

## Chapter

## The unification of Germany

Source 1



Source 2

Nations are inventions, the products of particular historical circumstances and movements

Sheehan, *German History 1770–1866*, 1989

◀ A cartoon from 1867. France warns Prussia: 'Now, you're big, alright. You mustn't get any bigger. Or falling you die for your own health.'

▶ King Wilhelm I of Prussia is proclaimed German Emperor (Kaiser) in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, on 18 January 1871, after the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War.

Source 3



## Think about

- ▶ Look at Source 1. According to the caption, why did France not want Prussia (the largest German state) to get any bigger?
- ▶ Do you think this was the real reason?

## Introduction

In 1871 Germany united to become a single state. It had previously existed as many separate states. The unification of Germany has had an enormous impact, not just on German history but on the history of Europe since 1871. Without a single powerful German state, two world wars might never have happened and Hitler might never have risen to power. German unification is, therefore, one of the most important events of modern history. This chapter examines how and why Germany united. It also introduces one of the most important figures in German history, Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck has always provoked extreme responses from historians. He has been described as a hero, a brilliant statesman and politician, a ruthless opportunist and even as the man who made Hitler possible. Although he himself denied that individuals can shape history, his own actions and achievements proved otherwise.

## Key questions

- What events between 1815 and 1871 led to German unification?
- Who was Bismarck and what were his aims?
- What role did each of the following play in the unification of Germany:
  - Prussia (the largest German state)
  - Economic growth
  - War
  - Nationalism
  - Liberalism
  - Bismarck
- Was Germany united by 'Blood and iron'?
- Was the unification of Germany inevitable?

## An era of change

Source 4

There is a dynamism about nineteenth-century Europe that far exceeds anything previously known. Europe vibrated with power as never before...its prime symbols were its engines – the locomotives, the gasworks, the electric dynamos...Europeans, in fact, were made to feel not only powerful but superior...for nineteenth-century man, power was the object of wonder and hope...

Davies, *Europe*, 1997

As Source 4 suggests, the nineteenth century was a time of enormous change in Europe. Society became less agricultural and more industrial; less rural and more urban. This was the era of steam engines, railways and, later, electricity. It was the era of machines that transformed production. It was the era of factories, built to house those machines. It was the era of urbanism as people flocked to the towns where the new factories were located. The impact of these changes cannot be overestimated.

Germany witnessed these changes as much as any country during the nineteenth century. Of great importance to its industrial development were improved communications. Better roads were built, canals were dug and, in particular, the railways arrived. The first line opened in 1835 and the railway system quickly expanded (despite doctors' health warnings of the dangers of travelling at such speed). German society also underwent an important change. The German people were no longer defined for life according to their status at

## Facts and figures

- 1800 Travel from Paris to St Petersburg took 20 days
- 1813 The first gas lights installed in Pall Mall, London
- 1835 Invention of the electric telegraph
- 1840s First postage stamp available in Britain (Penny Black)
- 1860s Oil available for the first time
- 1877 Invention of the telephone
- 1880s Electricity widely available
- 1889 Invention of the internal combustion engine
- 1890s Introduction of gliding
- 1896 Invention of the radio
- 1900 Travel from Paris to St Petersburg took 30 hours
- 1903 The Wright Brothers flew the first petrol-driven aeroplane

birth. Instead, they were defined by their social class at any given point. It was, in consequence, easier to move between social groups and nobles were free to pursue middle-class professions – although moves in the opposite direction, from peasant upwards, remained less common.

Europe's population was expanding rapidly, increasing from around 150 million in 1800 to over 400 million by 1914. This created tensions everywhere, not least in overcrowded, unhygienic living conditions in the rapidly expanding towns. In Germany, much of the population growth was in the countryside and food supplies were becoming inadequate. Terrible epidemics of disease, such as cholera, brought demands for better public health provision. These demands came from the expanding working classes, which began to acquire political awareness and self-confidence due to their large numbers, their concentration in the towns and their poor treatment. They were often joined by the growing middle classes who, despite their wealth and importance as traders and industrialists, resented their lack of political power. The traditional aristocratic elites in Germany were more determined than those in many other countries to hold on to their privileges and power and they were often the ones least affected by the changes happening around them.

This was also an era of growing nationalism which was to blossom fully towards the end of the century. Uneven economic growth among neighbouring states created opportunities for the most successful states to expand, in order to satisfy the needs of a growing population, to supply enough raw materials for production and to secure new markets. Some states, though not Germany, looked outside Europe for this and built up huge empires which spanned continents. In Germany, voices demanding the unification of the country could be heard; their calls were finally answered in 1871.

## Germany 1815–1858

### The German Confederation, 1815

Germany as a single country did not exist until 1871. Before the nineteenth century the area known as Germany consisted of over 350 different states, loosely linked by a common language. Some of the states were large kingdoms, such as Prussia and Austria, and others were little more than a city, ruled by noblemen. Together they formed part of the massive Holy Roman Empire, which also included extensive Austrian territories. This Empire, though vast, had little bearing on the states of which it was formed; it had no real political significance and disappeared after Napoleon invaded and defeated Austria and Prussia in 1805–6.

By the time of his own defeat in 1815, Napoleon had changed Germany for good. The hundreds of individual states had been reduced to just thirty-nine, although the largest two remained Austria and Prussia. In the Vienna Settlement of 1815, the German Confederation (Bund) was established, using the boundaries of the old Holy Roman Empire. This Confederation did not signal a unification of German people, not least because non-Germans were included – such as Italians – while groups of German-speakers were excluded (see Source 5). It was a federation of states rather than a federal state. In other words, the individual states remained independent and there was no overall head of the confederation. The Federal Diet which met at Frankfurt and was supposed to be the main decision-making body of the Confederation was really a chance for individual states to protect their own interests. Decisions were rarely made, as they depended on the unanimous approval of the member states.

### Nationalism

Strong feelings of loyalty between people who share race, language and culture. Also a desire in a people to defend their country and make it strong. The idea grew rapidly during the nineteenth century. At its worst it can lead to persecution of minority groups, such as Jews. It can also encourage expansion and war against other states. In its mildest form, however, it involves feelings of solidarity among a people and pride in their country. These feelings are more commonly termed patriotism today.

### Federal

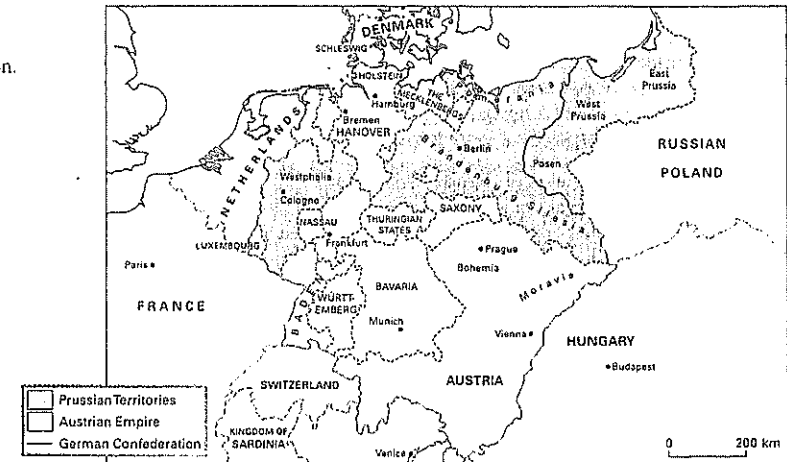
Where individual states are bound to a central government but also keep some of their own powers.

### Prussia

The Austrian Empire contained all the lands ruled by the ruling house of Austria, but also Hungary, parts of modern day Italy and regions that have since become independent, such as the Czech Republic.

### Source 5

The German Confederation.



### Liberalism

Belief in individual rights and freedom. Liberals supported free trade.

### Think about

How does Source 6 combine both liberalism and nationalism?

The main player in the creation of the Confederation was Prince Metternich, Foreign Minister of Austria. He saw Austria as the dominant influence in the Confederation. The idea of the Confederation was not to encourage unification. In fact, the intention of Metternich was the exact opposite. With an Austrian Empire full of different ethnic groups, the last thing he wanted to encourage was nationalism. If Germans were to unite then perhaps the Slovaks, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats and other groups in the Austrian Empire would also demand independent states.

In fact, the calls for German unification at this point were muted and mainly restricted to the middle class. It was true, however, that the years of Napoleonic rule had encouraged the growth of two ideologies; nationalism and liberalism. Liberals were often nationalists, although the reverse was not always the case.

### Source 6

... happiness and pleasure are not the highest aims of the people, but freedom. That is the will of God and reason ... the happiness and the greatness of a people depend only on the highest possible liberty of all citizens and the equality of all, established by laws they make themselves or that are made by their representatives ... An enthusiastic people which is willing to fight for such laws and for such a fatherland cannot be conquered ... and the most beautiful of all: Germans we are all together! ... that wonderful people from the Weichsel to the Vosges, from the North Sea over the Alps to Carpathia, made equal through speech, customs, and descent, all citizens of the Reich – a unified people of brothers is irresistible.

Extract from a speech by a nineteen-year-old student in 1820

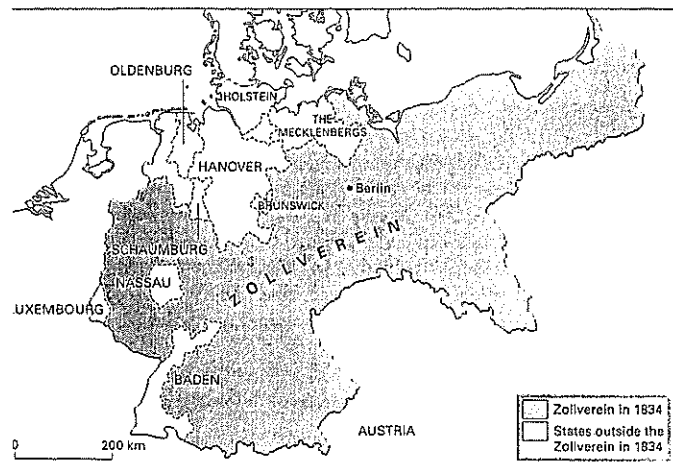
In 1819, a member of a nationalist student group murdered Kotzebue, an anti-liberal playwright with Russian connections. This prompted Metternich to issue the Karlsbad decrees which imposed tighter control on education and censorship of publications less than 320 sides long. This latter measure led, not surprisingly, to successions of dull and excessively long books, whose length had been pointlessly extended in order to avoid censorship! The whole episode

ustrated how fiercely Metternich opposed both liberalism and nationalism and in this attitude he was, for now, supported by Prussia.

though Austria was the strongest, most dominant member of the Confederation, the territorial settlement at the Vienna Conference prepared the way for future changes to the balance of power. Prussia's population more than doubled with the acquisition of land to the west, including the Rhineland and Westphalia. Such gains brought with them better supplies of raw materials and more advanced industry. They also shifted Prussia's field of vision into the east of Germany, as they came at the expense of losing Polish territory to Prussia. This enabled Prussia, as the century progressed, to dominate Germany in a way that Austria could not. From now on, lesser German states would tend to look to Prussia for protection and not Austria.

### The Zollverein, 1834

The complicated organization 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 rulers, keen to expand Prussia's trade and industry, established the Prussian Customs 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 in the early stages 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

### Think about

- ▶ Can you suggest any possible reasons why Austria was not included in the Zollverein?

### Source 7

- ▶ The Zollverein.

### Revolution

#### Junkers

Prussian aristocrats from east of the River Elbe.

### Notes

Most of the members of the Frankfurt Parliament were middle class. In fact, its members were unusually well qualified – over 80% had university degrees. Most were teachers, lawyers, and professors and there were some writers and clergymen. Out of the 596 members, just 4 were artisans and one was a peasant, who was further disadvantaged by being a Pole from Silesia.

### Discussion

The weaknesses of revolutionary forces in Germany were...evident from the start: it took a spark from outside to ignite the revolution; there was a range of forces with different aims exerting pressure on the regimes... Having withdrawn from the fray, rather than being defeated, conservative forces were able to observe the disarray and failings of the revolutionary groups, and later to return to take control of the situation with their armed forces intact, and even strengthened by concessions to peasant demands.

Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 1990

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.

### Revolution, 1848–1849

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 to their daily lives. Hardship was common. In the Prussian countryside, much of the land was owned by the Junkers, who exploited their peasant labourers. Even where 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 the 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. 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.

One of the key issues on which they disagreed was the boundary of this united Germany. There were two options. The first was to include German-speaking Austria (*Grossdeutschland* – Big Germany) and the second was to exclude it, leaving Prussia as the dominant state (*Kleindeutschland* – Little Germany). Slowly, after much discussion, a smaller Germany emerged as the favourite. By March 1849, the Frankfurt Parliament proposed a Constitution for a German Empire. The crown of this new Germany was offered to the King of Prussia, who refused to accept a thing 'moulded out of the dirt and dregs of revolution, disloyalty and treason'. What right, he argued, did these common men have to offer a king another crown? He was not the only ruler to reject the Constitution; the rulers of Saxony, Bavaria and Hanover did the same.

Why did the Frankfurt Parliament fail? On one level, it was because the rulers regained their confidence after the fright of 1848 and used the Prussian and Austrian armies to strengthen their position. On another level, however, it was because the liberals lacked the necessary backing. They were themselves afraid

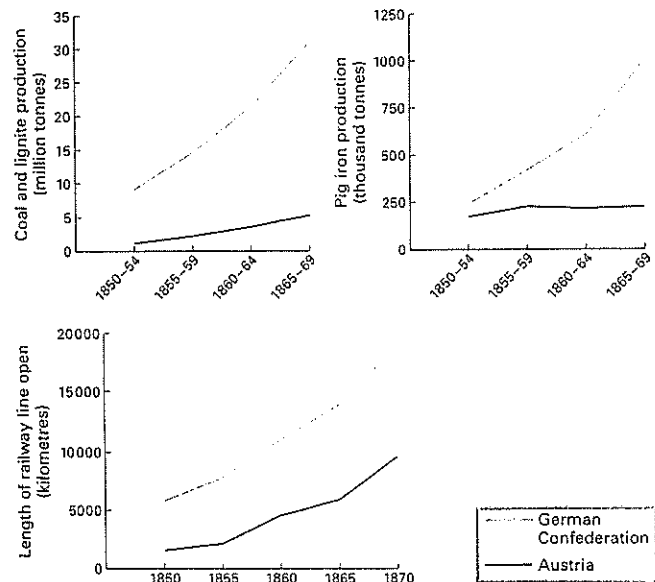
of the violence on the streets and could hardly claim to represent the protesters. One of the messages that north German liberals took away from this episode was the importance of securing Prussia's backing for any future unification proposal.

### Why did Prussia grow in strength after 1850?

Meanwhile, the Prussian government took steps, in May 1849, to ensure that any further moves towards German union would be under its control. The Erfurt Union, consisting of Prussia, Saxony and Hanover, was led by Prussia, and membership was open to the other German states. Its purpose was to explore the issue of unification, but it failed, however, largely through Austrian opposition. In 1851 the German Confederation (still dominated by Austria) was fully re-established and Prussia was forced to abandon alternative unification plans which Austria found unacceptable. However, Austria's triumph was short-lived as she was soon facing problems elsewhere. While the economy of the German Confederation as a whole flourished, Austria's did not (Source 8). In an increasingly industrial age, Austria's vast agricultural areas held back economic growth. In addition, her taxation system was outdated. Furthermore, Austria's involvement in military disputes with Italy and south-eastern Europe led to high expenditure on the army. In desperation, Austria attempted both to link her empire with the Zollverein and also to break the Zollverein up, but most of the German states preferred things as they were and Austrian plans were rejected.

Austria also lost an important ally during this period. During the Crimean War (1854-1856), Austria wavered between offering her support to Russia and to Britain and France. By the end of the war she had alienated Russia without securing the backing of either Britain or France and was, therefore, left isolated.

Meanwhile, Prussia went from strength to strength. Its industrial growth far outstripped that of Austria and in the space of ten years it doubled, as indeed did foreign trade.



Source 8

A comparison of the industrial growth of the German Confederation and Austria.

#### Think about

- ▶ How did the economic growth of the German Confederation and Austria differ?
- ▶ What impact do you think this had on relations between the German Confederation and Austria?

#### Activity

Another factor in Prussia's growing economy was her advanced education system. Elementary education had been made compulsory in 1812 and soon afterwards, technical institutions were established.

Source 9



The Prussian War Minister, von Roon.

#### Activity

The year is 1862 and the English Ambassador to Prussia is preparing a report. This report is intended to inform politicians in England how powerful the state of Prussia currently is.

Your task is to write this report, remembering to be as specific as possible in the details you provide. Your report should include the following areas:

- The Prussian economy
- Prussia's territory
- The power and strength of the Prussian monarchy
- Prussia's strength compared to Austria's
- Whether you think there will be some sort of German unification soon.

How can we explain such rapid industrial growth? The answer lies in a number of factors all of which interlink. The Zollverein provided a large free-trade area in Germany which brought many advantages. Trade outside the Confederation also increased and the result was more money to invest in further industrial projects. Rich coal and iron resources enabled the mining industries to flourish and the newly built railways, themselves a product of expansion, further stimulated the economy because of the ease of transporting materials and goods. The Prussian government supported this industrial growth. For example, the government offered money to struggling industries.

### Nationalism

While Prussia's economy became increasingly modern and forward-looking, politically she remained, by contrast, conservative and backward-looking. Manteuffel, the Prussian Prime Minister, governed without parliament and rejected all calls for a more representative, democratic political system. Despite this, the liberals won a large majority in the Prussian Parliament in 1858. A year later the National Association (*Nationalverein*) was founded to provide a platform for liberal discussions. It called for a centralized government led by Prussia in the place of the German Federal Diet. Their programme stated that 'In the present circumstances effective steps for the attainment of this aim can originate only with Prussia.' But how widespread was nationalism 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 whilst 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.

### Why was there a constitutional crisis in Prussia?

In 1858 King Friedrich Wilhelm IV suffered a series of strokes. His brother, Wilhelm, became regent and then King Wilhelm I when Friedrich Wilhelm died three years later. The new king was 64 years old and a devout Protestant, believing his power came from God. He was also a military man, convinced that a stronger army was essential to Prussia's greatness. When, in 1859, war broke out between France and Austria over the issue of a united Italy, a stronger Prussian army seemed even more crucial. With war on its doorstep, Prussia needed to be in a position to defend itself, and even exploit opportune circumstances. He asked the War Minister, von Roon, to strengthen the army and a bill was prepared to send to the Prussian Parliament in 1860. It proposed to increase the length of service in the army from two to three years and to abolish the Landwehr (a citizens' army, led mainly by middle-class officers). The cost of these changes would be high and the Parliament, now dominated by liberals, refused to approve a budget for the changes unless significant alterations were made. The new King was faced with a difficult decision. Either he abdicated or he accepted that Prussia's military affairs were beyond his control. He could tolerate neither option. This is what we describe as a 'constitutional crisis', when the constitution itself does not present any obvious solutions to such a deadlock. The only possible solution was to appoint a chief minister who might somehow be able to get the bill passed by the Prussian Parliament. Von Roon persuaded the King to meet the Prussian Ambassador to Paris and by the end of the meeting the King had a new Minister-President, Otto von Bismarck. It was 1862 and the beginning of a new era.

## What were Bismarck's aims?



Who was Bismarck?

Otto von Bismarck was born in 1815. His father was a Junker and a relatively uneducated man. His mother came from an educated middle-class background. She was intelligent and ambitious for her children and Bismarck was sent to boarding school at an unusually young age. Bismarck did not enjoy school. On leaving, he decided to study at Gottingen University where he was something of a misfit. He did not quite belong to either the aristocratic or the middle-class circles, though he chose the former. He disliked the lack of good manners and breeding amongst the middle class. He also disliked their seriousness. After university he entered the civil service. It was during this period that he fell desperately in love with an English girl, Isabella Loraine-Smith. He followed her around Germany and lost his job in the process, only to be jilted when she married someone else. He returned to the family estates which he ran successfully, despite his reputation as 'wild Bismarck' who had a liking for wine and women. During this time he read and travelled widely and continued to form his political ideas. The turning point came when he met Marie von Thadden in 1842. She was a devout Protestant and set out to 'save' Bismarck. He in turn was converted. Unfortunately, Marie died in an epidemic, an event which apparently had Bismarck praying for the first time in fifteen years. Soon afterwards he proposed to Marie's close friend, Johanna and she accepted. She provided Bismarck with the comfort and stability he needed. In 1847 Bismarck became a Deputy in the Prussian United Diet. A year later his defence of the old order during the revolution led to his first major political appointment, as the Prussian Representative at the Diet in Frankfurt. Here he played a significant role in trying to exclude Austria from German affairs. In 1857 he became the Prussian ambassador to St Petersburg in Russia and then to Paris. It was from here that he was summoned in 1862 to meet with King Wilhelm I of Prussia.

Source 10

'In many domestic and foreign affairs and questions,' wrote a contemporary, 'Prince Bismarck likes to provide himself with an alternative in order to be able to decide the same in one of two opposed directions.' Frequently these alternatives were multiple solutions to a single political problem that could be simultaneously explored until the moment of final choice. Often they were multiple possibilities of alliance with opposed political forces between which a final choice had to be avoided as long as possible. In its many variations, the strategy of alternatives provided Bismarck with a means of navigating amid the shifting currents and treacherous eddies of the time stream. It enabled him to gain and retain the initiative. The knowledge that his quiver held more than one arrow gave him the confidence and sureness that most of his opponents lacked.

Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany Vol 1*, 1990

### Historical debate

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, the 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.

Did he [Bismarck] foresee it [German unification] himself? Of all questions in Bismarck's career this is the most difficult to answer. He was always emphatic that he could not make events. He said once: 'Politics are not a science based on logic; they are the capacity of always choosing at each instant, in constantly changing situations, the least harmful, the most useful,...When someone praised his direction of events between 1862-1871, he pointed to many mistakes that he had made and said: 'I wanted it like this, and everything happened quite differently. I'm content when I see where the Lord wishes to go and can stumble after him.' Was this false modesty?...Certainly there is not a scrap of evidence that he worked deliberately for a war with France, still less that he timed it precisely for the summer of 1870.

Taylor, *Bismarck, The Man and The Statesman*, 1955

'I shall soon', said in effect the Prussian statesman, 'be compelled to undertake the conduct of the Prussian Government. My first care will be to organize the army, with or without the help of the Landtag [Prussian Parliament]. The King was right in undertaking this task, but he cannot accomplish it with his present advisers. As soon as the army have been brought into such a condition as to inspire respect, I shall seize the first best pretext to declare war against Austria, dissolve the German Diet, subdue the minor states, and give national unity to Germany under Prussian leadership.'

Bismarck in conversation with Disraeli, a British politician, in 1862. The account comes from Count Eckstadt, the Saxon Ambassador to London

Bismarck was at pains always to insist that war for him was only a final resort, to be avoided thankfully if the desired result could be achieved by other means...On the other hand, at no time so far as is known, did he ask himself whether the very fact that his aims could be achieved only by war did not put a question-mark against those aims.

What, in the autumn of 1862, was it that he wanted to achieve? It is doubtful whether at this stage he had any more specific or distant aim than reducing Austria's pretensions [claims] to the leadership of Germany, and setting up some sort of North German Union dominated by Prussia.

Crankshaw, *Bismarck*, 1981

...Prussia must gather and consolidate her strength in readiness for the favourable moment, which has already been missed several times; 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...

Bismarck's speech to the Prussian Parliament, 1862

### Structure

How do Sources 10, 11 and 12 differ in their interpretation of Bismarck's aims?

What light, if any, do Sources 13 and 14 shed on Bismarck's aims?

Can you suggest any reasons why historians hold different views on the question of Bismarck's aims?

### Activity

You will need to read the rest of this chapter before attempting this activity.

Re-read the 'Historical Debate' box and Source 11. Your task is to write a review of A.J.P. Taylor's book for a historical journal. Using the information on these two pages and the rest of the chapter, you need to decide whether or not you agree with Taylor's argument. You must back up your reason with evidence. Remember that your intended audience will want to know if the book is worth reading!



## How did Germany become united?

### The problem with the Liberals

Bismarck's first task as Minister-President was to resolve the constitutional crisis over the army bill. In his memoirs he recounted his promise to King Wilhelm I:

#### Source 15

I succeeded in convincing him [the King] that, so far as he was concerned, it was not a question of liberal or conservative of this or that shade, but rather monarchical rule or parliamentary rule, and that the latter must be avoided at all costs, if even by a period of dictatorship. I said; 'in this situation I shall, even if your majesty command me to do things which I do not consider right, tell you my opinion quite openly; but if you finally persist in yours, I will rather perish with the King than forsake your majesty in the contest with parliamentary government.'

Bismarck addressed the crisis in a typically ruthless and uncompromising fashion. He argued that there was no provision within the Constitution for resolving disputes between the two houses of parliament. The matter was therefore for the King to decide. The army bill was never passed but was nevertheless implemented and funded through the collection of taxes. Relations between Bismarck and the liberals deteriorated and, by the end of 1863, Bismarck had practically established a dictatorship in Prussia. The liberals were still powerful, however, and won a large majority in the 1863 election. It took two successful wars to convince them to support Bismarck, an outcome that was perhaps not entirely unplanned. Although Bismarck had clear foreign policy aims in 1862, he also began to appreciate that internal unity was an important by-product of successful wars.



### Schleswig-Holstein

The two duchies of Schleswig-Holstein (see Source 5) were autonomous (self-governing) but under Danish sovereignty. Holstein contained mainly Germans and was part of the German Confederation, whilst Schleswig contained a mixture of Germans and Danes and was outside the Confederation. In 1863 King Frederick of Denmark died, leaving no immediate heirs. As agreed by the Great Powers in 1852, he was succeeded by Christian of Glücksburg whose

#### Further reading

As you can see from the previous spotlight, there are many biographies of Bismarck. Shorter biographies include:

Waller, *Bismarck*, 1985  
Abrams, *Bismarck and the German Empire 1871-1918*, 1995

#### Source 16

A cartoon from a liberal magazine. Bismarck is holding the Prussian Constitution and saying that he cannot rule with it.

#### Think about

- ▶ What point is the cartoonist in Source 16 trying to make?
- ▶ Why is it significant that this cartoon comes from a liberal magazine?
- ▶ What strikes you about Bismarck's use of the word "rule"?

This was agreed by Britain, France, Russia, Prussia, Austria and Sweden.

The British politician, Palmerston, made the joke that only three people ever understood the Schleswig-Holstein issue: Prince Albert who was dead, a German professor who had gone mad and Palmerston himself, who had forgotten what it was about anyway.

I am certainly no Bismarck enthusiast, but he has the ability to act... I look forward to the future with pleasure. There is something invigorating, after fifty years of peace, in a day like the battle of Duppel [against the Danes] for the young Prussian troops. One feels as if all one's nerves had been refreshed.

Extract from a letter written  
by a German Liberal,  
April 1864

Bismarck was fortunate in 1866; Russia was unlikely to support Austria and an alliance with Italy was concluded. Bismarck somehow managed to secure the neutrality of France, although Napoleon III was signalling his support to both Prussia and Austria. However, it was not Napoleon's intention at this point to become involved in a war. He was much more interested in securing the best territorial position for France.

The Prussian victory at Koniggratz was not a foregone conclusion, despite Prussia's military superiority. A recent interpretation suggests that the outcome was partly dependent on the blunders of the Austrian command.

right to become King arose from his marriage to King Frederick's first cousin. Holstein refused to accept Christian on the grounds that his inheritance came through the female line. Meanwhile, Christian annexed Schleswig to the Danish crown. The Federal Diet demanded armed intervention but Bismarck called instead for joint action by Prussia and Austria alone.

The Danes were quickly defeated and, in the Treaty of Vienna in October 1864, they surrendered all rights to both duchies. However, Austria and Prussia held different views about the next step. Austria would have been happy to see the duchies remain autonomous, whereas Bismarck clearly had plans to annex the territories to Prussia. An agreement (the Gastein Treaty) was finally reached in 1865. Holstein would be administered by Austria and Schleswig would be governed by Prussia. At Austria's insistence, the duchies would remain under a joint sovereignty, thereby preventing full annexation to Prussia. Reluctant to go to war with Austria at this point, Bismarck accepted the decision. It was clear, however, that he expected further tensions to follow which would provide him with an opportunity to resolve the Austrian issue.

### War with Austria

Tensions did indeed continue over the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein and Bismarck made clear at a meeting of the Prussian Crown Council that war against Austria was inevitable. Bismarck had planned for this confrontation for some time. 'Germany is clearly too small for us both' he had written in 1856. In 1866 the time was right not only to settle the disputes over the duchies but also to settle the future of Germany. The Prussian army, under the command of General von Moltke, was well trained and well equipped. In addition, it seemed highly unlikely that either Britain or Russia – still smarting after Austria's actions in the Crimean War – would get involved.

In April 1866, Bismarck concluded a secret alliance with Italy. He also increased tensions by proposing a new constitution to the Federal Diet which he knew would be unacceptable to the Austrians. Meanwhile, the majority of the smaller German states rallied to the Austrian cause, fearing Prussian domination. The years of economic union did not appear to have increased their support for Prussia.

In June, Austria broke the Gastein Treaty by placing the Schleswig-Holstein question under the control of the Federal Diet. Prussia responded by occupying Holstein. Surprised that this alone did not provoke a declaration of war, Bismarck presented a fuller version of his proposal to reform the Federal Constitution. Austria now called on members of the Confederation to mobilize their armies. Prussia declared the end of the German Confederation and her troops advanced.

Within seven weeks, the Austrian army was defeated at Koniggratz. Bismarck had no wish to go any further and had to restrain the King who wished to inflict more wounds on Austria and win Austrian territories. This, in Bismarck's view, would encourage Austria to ally with any potential enemy of Prussia, especially France. Bismarck, in tears, presented the King with an ultimatum: either war should end or he would resign. Finally, a peace settlement was agreed at Prague in August. No Austrian land was annexed by Prussia although Venetia was surrendered to the Italians. Prussia did, however, annex Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Kassel, Nassau and the city of Frankfurt, all of which had supported Austria in the war. Austria was forced to accept Prussian dominance in Germany and agreed to the creation of a North German Confederation.

Not only had Bismarck achieved his aim of dominance over Austria. The war had also brought about the collapse of the liberals' vote in the election of 1866. Bismarck finally ended the conflict over the army bill in Parliament by persuading the King to admit he was at fault and by successfully requesting Parliament's approval for his actions over the previous four years (see note). Even the liberals accepted such a move in the wake of military victory and with the prospect of unification.

Bismarck had gained significant victories, both inside and outside Prussia. But which victory had he put first in his planning?

**Source 17**

The war of 1866 was entered on not because the existence of Prussia was threatened, nor was it caused by public opinion and the voice of the people...but for an ideal end – the establishment of power...Prussia felt itself called upon and strong enough to assume the leadership of the German races.

Field Marshal Helmut von Moltke, 1866

**Source 18**

It had been he [Bismarck] who had possessed the temerity [cheek] to break with the traditions of Prussian diplomacy and to choose an anti-Austrian policy as the means of dividing the parliamentary opposition that was threatening to paralyse the Prussian Government when he came to power in September 1862...

Craig, *Germany 1866–1945*, 1981

**The North German Confederation 1867**

What had Bismarck achieved through war with Austria? Prussia now controlled four-fifths of the population, and most of the territory, north of the River Main. The annexation of Hanover, Nassau, Hesse-Kassel, Schleswig-Holstein and Frankfurt was carried out in a brutal fashion. They were not consulted at any stage and as one historian points out 'It was not unification, but conquest' (Stiles, 1986). However, there remained independent states in north Germany which were outside of direct Prussian control (Saxony was the most significant). These states were forced to become part of the North German Confederation which covered all of Germany north of the Main and was controlled by Prussia. This Confederation was probably never an end in itself, however. It was another important step towards unification of the whole of Germany. It was also, in its exclusion of Austria, a symbol of Prussian dominance. If Germany was to be united, then it would surely be under Prussian control.

**The Constitution of the North German Confederation**

The Constitution of the North German Confederation outlived the Confederation itself. It became the basis for the Constitution of the German Empire of 1871 and is, therefore, worthy of some comment. Bismarck worked hard to produce a constitution which would prevent a system of parliamentary rule but would provide enough popular participation in government to satisfy the liberals. He also worked hard to ensure Prussian dominance of the Confederation whilst reassuring the northern (and indirectly, southern) states that their independence would not be destroyed.

**Notes**

The King was persuaded by Bismarck to accept an indemnity bill. This provided the Prussian Parliament's approval for all government expenditure for the previous four years. Historians have since criticized the liberals for agreeing to the bill, but in reality they had little choice. They agreed with Bismarck's economic and foreign policy and wanted to support any moves in the direction of unification.

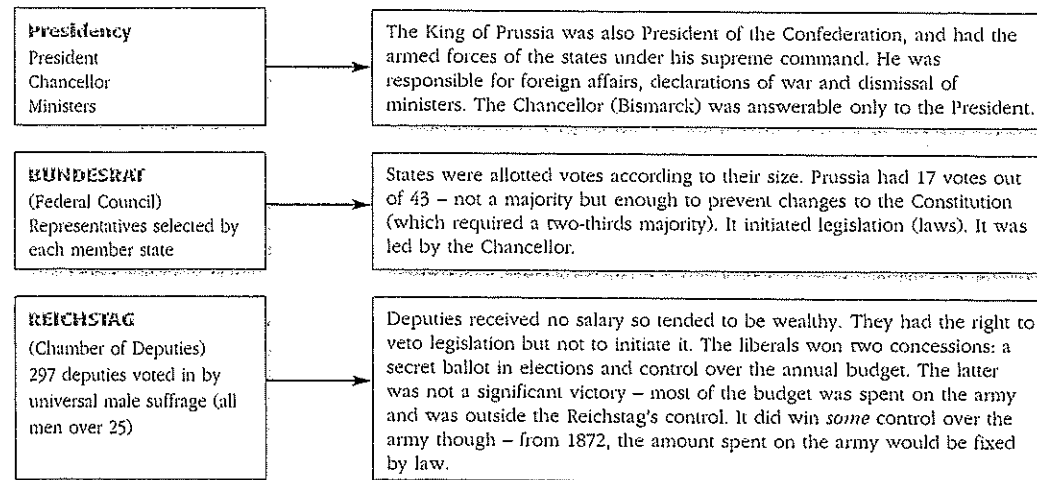
**Think about**

- ▶ Do Sources 17 and 18 agree on the main motives behind war with Austria?
- ▶ From your own knowledge, what do you consider to have been Bismarck's main motive behind war with Austria?

**Confederation**

See Source 21 on page 26 for a map showing the North German Confederation.

**The new Constitution**



**Think about**

- ▶ Who held the most power within the Constitution?
- ▶ How democratic was the Constitution? In other words, how much power did ordinary Germans have?
- ▶ Do you think the individual states would have been happy with their position in the Constitution?

The Confederation was responsible for defence, foreign policy and economic matters such as customs and banking. The individual states kept their own rulers, their own parliaments and their own laws. Local taxation could be raised to pay for government services including education.

**The Franco-Prussian War**

**The failure of economic union**

There was still the issue of the southern states however. There was little support in these areas for a Prussian-dominated Germany and they defended their right to remain independent. The term used to describe this is particularism. Bismarck had used the Prague settlement to ensure that the southern states could not support either France or Austria against Prussia. Clauses were inserted into the peace treaties which put the armies and railways of the states under Prussian control in times of war. Quite why they accepted this is unsure, but it may have been due to their own distrust of France. In any case, it meant that the southern states were no longer a potential threat to Bismarck. He decided not to force the southern states to unite with the north at this point. It is probable that Bismarck hoped that economic unity would eventually lead to political unity.

The four southern states were allowed to join the Zollverein and, in June 1867, Bismarck forced them to accept a new Zollparlament (customs union parliament). This organization would be dominated by Prussia and would include members of the North German Reichstag and elected members of the southern states. 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 have disagreed about Bismarck's plans at this point. Did he see a war against France as the only way of luring the southern states into the

**Notes**

The four southern states outside the North German Confederation were:

- Baden
- Württemberg
- Hesse
- Bavaria

Confederation? His famous words at the time, in 1869, are perhaps the best indication of his intentions:

**Source 19**

That German unity could be promoted by actions involving force I think is self-evident. But there is a quite 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...

Extract from a dispatch by Bismarck to the Prussian envoy in February 1869

**Luxembourg: a dress rehearsal for war?**

Napoleon III was eager to acquire territory on the west bank of the River Rhine, land that had formerly belonged to the French. He was disappointed that his neutrality in Prussia's war against Austria had not brought him any further towards this goal. Bismarck wanted, at this point, to keep the support of France. Apart from anything else, the Prussian army was not in a good enough state to face the French in a war. He pointed Napoleon away from the Rhine and towards Luxembourg. Luxembourg was a duchy under the sovereignty of the King of Holland but had also been made part of the German Confederation in 1815.

Napoleon succeeded in persuading the King of Holland to relinquish Luxembourg. When news 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 may have encouraged it despite his earlier encouragement of Napoleon. However, he did not want to fight France and so he put the matter in the hands of the Great Powers. In London it was decided that Prussia should withdraw its troops stationed in Luxembourg (a significant gain for France) but that the duchy should remain independent of French control. This was, overall, a humiliating defeat for Napoleon.

What were Bismarck's aims in Luxembourg? To prevent the French from making territorial claims on Germany? Or to undermine French relations to the point where war was clearly on the cards? Or was he simply keeping all his options open?

**The Spanish Succession**

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 prospect of a Hohenzollern on the Spanish throne was extremely alarming to France. Nevertheless, Bismarck pressured Leopold into accepting the crown in June 1870. This provoked France to such a degree that King Wilhelm in turn persuaded Leopold to step down, much to

**Think about**

- ▶ What was Bismarck's view of unification in 1869, according to Source 19?
- ▶ A year after this dispatch, Bismarck used a war against France as a way of speeding up unification. Does this mean that he was lying to the Prussian envoy?

**Biography**

**Napoleon III**

Emperor of France 1852-1870 and nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. He was elected President in 1848 but staged a coup in 1851 which allowed him to remain as President for a further ten years. In 1852 he abolished the Second Republic and made himself Emperor of the Second Empire. He encouraged industrial expansion in an attempt to make France strong, but was unsuccessful in his foreign policy, especially against Prussia which defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War, 1870–71, leading to his abdication.

**Key term**

**Hohenzollern**

The Hohenzollern dynasty ruled Prussia from 1701 to 1918 and the German Empire from 1871 to 1918.

**Source 20**

A woodcut from a painting by a German artist showing Napoleon III and Bismarck the day after Napoleon's capture by Bismarck at the Battle of Sedan. Bismarck is seated on the right.

**Think about**

- ▶ What impression of the French defeat does Source 20 convey?

Bismarck's distress. This was not enough to avert war, however. Gramont, the French Foreign Minister, insisted that Wilhelm should renounce Leopold's claim permanently which the Prussian King, independently of Bismarck, refused to do.

Bismarck received a telegram from the King outlining his meeting with the French Ambassador to Prussia, Benedetti, who had been sent by Gramont to put pressure on Wilhelm. The telegram became known as the Ems Telegram after the town of Bad Ems where the meeting took place. Although Bismarck did not add anything to the telegram, he edited words out to give the impression of an even firmer snub of the French by Wilhelm. He then ensured that the amended telegram was published in Berlin and abroad. Bismarck had obtained guarantees from the southern states that they would support him in a war against France. He was now, if not before, expecting a war.

**The war**

The Ems Telegram was the final straw for the French, and Napoleon declared war on 15 July 1870. Bismarck was in a strong position. Austria felt no obligation to support France after being let down in 1866. Nor was she prepared to risk a war without the support of Italy, who posed a threat to her southern borders. 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, especially the new Krupp field batteries.

In September, after a series of swift victories, Moltke saw his chance to surround the 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.



The Treaty of Frankfurt, signed in May, was a harsh settlement for France. The French territories of Alsace-Lorraine were annexed to Germany (see Source 21) and an indemnity of five billion francs had to be paid over four years. This settlement ensured a lasting rivalry and hatred between the two countries. For the next thirty-eight years the French swore to seek revenge on Germany and regain the land France lost in 1871.



### Historical debate

As we have already seen (pages 16–17) there is a debate about the nature of Bismarck's aims. It is difficult to deny that German unification was one of them (although at least one historian – A.J.P. Taylor – would challenge even this). Exactly how Bismarck intended to bring about unification is more difficult to pin down, however. Did Bismarck see a war against France as the only way? In his memoirs he wrote that 'a Franco-German war must take place before the construction of a united Germany could be realized' (Craig, 1981). This was, however, written with the benefit of hindsight and may have been an attempt by Bismarck to give his actions the impression of being well planned in advance. Other statements made at the time suggest that Bismarck was unsure about war, though was not ruling it out completely. His famous 'ripe fruit' speech (see Source 19) implied a wait-and-see policy. Not surprisingly, all this has led to a debate amongst historians. Some, such as Eyck, argue that Bismarck was indeed intending to fight France whilst others, such as Kolb, argue that France's reaction to the succession issue took Bismarck by surprise. Craig takes this even further by arguing that Bismarck did not want a war at all. Carr takes a moderate view, arguing that Bismarck was prepared to risk a war but tried to prevent it. A possible way through this debate is to remember Otto Pflanze's phrase 'a strategy of alternatives'. Perhaps it was a case of keeping all options open until the right option made itself clear.

### Document exercise: Bismarck and the war against France

#### Source A

##### War against France not certain

Unhappily I believe in a war with France before long – her vanity, hurt by our victories, will drive her in that direction. Yet, since I do not know of any French or German interest requiring a resort to arms, I do not see it as certain. Only a country's most vital interests justify embarking on war – only its honour, which is not to be confused with so-called prestige. No statesman has a right to begin a war simply because, in his opinion, it is inevitable in a given period of time...On the battlefield – and, what is far worse, in the hospitals – I

have seen the flower of our youth struck down by wounds and disease...Such memories and sights would leave me without a moment's peace if I thought I had made the war for personal ambition or national vanity...You may rest assured that I shall never advise His Majesty to wage a war unless the most vital interests of the Fatherland require it.

Bismarck speaking to a conservative deputy in the Prussian Parliament in 1867

#### Source B

##### Bismarck amends the Ems Telegram

Having decided to resign, I invited [Roon] and Moltke to dine with me...both were greatly depressed...During our conversation I was informed that a telegram from Ems...was being deciphered...On a repeated examination of the document I lingered upon the authorisation of His Majesty, which included a command, immediately to communicate Benedetti's fresh demand and its rejection both to our ambassadors and the press. I put a few questions to Moltke as to the extent of his confidence in the state of our preparations, especially as to the time they would still

require in order to meet this sudden risk of war. [Several] considerations, conscious and unconscious, strengthened my opinion that war could be avoided only at the cost of the honour of Prussia and of the national confidence in it. Under this conviction I made use of the royal authorisation communicated to me...to publish the contents of the telegram, and in the presence of my two guests I reduced the telegram by striking out words...

Bismarck, *The Man and the Statesman*, 1898

#### Source C

At least I am not so arrogant as to assume that the likes of us are able to make history. My task is to keep an eye on the currents of the latter and steer my ship in them as best I can.

Bismarck

#### Source C

##### Bismarck reflects on the war

I assumed that a united Germany was only a question of time...I did not doubt that a Franco-German war must take place before the construction of a united Germany could be realised...I was at that time pre-occupied with the idea of delaying the outbreak of this war until our fighting strength should be increased.

Bismarck, *The Man and the Statesman*, 1898

#### Source D

##### Bismarck wanted to avoid war

It is always dangerous to speak with too great assurance of Bismarck's intentions, but the explanation given here [that Bismarck believed French politicians would block a war] is certainly more reasonable than the argument, often made, that he was seeking war with France from the beginning of the Spanish question. Throughout his life, Bismarck was an opponent of preventive war...If the trumpets of war were to sound in the spring of 1870, the initiative in his view would have to be France's, and he was confident that in the prevailing circumstances Napoleon would not give the necessary command.

Craig, *Germany 1866-1945*, 1981

#### Source E

##### Bismarck did want war

I personally feel convinced that Bismarck undertook it [support of Leopold] with the intention of putting Napoleon in a formidable dilemma: either to suffer a political defeat which would in the long run cost him his throne, or to wage war – and that he foresaw that Napoleon would prefer war. Therefore, responsibility for the war rests in the first instance with Bismarck. He is of course, not the only person responsible...[but] Bismarck alone kept the initiative by knowing beforehand how the others would react to his moves.

Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire*, 1968

### Examination-style questions

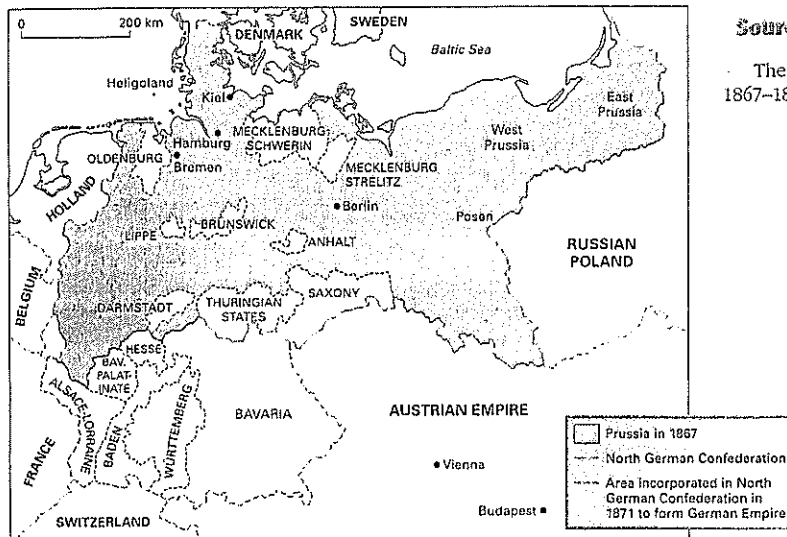
- 1 Comprehension in context**  
Using Source B and your own knowledge explain why Bismarck edited the Ems Telegram.
- 2 Comparing the sources**  
How and why do Sources D and E differ in their interpretation of Bismarck's aims?
- 3 Assessing the sources**  
How useful are Sources A and C when assessing Bismarck's aims?
- 4 Making judgements**  
'Bismarck planned to use a war against France in order to unite Germany.' Using all the sources and your own knowledge, explain whether or not you agree with this statement.

### Activity

Return to the Spotlight on pages 16–17. You now know enough about Bismarck to complete the activity.

## Unification

Between the battle of Sedan and the fall of Paris, enthusiasm for the war amongst the southern states waned. Bismarck was concerned that they might withdraw their support. At the same time the southern states were increasingly of the opinion that they could not afford to remain isolated with such hostility between Germany and France. Having supported Bismarck, they were vulnerable to French reprisals. It was therefore useful for all concerned to see further political unity in Germany. One historian has claimed that unification was not planned before the war and that Bismarck '...pushed the south German states into the Reich not at all with a vision of a distant future, but solely to keep them in the war.' (Taylor, 1966) An alternative interpretation is that Bismarck, whether planning a war with France in advance or not, saw an opportunity once war had started to push for unification. He saw his opportunity to achieve his long-term ambition more quickly than might otherwise have been expected.



### Source 21

The unification of Germany  
1867–1871.

One thing is certain, however. Although the war against France had aroused nationalist passions, the unification was carried out for practical rather than ideological reasons:

### Source 22

On 18 January 1871, in a ceremony at Versailles, the German Empire was proclaimed, with rulers of the German states offering King Wilhelm I of Prussia the hereditary crown of a united Germany. Whatever nationalist mythology may subsequently have claimed, there was a great deal of grumpiness on all sides: reluctance on the part of princes, as well as a certain sulkiness on the part of the new Emperor himself. What had been engineered, under Bismarck's guidance, was effectively the extension of Prussian power rather than the expression of nationalist enthusiasm for a united Germany.

Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany*, 1990

## Why was Germany united in 1871?

### Activity

Historians have disagreed about the relative importance of different factors contributing to German unification. German historians initially stressed the greatness of Bismarck. By 1919, however, a British economist, Keynes, was already challenging this with his statement 'The German Empire was not founded on blood and iron, but on coal and iron'.

In small groups, take one of the factors listed below and prepare a short presentation on its contribution to German unification. Try to convince the other groups that your factor was the most important. At the end of the presentations, take a class vote on the order of importance of all the factors.

- Bismarck
- Economy
- Prussian army
- Nationalism & liberalism
- Other countries (especially France and Austria)

## Conclusions

Many factors contributed to the unification of Germany. The growing strength of Prussia, both economically and politically, was a major factor – perhaps *the* major factor. However, circumstances outside Germany also played a major role and enabled Bismarck to achieve unification sooner than perhaps even he expected. War against France certainly determined the timing of unification and in this respect, it could indeed be argued that Germany was united by 'blood and iron'. Historians are still arguing about whether or not German unification was inevitable. Most agree with Fulbrook (see Source 22) and argue that it was not James Sheehan, for example, argues that it came as a surprise and a shock. Thomas Nipperdey, however, argues that unification was part of a natural and inevitable process and would have happened without Bismarck. For him, German unification was the result of increased German identity during the nineteenth century. On the whole, the evidence does not support Nipperdey. Germany did not unite because of popular pressure from the German people. It united because the smaller German states felt that they had little choice.

### Further reading

You might like to follow up Sheehan's argument in his book *German History 1770–1866*, 1989.

### Timeline

- 1815 The Vienna Settlement  
The German Confederation created
- 1818 Prussian Customs Union set up
- 1834 The Zollverein (Customs Union) created
- 1848 Revolution  
Frankfurt Parliament fails to unite Germany
- 1851 The German Confederation re-established
- 1854–6 The Crimean War
- 1858 King Friedrich Wilhelm IV replaced by his brother Wilhelm as regent
- 1859 The Nationalverein founded
- 1860 von Roon presents the army bill to the Prussian Landtag (Parliament) which leads to a constitutional crisis
- 1861 Wilhelm becomes King of Prussia, aged 64
- 1862 Bismarck appointed Minister-President of Prussia
- 1863 Bismarck practically establishes dictatorship in Prussia
- 1864 Denmark defeated by Prussia
- 1865 Gastein Treaty – Prussia and Austria agree to share Schleswig-Holstein
- 1866 Austria defeated by Prussia
- 1867 North German Confederation established  
Indemnity bill ends the constitutional crisis  
Southern states join the Zollverein  
Luxembourg crisis
- 1870 Spanish crown offered to Prince Leopold  
Ems Telegram  
War with France
- 1871 Unification of Germany  
France defeated by Prussia/Germany  
Treaty of Frankfurt