor harvest and the recession that followed the industrial expansion in the early 1840s.

February 22, 1848: In France, one of many banquets to protest the government's inflexibility was planned, but the government banned it. Crowds began to gather in the streets and minor skirmishes with police erupted. Workers who could have never afforded tickets to the banquet constructed barricades. The revolution had begun.

February 24, 1848: After the National Guard refused to cheer for their king, Louis Phillipe, he abdicated the throne to his grandson. The Second Republic was declared from the Hotel de Ville. The cabinet was confirmed by a crowd outside the hotel.

March 3, 1848: Revolution broke out in the Rhineland.

March 12, 1848: Revolution broke out in Vienna, Austria.

March 15, 1848: Revolution broke out in Berlin, Germany.

March 18, 1848: Revolution broke out in Milan, against Austrian rule. The papal states were given a constitution and the Milanese defeated the Austrians.

March 22, 1848: Revolution broke out in Venice against the Habsburg Austrian Empire. The Venetian Republic was re-established. All of these revolutions followed the same pattern: The news of revolution in France would attract excited crowds, groups of men (mostly journalists, lawyers, and students) met to discuss the rumours. The government, in fear of revolution, would call out the army, which would begin to skirmish with the citizenry. Barricades would come up and mob action would ensue.

March, 1848: 600 delegates meet in Frankfurt in a pre-parliamentary (*Vorparlament*) assembly and called for a universal manhood suffrage election to form a national assembly to govern a unified Germany.

May, 1848: 830 delegates met in Frankfurt, mostly from the small states in the liberal West. Began to form a democratic constitution that gave the assembly itself executive control over a unified Germany.

May, 1848: As Hungary began to gain autonomy from the Austrian Habsburg Empire, Austrians began to demand a representative government. Metternich (Chancellor of Austria) resigned and universal manhood suffrage was granted.

May, 1848: As unwilling parts of the Hungarian Republic, the Croats, Czechs, and Rumanians begin to demand a similar autonomy as that granted to Hungary.

May, 1848: Piedmont declared war on Austria with a papal blessing and his troops, but Pius IX soon pulled out saying he could not fight a Catholic Austria. The Piedmontese seemed overwhelmed, but had managed to win a battle by the end of May.

July, 1848: Austrians attack Piedmont and overwhelmingly defeat it. Troops march into Milan.

September, 1848: Riots erupt in Frankfurt. The Assembly is forced to call for Prussian and Austrian aid to restore peace.

October, 1848: Austrians use Croatian sentiments for autonomy to march into Vienna and beat it into submission.

December, 1848: Prince Felix von Schwarzenberg fills Metternich's post and convinces Ferdinand I to abdicate to his 18-year-old son Francis Joseph I.

January, 1849: Austria invades Hungary, is pushed back.

March, 1849: Piedmont declares war on Austria. A strong Austrian victory places Italy firmly back into Austria's hands.

March, 1849: The Frankfurt Assembly finally completes the German constitution and elects Frederick William IV of Prussia as German emperor. When he refuses to rule the revolutionary state, the Assembly dissolves. New revolutions arise in the Rhineland, Saxony, and Bavaria.

June, 1849: With the aid of Prussian troops, Austria quashes the revolutions in the Rhineland, Saxony, and Bavaria.

June, 1849: Russians intervene and seal the fate of the Hungarian Republic, which is plagued by constant onslaught from the Austrians and dissensions from the Croats, Slavs, and Romanians.

Austria vs. Prussia (Round 1): The Erfurt Union and the 'Capitulation of Olmütz'

The Erfurt Union Plan

Immediately following the successful suppression of the Revolution, the prestige of the Prussian state was higher than it had been for many years, while Austria was still engaged elsewhere with the affairs of her empire (such as suppressing an uprising in Hungary). In addition, it appeared for the time being that the German Confederation was more or less defunct following the recent constitutional eruptions. How could the vacuum in princely German politics be filled without risking the revival of radical, nationalist ideas?

Prussian General Josef von Radowitz tried to answer this question in a set of proposals put to a representative assembly of the German states at Erfurt in March 1850. His proposals included a union of the North German states under the presidency of the King of Prussia, and under the protection of the victorious Prussian army. For Friedrich Wilhelm IV, the Prussian King, the great advantage of the plan was that Prussian influence would be based upon sound monarchical principles and not, as the offer of the German crown had been in 1849, upon any principles of popular sovereignty. According to this plan, Austria would be excluded from this 'Erfurt Union' and a *Kleindeutschland* would be created.

The Capitulation of Olmütz

In effect, von Radowitz was moving too far, too fast. The only real basis for the Erfurt Union was the fear of the German princes at the prospect of a renewed liberal onslaught. In fact, it was already evident that many of the 'middling' German states feared Prussian hegemony as much as, if not more than, liberal revolt. As a result, 11 states, including Hanover, Bavaria, Saxony and Wurttemberg, refused to send representatives to Erfurt.

The fundamental weakness of the proposals, however, was that they arose from an Austrian withdrawal from German affairs that was only temporary. By later 1850, with the Hungarian and Italian revolts under control, the Austrian premier, von Schwarzenberg, was able to declare that 'we shall not let ourselves be thrown out of Germany', and began to insist on the reconstruction of the Confederation as it had existed before 1848. Thus, by the summer of 1850 there were two assemblies claiming to speak for Germany: the Prussian-led Erfurt Union and the Austrian-led Confederation.

A revolution in the small duchy of Hesse-Cassel provided the test of nerves between the two German powers. With the alternatives of seeking aid from the Erfurt Union or from the Confederation, Hesse-Cassel turned to the latter. Anxious to preserve her newly found prestige, the Prussian army mobilised and small-scale fighting broke out between Prussian and Confederation troops. But Friedrich Wilhelm had no wish for war, and, in a meeting arranged at Olmütz on 29 November 1850 Prussia, under pressure from Russia and fearful of antagonising Austria, agreed to abandon the Erfurt Union Plan.

Austria had won a major diplomatic victory and Prussia had suffered a huge humiliation.

What does this suggest about the balance of power in Germany in 1850?

Homework: Read the section 'Austrian decline' on pp.16-17 of this pack and complete the mind map activity (create a mind map detailing reasons for Austrian decline).

Lesson 5: Austria and Prussia in the 1850s – the changing balance of power

Prussian humiliation at Olmütz in 1850 had demonstrated that Austria was still the most powerful state within the German Confederation. However, over the next decade a number of developments in both Austria and Prussia (and foreign affairs) would bring about a change in the balance of power in Germany.

Austrian decline

International Affairs: the Crimean and North Italian Wars

Crimean War:

In 1854 Great Britain, France and Turkey went to war with Russia, a war that became known as the Crimean War. Russia had played a big role in helping Austria suppress the Hungarian uprisings in 1848-9, and expected Austrian support. However, Austria was suspicious of Russian intentions in the Balkans, and even threatened to enter the war on the side of the Allies (Britain, France and Turkey). Austria mobilised her army and kept it ready for action, but never actually joined the war. The War ended in military defeat for Russia. Nevertheless, the war also was a diplomatic disaster for Austria. Her failure to repay her debt to Russia had ruptured forever the 'Holy Alliance' between the two powers. Furthermore, although she generally sided against Russia, she never fully committed herself to Britain and France. As a result, by 1856 Austria had lost the friendship of Russia without obtaining that of Britain and France, leaving her isolated in European diplomacy. Prussia, on the other hand, had managed to keep on good terms with the other European powers – especially Russia – by remaining strictly neutral throughout the war.

North Italian War:

The North Italian War of 1859 continued the process of Austrian humiliation. In 1858 the French Emperor Napoleon III signed a treaty with Piedmont-Sardinia with the intent of driving Austria out of Northern Italy and creating a unified Italy. Austria declared war on Piedmont in April 1859, but was quickly defeated by the Piedmontese and French armies. The war was a severe blow to Austria's prestige. Prussia might have profited from the war if it had supported Piedmont and France against Austria, but popular feeling in Prussia, as in most German states, was anti-French. Instead, Prussia delayed the mobilisation of her forces until Austria's defeat was virtually assured (July 1859). She then mobilised in concert with the South German princes, with a view to protecting the Rhine frontier against any further French expansionism. Thus, Prussia appeared to be making a gesture for the protection of Germany at a time when it was becoming increasingly difficult to believe in Austrian protection. As a result of the war, Austria ceded Lombardy to Piedmont-Sardinia, and Savoy and Nice to France. Moreover, the cost of the war had a terrible effect on Austria's already strained finances.

Problems of Empire

In the 1850s the Austrian government made efforts to centralise the state. Centralisation meant control from Vienna by Germans. All civil servants, judges and army officers had to speak German. This led to unrest among many non-Germans within the Austrian Empire – for instance, Hungarian resentment at the centralisation of power in the Empire led to a widespread refusal to pay taxes, and 150,000 troops had to be kept in Hungary in order to maintain Austrian control. Thus, as well as a loss of prestige in foreign affairs, the Austrian Empire was also being weakened from within.

The 1855 concordat with the Catholic Church, which strengthened the Church's hand in matters such as education, made Catholicism to all intents and purposes the state religion in Austria. As well as

adding to the disaffection among the non-Catholic nationalities, the concordat alienated German Protestants and anti-clerical liberals. This dashed the hopes of those who still dreamed of creating a *Grossdeutschland*.

Economic problems: Continued isolation from the Zollverein

In 1849, Austrian Minister-President Schwarzenberg, realising the political implications of Prussia's economic success, proposed establishing a *Zollunion*, an extended customs union, between Austria and the *Zollverein*. This move failed. So too did Schwarzenberg's efforts in 1851 to establish an alternative customs union to include Austria and those German states still outside the *Zollverein*. Thus, while Austria clung to its political leadership of the Confederation, it was effectively isolated from the Prussian-dominated economic coalition of the German states.

Therefore, Austrian finances became a serious problem in the 1850s. While taxes were increased and government expenditure reduced, this was not sufficient to reduce the huge deficit left over from the Metternich era. Military operations against the 1848 revolutionaries had only increased the deficit, while mobilisation and involvement in the Crimean and North Italian Wars had further damaged finances. Austria's financial difficulties also meant that it lacked the means to reform its army, which would soon prove costly in the 1860s.

TASK: On a separate sheet of paper (ask for A3 if you require it) create a mind map detailing reasons why Austrian influence in Germany declined in the 1850s. Make sure to include:

- **Reasons for decline in Austria's position in Foreign Affairs (details of Crimean and North Italian Wars and effects these had on international relations)**
- **Internal problems which weakened the Empire from within**
- **Economic problems and the knock-on effects this might have on Austria's position in Germany.**

The Emergence of Prussia

While Austria was declining in power in the 1850s, Prussia's power grew enormously. This was in large part a result of economic success and industrialisation and a revival of liberal nationalism.

Economic success

We have already seen how the Zollverein brought economic unity in Germany and made Prussia the economic powerhouse of the German Confederation. Another reason for her success over Austria was her rapid economic expansion in the 1850s, helped by an abundance of natural resources, largely as a result of territory gained in the 1815 Congress of Vienna. As William Carr notes, 'by an accident in geography German industrial expansion occurred largely in Prussian territory in the Ruhr, Silesia and the Saarland...Consequently the economic balance of power was moving slowly but surely in favour of Prussia in Germany and in Europe in the 1850s and 1860s; long before the battles of Sadowa and Sedan were fought [part of the later Wars of Unification], Prussia had drawn ahead of Austria and France in the industrial race, with all that this implied for the political future of Germany.' Through the Ruhr valley and west and south-west across the Rhine lay substantial deposits of coal and iron ore. Rich coal resources were also available in the Saar valley, in Prussian Silesia and in Upper Silesia, where zinc and iron deposits were also worked.

Other factors also aided Prussian economic expansion:

- Prussia had a good education system from primary schools to university level
- Prussia had a good system of communications. Railway development was particularly impressive. In 1850 Prussia had 5865km of railway line; by 1870 this had grown to 18,876km
- Railway development encouraged a host of other industries, for example, coal and iron and steel. Quite apart from its economic significance, the growth of the German railway system as a whole played a considerable role in the process of 'shrinking' the country.
- A number of key individuals played vital roles in ensuring that Prussian industrialisation forged ahead. **Alfred Krupp** was particularly important. In 1846 he employed just 140 workers. By the 1860s his iron and steel works at Essen found work for thousands of Prussians. Krupps became the main manufacturer of weapons for the Prussian army – this would become particularly important in the Wars of Unification in the 1860s
- The Prussian government also subsidised railway building, used the Prussian state bank to finance industrial pilot projects and set up technical schools (although historians disagree about the role this really had in encouraging growth)

Growth of nationalism and liberalism

The second major development during this period was the revival of the German national movement in the last years of the 1850s. Although the failure of the 1848 revolution was a serious blow to German nationalism, the idea of a unified state persisted in the hearts and minds of liberal-nationalists. In September 1859 the **Nationalverein** (German National Association) was formed. Stimulated by the success of Italian nationalism, it promoted the idea that Prussia should lead the German cause (as the state of Piedmont had led the cause of North Italian nationalism) and become more liberal in outlook. Importantly, the *Nationalverein* adopted a more pragmatic approach than previous generations of nationalists. Gone was the romantic idealism of 1848. Many nationalists now accepted that nothing could be achieved without power. Only Prussia seemed to have that power – as a result the *Nationalverein* was *Kleindeutsch* in outlook. At its peak the *Nationalverein* had only 25,000 members. However, it included many influential men and had close links with a range of organisations, especially with liberal parties that won growing support in many states, including Prussia, in the early 1860s.

Liberals enjoyed success in Prussia in the 1850s. After 1848, Prussia had a constitution with universal suffrage – but the system was far from democratic, since voters were divided into three classes according to the amount of taxes they paid. As a result, in 1849, 4.7% of voters chose one third of electors. Another third were elected by 12.6% of those eligible to vote, and the remaining third by 82.7%. However, the three-class electoral system actually gave a great advantage to the middle-class liberal elite. As a result, liberalism grew in political influence, and became a force that no politician could afford to ignore.

However, it is important not to overstate how widespread nationalism was in Germany at this point. Although growing in middle-class circles and promoted through celebrations of German culture, it is unlikely that it ever really filtered down to the ordinary people. And while growing pressure from the liberals was a factor in unification, it can hardly be argued that unification came as the result of widespread, fervent nationalism throughout Germany.

TASK: Use the information above to complete the table on the next page. Make sure to include details (e.g. precise facts, figures and dates) and explain points fully.

Consider: How much had the balance of power changed in Germany by the 1860s?

Prussian Ascendancy in the 1850s

	Economic Success	Revival of Liberal Nationalism
Key information		
How did this make unification under Prussian leadership more likely?		

Army Reforms, Constitutional Crisis and the emergence of Bismarck 1858-62

Despite the improvement in her fortunes in the 1850s, one area of weakness for Prussia remained her army. Little had been done to reform or increase the size of the Prussian army since 1815. Although the population of Prussia had increased from 10 million to 18 million since 1820, the annual army intake remained at 40,000 – thus each year 25,000 Prussians escaped military service. Furthermore, the mobilisation of the Prussian army during the North Italian War in 1859 had been a disaster – the war was over before it could be organised into readiness, and consequently Prussia lost the opportunity to achieve some political advantage over Austria.

Reform of the army became the principal concern for **Wilhelm I**, who became regent of Prussia in 1858 when his brother Friedrich Wilhelm IV was declared insane (Wilhelm would become king in 1861 and reign for another 27 years). For Wilhelm, a strong army was the only sure guarantee of a strong monarchy, and he also realised that without a strong army Prussia could not play the great role in Germany which her expected of her.

To remedy this, Wilhelm appointed **Albrecht von Roon** as Minister of War in 1859. In 1860, Roon introduced a bill to reform the army. He aimed to:

- Double the regular army's size
- Increase the period of military service from two to three years
- Reduce the role played by the inefficient *Landwehr* (the reserve force created in 1813, which consisted of untrained or partially-trained men)
- Re-equip the troops

However, these proposals were met with opposition from the liberal majority in the Prussian parliament (*Landtag*):

- Liberals feared the government might use the expanded army, not for defence from foreign attack, but against its own people as had happened in 1848-9
- The civilian *Landwehr*, although inefficient, was popular with liberals, who regarded it as a citizens' army, the guarantor of liberal freedoms against the reactionary and aristocratic regular army.
- Liberals believed that Parliament should have financial control over army expenditure. Without such a right it had very little power.

Constitutional crisis 1860-2

The army bill led to a constitutional crisis. In 1860 Parliament would only agree to approve the increased military budget for a year and would not agree to extend the term of military service to three years.

In June 1861, radical liberals formed the Progressive Party. In the newly elected Parliament in December 1861 the Progressives became the largest party, with 109 seats. Parliament would not pass the money bill for the army and Wilhelm would not accept two years' military service.

In September, Parliament again refused to pass the army bill. Wilhelm, fearing civil war, contemplated abdication. However, on 22 September, on the advice of Roon, he appointed Otto von Bismarck as chief minister. Bismarck only accepted the post on the condition that he could do as he saw fit. Bismarck had a reputation as a tough, ambitious and ruthless politician. He was viewed as a conservative reactionary and his appointment was seen as a deliberate affront to the liberals. His appointment was to be one of the most momentous occasions in Prussian, German and European history.

Questions:

1. Briefly explain the nature of the Constitutional Crisis
2. Imagine you are Bismarck. How would you approach the constitutional crisis?

HOMEWORK – BISMARCK: THE MAN AND HIS AIMS

TASK 1 - Read the handout and pp. 72-75 in your textbooks and create an A4 fact sheet on Otto von Bismarck. You must include:

- Information on his background and political views (e.g. Aristocratic/Middle class? Conservative/Liberal?)
- His career before 1862 – in particular his views towards Austria
- His aims and motives in 1862
- A definition of *Realpolitik*

TASK 2 – ‘Blood and Iron’

Bismarck’s first speech to the Prussian *Landtag* (Parliament) on 30 September 1862 badly misfired. It was not well received by liberals, and he failed to build any bridges to his political opponents. The speech, however, was to become famous for a phrase now quoted in all histories of German Unification – ‘Blood and Iron’:

“Germany is not looking to Prussia’s liberalism, but to its power; Bavaria, Wurttemberg, Baden may indulge liberalism, and yet no one will assign them Prussia’s role; Prussia has to coalesce and concentrate its power for the opportune moment, which has already been missed several times; Prussia’s borders according to the Vienna Treaties are not favourable for a healthy, vital state; it is not by speeches and majority resolutions that the great questions of the time are decided – that was the big mistake of 1848 and 1849 – but by iron and blood.”

Quoted in Stiles and Farmer

- What did Bismarck mean by the phrase ‘iron and blood’?

Lessons 6,7&8: Bismarck's actions, 1862-71 – How did he do it?

The story of Bismarck's success is remarkable. When he was appointed Minister-President in 1862, Prussia was in the midst of a constitutional crisis. Bismarck had no ministerial experience and was not expected to last long in power. Yet within eight years of his appointment, Bismarck would guide Prussia to victory in three wars (against Denmark, Austria and France, respectively) and create a unified German state under Prussian control in 1871. He would then go on to serve as Chancellor of the unified Germany he had created for another two decades, until his resignation in 1890. How did he do it? Did he have a master plan? Did he deliberately manipulate events to meet his aims? Did Bismarck foresee unification all along? Bismarck himself offered contradictory responses to these questions:

"When the army has been brought to such a state as to command respect, then I will take the first opportunity to declare war with Austria, burst asunder the German Confederation, bring the middle and smaller states into subjection, and give Germany a national union under the leadership of Prussia"

Words (allegedly) spoken by Bismarck to Benjamin Disraeli, a leading British politician, in 1862.

"A statesman is like a man wandering in a forest who knows his general direction but not the exact point at which he will emerge from the wood. It was difficult to avoid war with Austria, but he who is responsible for the lives of millions will shrink from war until all other means have been exhausted"

Bismarck in 1890

Historians' views on Bismarck

Historians have debated whether or not Bismarck had fixed aims. In his memoirs, which he wrote after he resigned his post in 1890, Bismarck creates the impression that he had a plan from the beginning. This may, however, be an attempt to enhance his own reputation. At the other extreme, historian A.J.P. Taylor has argued that Bismarck improvised his policies day by day. There was no fixed plan, but Bismarck was brilliant at exploiting circumstances. Otto Pflanze, who has written a massive three-volume biography of Bismarck, proposes an alternative interpretation. While Bismarck had very real aims, he adopted what Pflanze terms 'a strategy of alternatives'. In other words, Bismarck kept his options open about how and when to achieve his aims.

As you explore how unification was achieved, consider these two interpretations of Bismarck's role in unification. How important was he? Is he best described as a master planner or an opportunist?

TASK: Complete the A3 table on the events between 1862 and 1866

DISCLAIMER – When studying Bismarck's role in German Unification it is very easy to 'read history backwards' (to see unification as inevitable and planned by Bismarck all along). It is important not to do this, and to study this period more carefully, and assess which factors were out of Bismarck's control but which still worked in his favour.

Solving the constitutional crisis

Bismarck was appointed Minister-President to deal with the constitutional crisis that had developed over the Army Bill (see p. 21). In the end, he dealt with the crisis with a ruthlessness that would become characteristic of his leadership. He solved the problem of the military budget by withdrawing it, declaring that Parliament's support for the army bill was unnecessary as the army reforms could be

financed from taxation. To liberal suggestions that the people refuse to pay taxes, Bismarck replied that he had 200,000 soldiers ready to persuade them.

Parliament declared Bismarck's actions illegal, but he ignored it. The taxes were collected and the army was reorganised as if Parliament did not exist. Civil servants who objected to Bismarck's actions were dismissed. For four years (and through two wars), he directed Prussian affairs without constitutionally approved budgets and in the face of fierce parliamentary opposition. 'Men spat on the place where I trod in the streets', Bismarck wrote later. But he rightly judged that his opponents would avoid an appeal to force: few wanted a repeat of 1848.

The Polish Revolt – January-April 1863

In the late eighteenth century Prussia, Russia and Austria collectively had divided Poland among them. In 1863, Poles in Russia rose in revolt against Russian rule. Bismarck viewed the situation with concern – he worried that the revolt might escalate into a general Polish uprising and spread to Prussia as well. Tsar Alexander II ordered the revolt to be suppressed. France, Austria and Britain protested and offered mediation. Bismarck took the opportunity to gain Russian friendship by offering military assistance. The tsar, confident that he could defeat the Poles unaided, rejected the offer, but agreed to a convention by which Prussia would hand over to the Russians any Polish rebels who crossed the border.

Prussian liberals, who hated autocratic Russia, protested at Bismarck's action. So too did France, Britain and Austria. Bismarck found himself isolated. In an attempt to improve his diplomatic position, he claimed that the convention did not exist because it had never been ratified. This angered the tsar and Prussia was left seemingly friendless.

However, when the uprising was finally suppressed in 1864, it was clear Prussia had emerged from the affair less disastrously than Bismarck had expected. Given that the tsar had been deeply offended by Austrian and French criticism, it was likely that Russia would remain neutral in the event of Prussia going to war with Austria or France.

The Congress of Princes – August 1863

Although Austria was on the decline diplomatically, in the summer of 1863 she made a last determined effort to seize the initiative in Germany at the **Congress of Princes**. The German princes met in Frankfurt to discuss a new reform plan for the Confederation. Realising that this scheme was designed to maintain Austria supremacy within the Confederation, Bismarck encouraged Wilhelm I not to attend – threatening to resign if he did so. He also agreed to implement the new reform plan only on the condition that Prussia should have equal powers to Austria and that the new Confederation had an assembly elected by universal manhood suffrage. Bismarck knew these conditions would be utterly unacceptable to Austria, and Austria's attempts to cling on to power within the Confederation were thwarted.

The Schleswig-Holstein Issue and War with Denmark

Schleswig and Holstein were two duchies ruled by the Danish Crown. Holstein was German-speaking and a member of the German Confederation. Schleswig had both German and Danish speakers and was not in the Confederation. Both Danish and German nationalists had conflicting claims to the duchies, which caused great tension - Danish nationalists claimed Schleswig, while German nationalists insisted on the indivisibility of the duchies. This had led to trouble in the duchies in 1848. Holsteiners had rebelled against Denmark and Prussian troops had marched to their aid in support of the Frankfurt Parliament, until Russian intervention had forced the Prussian army to make peace.

In November 1863 the childless King Frederick VII of Denmark died. A treaty signed in London in 1852 (the London Protocol) had agreed that Frederick would be succeeded as ruler of Denmark and the duchies by Christian of Glücksburg, heir to the Danish throne through marriage to the king's first cousin. It was also agreed that the two duchies would not be incorporated into Denmark.

However, when Christian became King of Denmark he immediately violated the terms of the London Protocol by incorporating Schleswig into Denmark. German nationalists responded by demanding the title of Duke of Schleswig-Holstein be granted to Frederick, Duke of Augustenburg. In December 1863 the smaller states of the German Confederation, condemning Christian's actions as tyrannical, sent an army into Holstein to install the Duke of Augustenburg as its ruler. Overnight, the Duke became the most popular figure in Germany, a symbol of German nationalism.

Bismarck's actions

Bismarck was not influenced by German public opinion. However, he did see that the crisis offered splendid opportunities. He hoped to annex the two duchies, strengthening Prussian power in north Germany and winning credit for himself into the bargain. He had no wish to see the Duke of Augustenburg in control of another independent state in north Germany.

Bismarck first won Austrian help. Austrian ministers had very different aims to Bismarck. Austria, while supporting the Augustenburg claim, was suspicious of rampant German nationalism, and was anxious to prevent Bismarck from allying Prussia with the forces of nationalism. Bismarck meanwhile pretended to support Augustenburg too, keeping his expansionist aims secret. A military alliance was agreed between Prussia and Austria in January 1864. Denmark was quickly defeated and the Treaty of Vienna was signed in October 1864, in which the King of Denmark gave up his rights over the duchies, which were to be jointly administered by Austria and Prussia.

As Bismarck probably intended, the question of the long-term fate of the duchies now became a source of severe tension between Austria and Prussia. Public opinion in Germany and the duchies expected that Augustenburg would become duke. Austria supported this too. However, Bismarck proposed that Augustenburg be installed only on conditions that would have left him under Prussia's power – conditions totally unacceptable to both Austria and the Duke. Thus, by the summer of 1865 the future of the duchies was still not settled and relations between Austria and Prussia were fast deteriorating. Austria continued to support Augustenburg's claim while Prussia worked for annexation.

The Convention of Gastein

Neither Austria nor Bismarck wanted war at this stage. Austria, almost financially bankrupt, regarded war as too expensive a luxury. Bismarck was not convinced that the Prussian army was yet ready to fight and win. While Bismarck and Wilhelm I were visiting the fashionable Austrian spa town of Bad Gastein, an Austrian envoy arrived to open negotiations. As a result of this meeting it was agreed in August 1865, by the Convention of Gastein, that:

- Holstein (the duchy nearer Prussia) would be administered by Austria
- Schleswig would be administered by Prussia

The Convention diffused the crisis – but in less than a year Austria and Prussia would be at war. It is arguable that Bismarck agreed to the Convention to buy time to prepare his army and to try to secure French and Italian support for the war with Austria (a war which, supposedly, he believed to be inevitable). Either way, the Convention ensured that Bismarck could pick a quarrel with Austria over Holstein at any time he wanted.

Preparing for war with Austria

The Meeting at Biarritz

While Bismarck may not have wanted war at this stage, he realised that it was a distinct possibility. He therefore did all he could to strengthen Prussia's international position. Confident that Britain and Russia would not support Austria, he still feared France.

In October 1865, Bismarck met the French Emperor Napoleon III at Biarritz in the south of France. Historians continue to debate what happened. Almost certainly nothing was formally agreed – Bismarck was not prepared to offer German territory in the Rhineland in return for France's neutrality, and Napoleon, calculating that the war between Prussia and Austria would be exhaustive and inconclusive, intended to remain neutral and then turn this to his advantage by mediating between the two powers, gaining a much greater reward in the process than anything Bismarck could currently offer.

However, although no formal agreement was made, Bismarck left Biarritz confident of France's neutrality in the event of war with Austria.

Alliance with Italy

Over the winter of 1865-6, Prussian-Austrian relations worsened as Prussia found every possible excuse to denounce Austria for violating the terms of the Treaty of Gastein. In February 1866, at a meeting with the Prussian Crown Council, Bismarck declared that war with Austria was only a matter of time. It would be fought not just to settle the final fate of the duchies, but over the wider issue of who should control Germany. Bismarck carefully laid the groundwork for war.

A secret alliance was made with Italy in April 1866, by which Italy agreed to follow Prussia if it declared war on Austria within three months. In return, Italy would acquire Venetia from Austria when the war ended.

War with Austria (The Seven Weeks' War)

Immediately after the Treaty with Italy had been signed, Bismarck stoked up tension with Austria over Holstein. In June, Austria broke the Gastein Treaty by appealing to the Federal Diet for help with the Schleswig-Holstein question. Prussia responded by occupying Holstein. Surprised that this alone did not provoke a declaration of war, Bismarck also proposed a new constitution to the Federal Diet which he knew would be unacceptable to the Austrians. Austria now called on members of the Confederation to mobilise their armies. Prussia declared the end of the German Confederation and invited all other German states to ally themselves against Austria. However, most began mobilising against Prussia.

Within seven weeks, the Austrian army was defeated at the Battle of Koniggratz (also known as the Battle of Sadowa). **We will study why the Prussian army was so successful in the section on the army, (see pp. 32).**

The Austrian government recognised that further fighting would almost certainly lead to further defeats and might even result in the breakup of the Austrian Empire. For Austria the priority was a rapid end to the fighting, at any reasonable cost. Prussia was now in a position to dictate terms as the victor. It was a personal victory for Bismarck, and put him in a position to dominate not only Prussia, but also the whole of Germany for the next quarter of a century.

The Results of the Seven Weeks' War

The Treaty of Prague and the Creation of the North German Confederation

Austria was at Prussia's mercy after Sadowa. Wilhelm I now proposed an advance on Vienna and a takeover of Austria. Bismarck, fearful that France and Russia might intervene, counselled caution. Wilhelm and his senior generals furiously protested to Bismarck, but Bismarck threatened suicide if his advice was not taken. Eventually Bismarck got his way.

A peace settlement was agreed at Prague in August. It was agreed:

- No Austrian land would be annexed by Prussia (although Venetia was surrendered to the Italians, as agreed)
- Prussia would, however, annexe territory from other German states – including Schleswig-Holstein, Hesse-Cassel, Hanover, Nassau and Frankfurt
- All other German states north of the River Main were to be formed into the **North German Confederation** under Prussian leadership

By 1866 – just four years into office – Bismarck had succeeded in creating a unified *Kleindeutschland* (of sorts). However, Bismarck opposed pressing for the unification of all Germany in 1866. As well as the threat of French intervention, he feared that if Prussia absorbed too much too soon, this might be more trouble than it was worth. The four Catholic states south of the River Main – Bavaria, Wurttemberg, Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt – thus retained their independence.

Nevertheless, all four states agreed to sign a secret military alliance with Prussia, whereby, in the event of war, they would not only fight alongside Prussia, but also put their armies under the command of the King of Prussia.

The 'surrender' of the liberals – The Act of Indemnity

The events of 1866 also provided Bismarck with a notable domestic triumph – liberals changed their attitudes towards him. Liberals had condemned Bismarck for his illegal actions in the wake of the constitutional crisis in 1862 (see pp. 23-24 of this pack). But now Bismarck had secured unification – something they had sought for decades. Hatred for Bismarck now turned into admiration – they were intoxicated by his success. In this atmosphere, Bismarck chose the moment perfectly to approach the Reichstag with an admission that he had acted illegally and ignored parliamentary rights over the last four years, and to request their pardon in the form of an Act of Indemnity. Only seven votes were cast against the indemnity bill. Bismarck had ruled for four years without parliament, and got away with it.

The Franco-Prussian War: did Bismarck plan it all along?

As we have seen, Bismarck manipulated and reacted to events between 1862 and 1866 in order to achieve his aims of Prussian expansionism. He had unified the north of Germany and brought the liberals to heel. Two-thirds of all Germans (excluding Austrian Germans) were now part of the North German Confederation. Now Bismarck faced pressure from nationalists to complete the process of unification and bring the southern states into a unified Germany, too.

The problem with Southerners – Southern particularism

The problem with the southern states was that there was little support in these areas for a Prussian-dominated Germany and they defended their right to be independent. Nevertheless, Bismarck hoped that economic unity would eventually lead to political unity.

For this reason, the four southern states were allowed to join the Zollverein and, in June 1867, they were incorporated into the new *Zollparlament* – a parliament elected to discuss the policy of the Zollverein. This was intended to encourage closer co-operation between north and south. However, if Bismarck hoped that this would smooth the path to political unity he was mistaken. Elections for the Zollparlament in the southern states produced an overwhelming majority of deputies who opposed political union. It was becoming clear that the evolution of political unity out of economic unity would take considerable time. Was Bismarck prepared to wait?

Historians disagree about Bismarck's plans at this point. Did he see war against France as the only way of luring the southern states into the Confederation? His words in 1869 are perhaps the best indication of his intentions:

That German unity could be promoted by actions involving force I think is self-evident. But there is quite a different question, and that has to do with the precipitation of a powerful catastrophe and the responsibility of choosing the time for it. A voluntary intervention in the evolution of history...results only in the shaking down of unripe fruit, and that German unity is no ripe fruit at this time leaps, in my opinion, to the eye. If the time that lies ahead works in the interest of unity as much as the period since the accession of Frederick the Great has done...then we can look to the future calmly and leave the rest to our successors.

What does this suggest about Bismarck's view of unification in 1869?

Why did Prussia go to war with France?

Use the following information to complete the A3 diagram.

The international situation in 1866 was far better than Bismarck might have expected. Britain welcomed Prussia's dominant position in central Europe, regarding it as a welcome counterweight to both France and Russia, while Russia was pleased that it had a reliable partner against Austria. Furthermore, Austria, defeated and now absorbed with problems within its empire, was not in a position to mount a war of revenge.

The only real threat was France, led by Emperor Napoleon III. Bismarck knew that Napoleon and many Frenchmen regarded the establishment of a powerful German state as a threat to French security.

Furthermore, Napoleon was eager to acquire territory on the west bank of the River Rhine, land that had formerly belonged to the French.

The Luxemburg Crisis

In July 1866, the French ambassador in Berlin presented detailed plans to Bismarck for France to acquire part of the Rhineland belonging to Bavaria and Hesse. This idea was firmly rejected by Bismarck, who did not want to give away any German territory to France. But neither, in mid-1866, did he want to alienate France. Apart from anything else, the Prussian army was not in a good enough state to face the French in a war. He therefore suggested that France should look for expansion, not in the Rhineland, but further north in the French-speaking areas of Belgium and Luxemburg.

Having missed the chance to check Prussia's growth of power in 1866, Napoleon needed a diplomatic and territorial success to prove that France remained Europe's greatest power. Luxemburg seemed to provide an opportunity.

Napoleon, with Bismarck's help, succeeded in persuading the King of Holland, who was also the Duke of Luxemburg, to relinquish the duchy. However, Prussia also had certain rights in Luxemburg, in particular to garrison the fortress. This right dated from the Vienna peace settlement of 1815, which had made the fortress part of the German Confederation. Therefore, when news of the French takeover reached the Reichstag there was uproar at the thought of France simply taking land which contained German speakers and which had Prussian troops stationed on it.

Bismarck must have been prepared for this nationalist outburst, and indeed he encouraged and exacerbated the nationalist fervour. He began to refer to Luxemburg as German, and announced that its surrender would be 'a humiliating injury to German nationalist feelings.' He went on to declare: 'if a nation feels its honour has been violated, it has in fact been violated and appropriate action must ensue. We must in my opinion risk war rather than yield.' Anti-French sentiment increased throughout Germany.

Why did Bismarck encourage this nationalist hysteria? It seems unlikely that he wished to start a war with France at this stage. Perhaps his intention was to start a campaign of provocation to drive Napoleon into war in due course. Perhaps, rather than leading, he was himself partly led by German nationalists whom he knew he could not afford to alienate.

The results of the crisis

In March 1867, Bismarck went further by releasing texts of the secret military alliances he had made with the south German states. These showed that the North German Confederation and the four southern states were not as independent of each other as they had seemed. Relations between Prussia and France now deteriorated. Bismarck now appealed to the Great Powers to settle the Luxemburg question. At a conference in London, it was decided that Prussia should withdraw its troops stationed in Luxemburg, but that the duchy should remain independent of French control.

While the outcome of the London conference seemed like a compromise, the fact that there was no territorial gain for France was a heavy blow for Napoleon.

The Hohenzollern Candidature

An opportunity to provoke France – if this was indeed Bismarck's aim – came in 1870. Isabella, the Queen of Spain, had been forced to abdicate two years earlier. In 1870, the Spanish crown was offered to Prince Leopold, a member of the Prussian royal family (the Hohenzollerns). Bismarck knew that the prospect of a Hohenzollern on the Spanish throne would be extremely alarming to France, who would

feel 'encircled', with Hohenzollern monarchs in Berlin and Madrid pursuing anti-French policies simultaneously. Nevertheless, and against Leopold's initial wishes, Bismarck pressured Leopold into accepting the Spanish crown in June 1870.

The crisis

Bismarck had planned that the document giving Leopold's acceptance would arrive in Spain and be immediately presented to the Spanish parliament (*Cortes*) for ratification. However, the message, relayed in code through the Prussian embassy in Madrid, suffered an unforeseen mix-up of dates due to a cipher clerk's error. As a result the *Cortes* was not in session when the document arrived and before it could be recalled the secret of Leopold's acceptance leaked out.

The news reached Paris on 3 July 1870. Napoleon and his new aggressive Foreign Minister Antoine Gramont regarded Leopold's candidature as totally unacceptable. An angry telegram was sent to Berlin asking whether the Prussian government had known of Leopold's candidacy and declaring that 'the interest and honour of France are now in peril.' The French ambassador to Berlin, Count Benedetti, was instructed to go to the spa town at Ems, where Wilhelm I was 'taking the waters' and to advise him to stop Leopold leaving for Spain if he wanted to avoid war.

Wilhelm, who had no wish for war, assured the ambassador of Prussia's friendship for France, and on 12 July Leopold withdrew his candidacy. The affair seemed to have been settled, with the diplomatic honours going to France.

However, goaded by Gramont, Napoleon overplayed his hand. France now demanded an official renunciation from Wilhelm I, on behalf of Leopold, for all time. Wilhelm found this deeply insulting and refused to give the assurances demanded since he had already given his word. Even so, his reply was conciliatory. As a matter of course he instructed one of his aides to notify Bismarck, in Berlin, of the day's events in a telegram. He also gave Bismarck permission to communicate details to the press.

The Ems Telegram

That evening, Bismarck received the telegram that would come to be known as the Ems Telegram. After reading the telegram, Bismarck edited out a number of words (without adding any words) to give the impression that Wilhelm had been even firmer in rejecting the French demand. As well as giving the impression that Wilhelm had insulted the Count Benedetti, the changes to the telegram were designed to give Germans the impression that Benedetti had insulted Wilhelm.

Bismarck then ensured that his amended text of the Ems telegram was published in newspapers in Berlin. As Bismarck anticipated, the publication of the amended Ems telegram did cause eruptions in France. French newspapers, convinced that French honour was at stake, demanded war. Napoleon, urged on by his wife, his ministers, the chamber of deputies and public opinion, declared war on Prussia on 19 July.

Bismarck, claiming that France was the aggressor who had 'committed a grievous sin against humanity', called on the south German states to support Prussia in accordance with the terms of their 1866 military alliances. All agreed to do so.

The Results of the Franco-Prussian War

An overview of the war

When war broke out, Bismarck was in a strong position. Austria felt no obligation to support France after being let down in 1866. Russia had promised to fight alongside Prussia if Austria joined France: this was enough to keep Austria neutral. Denmark toyed with the idea of supporting France in the hope of recovering Schleswig but in the end did nothing. Italy made such outrageous demands on France as the price of support, that Napoleon would not accept them. Britain was unwilling to come to France's assistance, particularly after Bismarck made it appear as if the French emperor was about to invade Belgium in defiance of the longstanding guarantee of Belgian independence.² The German army (to all intents and purposes the Prussian army) was also in very good shape. Morale was high, leadership skilful and equipment effective.

In September, after a series of swift victories, the German army surrounded French forces at Sedan. The French lost more than twice as many men as Germany and Napoleon III was captured. Despite this crushing defeat, France limped on until the fall of Paris in January 1871.

(We will look at the war in more detail in the next section, on the strength of the Prussian Army)

TASK: Results of the War – Read pp. 110-112, and use the following pointer questions to help you make notes on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1. How did Prussian success in the war help unite the southern states and the North German Confederation?**
 - a. Could this have been achieved without resorting to war with France? Explain your answer.**
- 2. List the ways Bismarck attempted to 'win over' the southern states to German Unification.**
- 3. What happened in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles on 18 January 1871?**
 - a. Why was Versailles chosen as the setting for this?**
- 4. The Treaty of Frankfurt – Create a fact sheet about the Treaty of Frankfurt, and include information on:**
 - a. Territory gained by the German Empire**
 - b. Reparations owed by France**
 - c. Explain why Germany imposed a strict treaty on France, but no on Austria – try to expand and go beyond what is written in the text book and build on your knowledge of the course so far.**

² Bismarck did this by publishing in *The Times* draft documents given to him by the French ambassador in 1867, when they were discussing possible 'compensation' for French neutrality during the Seven Weeks' War. Bismarck appears to have kept these documents carefully for use in just such circumstances as arose in July 1870.

Military strength or Weak opponents? Why was the Prussian army so successful?

In the exam, you will likely be asked a question on the relative importance of different factors in bringing about German Unification. Two of the most important factors bringing about unification were the strength of the Prussian Army and the weaknesses of Bismarck's opponents. These factors worked together to ensure Prussian hegemony in Germany.

What follows is a brief description of the Seven Weeks' War and the Franco-Prussian War. **In two different colours, highlight points which demonstrate how the superior strength of the Prussian army helped win the wars, and points which demonstrate that the wars were won by opposition weaknesses.**

Strength of Prussian Army:

Weaknesses of opponents:

Seven Weeks' War

When war broke out with Austria on 15 June 1866, the Prussian army was in a much better position than it had been previously. Since the shambolic mobilisation in the North Italian War of 1859, reforms had been successfully carried out and the army was now under the command of General Moltke, a gifted military leader. Advance planning and preparation, particularly in the use of railways for moving troops, meant that mobilisation was much more efficient than that of the Austrian army. Moreover, Prussia had a large core of troops who were far better trained, disciplined and equipped than their Austrian counterparts.

However, Austria's position was far from hopeless:

- It had more soldiers: 400,000 to Prussia's 300,000
- Most of the other German states supported Austria

Although the Italians fulfilled their part of the secret treaty, they were defeated easily by the Austrians on 24 June. To prevent the victorious Austrians in the south from linking up with their troops in the north, Moltke determined to invade Bohemia. One single-track railway ran from Vienna to Bohemia. By contrast, Prussia used five lines to bring its troops southwards. Moltke adopted the risky strategy of dividing his forces for faster movement, only concentrating them on the eve of battle. Fortunately for Prussia, the Austrian high command missed several opportunities to annihilate the separate Prussian armies.

The Battle of Sadowa (also known as the battle of Koniggratz)

On 3 July 1866 the major battle of the war was fought at Sadowa. Although both sides were equally matched, and Austrian troops well equipped with artillery, the Prussians brought into use their new **breech-loading needle gun**. Its rate of fire was five times greater than anything the Austrians possessed, and it proved decisive. The Austrian army fled in disorder. Austria suffered 45,000 casualties, Prussia 9,000. The Prussians had won the battle and with it the war.

Franco-Prussian War

Most Europeans expected a French victory:

- France's population was 38 million, that of Germany 32 million
- The French army had been successful in both the Crimean War (1854-6) and the North Italian War (1859)

However, the Prussian army, with troops from the other German states, was quickly mobilised. Mobilisation had been well planned, and some 470,000 troops had been moved by train to the borders of Alsace by the beginning of August. Six German railway lines ran to the French-German frontier: France had only two. The German soldiers were under the command of the brilliant General Moltke. French mobilisation was slower and not complete by the time Napoleon III arrived at Metz to take supreme command at the end of July. The French army was less than 300,000 strong and it had no plan of campaign.

The German army enjoyed early success at Spicheren (5 August), Worth (6 August), and knocked the bulk of Napoleon's finest troops out of action at Metz between 16 and 18 August. The decisive battle came at Sedan on 1 September. French troops found themselves encircled by the German army at Sedan and attempts to break out failed. Blasted by German artillery, which had a longer range and a higher rate of fire, they suffered nearly 40,000 casualties. Prussian losses were only 9000. Napoleon was taken prisoner, along with 84,000 men, 2,700 officers and 39 generals. France carried on fighting under the new government of the French Third Republic, but from the end of September German forces surrounded Paris, and the French government eventually agreed to an armistice on 28 January 1871.

TASK: Read pp. 132-136 of the handout (an extract from *Germany 1848-1914* by Bob Whitfield) and use this supplementary information to answer the following questions and complete the table on the following page (A3 copy available).

1. **What is the most obvious piece of evidence to support the claim that the army was the most influential factor in the unification of Germany?**

2. Is it possible to imagine German Unification without the success of the Prussian army? Does this necessarily make Prussian military strength the most important factor in unification? How might you counter this argument?
3. Identify Bismarck's main opponents (think: did he only have *military* opponents?)
4. Is there any evidence to suggest that the weaknesses of Bismarck's opponents have been exaggerated?

Strength of Prussian Army	Reform to the Army	Organisation and Planning	Technology	Political and diplomatic context
Weaknesses of opponents	Economic Problems	Political difficulties	Military weakness	Political and diplomatic context

