

GERMANY: LIBERALISM AND NATIONALISM

In 1815, Germany was not a unified state but rather a collection of numerous independent states. These states varied in size and power, ranging from the sprawling Austrian Empire to smaller kingdoms and duchies. The states were loosely associated under the nominal rule of the Holy Roman Emperor, who was typically also the ruler of Austria. However, the Holy Roman Empire had lost most of its power and political relevance by the nineteenth century.

The Holy Roman Empire was an ancient group of states that encompassed a significant part of Central Europe. It was founded in the Middle Ages and lasted until 1806 when Napoleon Bonaparte dissolved it. Throughout its history, the Holy Roman Empire played a crucial role in shaping the political and cultural landscape of Germany. It provided a loose framework for governance and maintained some degree of unity among the German states, although it was often characterized by decentralization and conflicts between its members.

Napoleon's actions had a significant impact on the sense of German unity. In 1806, he reorganized the patchwork of German states, reducing the total number of states and annexing territories. The left bank of the River Rhine was annexed by France, and smaller states were amalgamated. This reorganization led to the formation of the Confederation of the Rhine, consisting of Bavaria, Saxony, Baden, and other states, which were directly governed by Napoleonic France. The introduction of French enlightenment ideals, such as liberty and equality, influenced the political discourse in these states. It also brought about upward mobility for the middle class and a reduction in feudal restrictions. The imposition of a foreign empire stimulated a sense of collectivity among the German states and contributed to the emergence of a German identity or "nation."

Following Napoleon's defeat and the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Germany's status was still fragmented. The German Confederation was established, consisting of 39 states, with Austria and Prussia being the dominant powers. The confederation aimed to maintain the security, independence, and integrity of its member states while preserving the status quo and curtailing liberal ideals, internal rebellion, external aggression, and nationalistic desires. Germany did not have clearly defined borders, and the concept of a collective German identity was still evolving. Different regions had distinct cultural and linguistic characteristics, and there was a power struggle between the northern states, which gravitated towards Prussia, and the southern states, which remained loyal to Austrian influence.

The Metternich system refers to the political approach and policies implemented by Austrian Foreign Minister Clemens von Metternich. Metternich aimed to maintain traditional authority over the German states and was not concerned with German political unity. He considered nationalist ideals and discourse dangerous. His main objective was to preserve Austria's influence, and he ensured that the Vienna settlement turned the German states into a loose confederation under Austrian dominance. The Metternich system sought to resist two main forces of change: liberal and nationalist ideals. Metternich aimed to suppress liberal movements and prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas that challenged the existing order. He believed in maintaining stability and the authority of monarchies. The system was partly successful in maintaining control and stability in the German states for some time. However, it faced increasing challenges as nationalist sentiments and demands for political reforms grew stronger, eventually leading to the revolutions of 1848 and the dismantling of the Metternich system.

During the Vormärz period, which lasted from 1815 to the revolutions of 1848, Germany experienced a combination of political excitement, reaction, and repression. The period was characterized by the clash between enlightenment and national ideals on one hand and the conservative vision of Austrian Foreign Minister Metternich on the other.

After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, absolute rule was restored in all German states. While the Federal Act did require the rulers to introduce a "Constitution of Regional Estates," many rulers ignored or minimized the power of these constitutions. In the northern states such as Bavaria, Baden, Wurtemberg, and Hesse-Darmstadt, attempts were made between 1818 and 1820 to give more power to assemblies to control laws and taxes. However, the monarchs still maintained real power and the right to appoint their own ministers.

In Austria, both King Francis I (1804-1835) and his successor Ferdinand I (1835-1849) maintained absolutist authority. The introduction of local Diets, or representative assemblies, had limited impact as they were dominated by the aristocracy and served mainly to maintain the existing social order.

Prussia, on the other hand, did not have a constitution until 1848. King Frederick William III (1797-1840) showed little interest in liberal reforms. Prussia was divided into various territories with cultural, economic, and religious differences. The presidents of the provinces were appointed by the central government in Berlin. The introduction of provincial estates in 1823 gave the people little power as they were completely dominated by the aristocracy.

The majority of monarchs in the German states remained committed to maintaining absolute authority and aristocratic power.

However, the French occupation of the region during the Napoleonic period brought some administrative reforms in areas such as the economy, finance, law, and education. These reforms benefited the bureaucracies of the German states.

Overall, the Vormarx period was characterized by tension between conservative absolutist rule and the aspirations for liberal reforms and national unity. The stage was set for the eruption of the revolutions of 1848, which would challenge the established order and push for greater political rights and freedoms.

Metternich harboured a deep-rooted fear of nationalism and liberalism because he believed they posed a threat to the established order and stability of the European monarchies. He saw nationalism as a dangerous force that could lead to the fragmentation of empires and the rise of independent nation-states, which could destabilize the balance of power. Liberalism, with its emphasis on individual rights, constitutionalism, and representative government, challenged the absolute authority of monarchs and the traditional hierarchical social order.

Metternich wanted to preserve the status quo because he believed it provided stability and prevented radical changes that could lead to social upheaval and revolution. He was a staunch defender of the monarchy and aristocracy and believed in maintaining their privileged positions and authority. He saw the existing political and social order as necessary for maintaining peace and preventing the spread of revolutionary ideas.

The "Metternich System" refers to the political approach and policies implemented by Clemens von Metternich to suppress revolutionary and liberal movements. It involved tight control over political dissent, censorship of the press, surveillance of universities, and the use of secret police to monitor and suppress subversive activities. Metternich sought to maintain the authority of monarchies, suppress liberal and nationalist aspirations, and prevent any challenges to the existing social and political order.

The Metternich system was partly successful in quashing the activities it was devised to oppose. The Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, which Metternich orchestrated, resulted in the disbanding of student societies, press censorship, and increased surveillance. Professors were dismissed, radical leaders were imprisoned, and dissenting voices were silenced. These measures helped to suppress revolutionary and liberal movements for a time and maintain the existing order. However, the system faced ongoing challenges and ultimately failed to contain the forces of change. The revolutions of 1848 marked a turning point and led to the dismantling of the Metternich system as widespread unrest and demands for political reforms could no longer be contained.

During the Vormarx period, Metternich used the system of European Congresses to assert Austria's reactionary interests. The Congress of Troppau in 1820 was one such congress where Metternich sought support from Russia and Prussia to suppress revolutionary movements in Spain, Portugal, Piedmont, and Naples. The resulting protocol stated that the three countries would not recognize the rights of a people to restrict the powers of their king. Metternich used various means of repression, including surveillance, censorship, and the use of secret police, to maintain the status quo and silence dissenting voices. While his efforts were partially successful in the 1820s, the surge of nationalism and liberalism in the 1830s posed new challenges.

In the 1830s, liberal and nationalist movements gained strength. The July Revolution in Paris in 1830 triggered demonstrations and riots in southern German states, leading to demands for constitutional rule and liberalization. Some states, such as Brunswick, Saxony, Hesse-Cassel, Bavaria, Baden, and Wurttemberg, made concessions to the liberal demands, granting greater parliamentary representation and press freedom. Hanover also conceded to a constitution in 1832. The liberal campaigns of the 1830s focused on constitutional government and material demands such as freedom of speech, press, worship, and the formation of political associations.

The strengthening of nationalism in the 1830s saw the emergence of German nationalist sentiments and the desire for a unified German state. Intellectual debates on German nationalism by philosophers such as Johann Herder, Johann Goethe, and Georg Hegel influenced the development of these sentiments. While the appeal of nationalism was limited to an intellectual elite, efforts were made to spread the message to workers in cities. Workers' movements had more democratic goals and were open to the use of violence for justice. However, these movements did not gain much traction beyond the cities, and farmers and peasants in the countryside remained largely depoliticized.

The establishment of customs unions, particularly the Zollverein, played a significant role in economic cooperation between German states from 1815 to 1848. The Zollverein, initiated by Prussia, aimed to promote free trade within the German states by eliminating customs barriers and internal tariffs. It started with Prussia enacting tariff reforms in 1818 and expanded to include other states over time. The Zollverein bolstered Prussia's economic power and influence, making it the economic leader of the German Confederation. However, Austria, being protectionist, refused to join the Zollverein, leading to its isolation and Prussia's ascendancy. The Vormarx period saw a complex interplay between repression, liberal reforms, nationalism, and economic cooperation. Metternich's repressive measures aimed to maintain the status quo and suppress revolutionary and liberal movements, but they faced challenges from the growing liberal and nationalist sentiments. The establishment of customs unions, particularly the Zollverein, fostered economic cooperation but also contributed to the rise of Prussia's influence and the sense of a unified German

identity. These developments set the stage for the revolutionary events of 1848, which marked a significant turning point in the Vormärz period and the subsequent pursuit of German unification.

The Frankfurt Parliament

- The Frankfurt Parliament was the result of the Vorparlament, which gathered in Frankfurt in March 1848.
- The Parliament aimed to draft a constitution for a unified Germany and was composed of elected representatives from different German states.
- It convened on May 18, 1848, in St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt.
- The Parliament faced challenges from the beginning, including disagreements over the nature of the German state and the role of Austria.
- There were debates between those who advocated for a greater Germany that included Austria and those who supported a smaller Germany without Austria.
- The Parliament initially elected Archduke Johann of Austria as regent, but he declined the offer, leading to a search for a suitable monarch.
- Eventually, the Parliament offered the crown of a constitutional monarchy to King Frederick William IV of Prussia, but he rejected it, citing divine right and a lack of support from other German rulers.
- The Frankfurt Parliament faced increasing opposition and pressure from conservative forces, including the aristocracy and the military.
- The failure to secure a monarch and the lack of support from the ruling elites led to disillusionment among the members of the Parliament.
- The Parliament's attempts to assert its authority were undermined, and it gradually lost support and influence.
- The Frankfurt Parliament dissolved in May 1849, and its failure marked a setback for the aspirations of a unified and democratic Germany.
- The Frankfurt Parliament's legacy lies in its symbolic significance as an early attempt at German unification and its role in shaping the subsequent political developments in Germany.

The Frankfurt Parliament and the Drafting of the Constitution

- The Frankfurt Parliament faced significant challenges in drafting a constitution that could satisfy the diverse interests and aspirations of the German states.
- The parliamentarians debated various issues, including the nature of the German state, the balance of power between the central government and the individual states, and the role of different social groups.
- There were disagreements between liberals, conservatives, and more radical factions within the parliament.
- The liberal factions generally sought a constitutional monarchy with a strong central government and guarantees for civil liberties and individual rights.
- The conservatives, on the other hand, advocated for a more decentralized system with greater autonomy for the individual states and a limited role for the central government.
- The drafting of the constitution was a complex process that required compromises and negotiations among the parliamentarians.
- The parliament established several committees to work on different aspects of the constitution, such as the structure of government, civil rights, and the relationship between the central government and the states.
- The debates and discussions in the Frankfurt Parliament reflected the broader political and ideological divisions within German society.
- The parliamentarians faced challenges in finding common ground and reconciling the interests of different groups and regions.
- Despite these challenges, the Frankfurt Parliament managed to draft a constitution, known as the Frankfurt Constitution or Paulskirchenverfassung.
- The constitution proposed a constitutional monarchy, a two-house parliament, and guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms.
- However, the Frankfurt Constitution faced significant opposition from conservative forces, including the rulers of many German states who were resistant to ceding power to a central authority.
- Ultimately, the Frankfurt Constitution was not implemented as it lacked the necessary support and legitimacy from the ruling elites and the broader population.
- The failure of the Frankfurt Parliament and the Frankfurt Constitution marked a setback for the aspirations of a unified and democratic Germany, and it highlighted the challenges of achieving consensus and political stability in a fragmented and diverse society.

The failure of the Frankfurt Parliament can be attributed to several factors:

- **Lack of popular support:** The Frankfurt Parliament failed to resonate with the working class and artisans who were looking for more radical social and economic reforms. The parliament's focus on liberal ideals and its rejection of certain demands from the workers led to a loss of faith and support among these groups.
- **Internal divides:** The parliament was divided between radical, liberal, and conservative factions. The lack of consensus and the presence of politically uncommitted individuals made it difficult to make progress and achieve unity. **Weak leadership and decision-making:** The choice of Heinrich Gagern as the leader of the parliament proved to be a poor decision. Gagern lacked the necessary assertiveness and management skills to effectively lead the assembly. The parliament's inability to make decisive decisions and effectively address challenges hindered its progress.
- **Lack of military power:** The Frankfurt Parliament had no army of its own and relied on the support of Prussia. However, Prussia was hesitant to commit its military resources to the parliament's cause, leading to a lack of military strength and influence.
- **Opposition from Austrian and Prussian authorities:** Austria and Prussia, the two most powerful states in Germany, were not supportive of the Frankfurt Parliament's goals. Austria aimed to maintain its own authority and prevent a strong unified Germany, while Prussia was sceptical of the parliament's intentions and reluctant to cede power to a central authority.
- **National conflicts and divisions:** The question of defining the boundaries of Germany and determining the inclusion or exclusion of certain regions, such as Austria and parts of Prussia, caused divisions and disagreements within the parliament. The Frankfurt Parliament struggled to address the complex national and regional dynamics within Germany.
- **Lack of decisiveness and cooperation:** The parliament's indecisiveness and willingness to cooperate with traditional authority figures and existing power structures limited its ability to bring about significant change and establish a unified Germany.

In the end, the Frankfurt Parliament failed to achieve its goals of creating a unified and democratic Germany. Its lack of popular support, internal divisions, weak leadership, opposition from Austrian and Prussian authorities, and the complexities of national dynamics contributed to its ultimate irrelevance and embarrassment.

The German revolutions of 1848-1849, including the events in Prussia and Berlin, ultimately failed for several reasons:

- **Frederick William IV's wavering stance:** Prussian King Frederick William IV initially appeared to be a potential ally of the Frankfurt Parliament and the revolution. He made concessions, agreed to a new constitution, and showed some liberal tendencies. However, his commitment to divine right authority and his attachment to the privileges of kingship led him to change his position and resist further reforms.
- **Lack of popular support:** The revolutions faced limited support from the rural population, which remained apathetic and disconnected from the urban uprisings. Many peasants and rural inhabitants were primarily interested in the removal of feudal powers and did not strongly identify with the broader revolutionary goals.
- **Internal divisions:** The revolutionary movement in Germany was characterized by divisions and tensions between liberals and radicals, proponents of Grossdeutschland (including Austria) and Kleindeutschland (excluding Austria), and conflicts between the middle class and working-class groups. These divisions weakened the unity and effectiveness of the revolution.
- **Conservative resistance:** Monarchs and conservative forces across Germany were determined to preserve their authority and resisted the revolutionary changes. They had strong armies at their disposal and were able to suppress uprisings, revoke constitutional changes, and restore their control. The conservative backlash undermined the progress made by the revolutionaries. **Loss of momentum and disillusionment:** Over time, enthusiasm for the revolution waned, and support for radical change diminished. The failure of the Frankfurt Parliament, internal divisions, and the resurgence of conservative power eroded public trust in the revolutionary cause. Many people became disillusioned, and the old monarchs regained dominance.
- **Lack of a unified and coordinated movement:** The German revolutions lacked a unified and coordinated approach. Demonstrations and uprisings were scattered and localized, with different methods and demands. The absence of a cohesive and widespread people's movement hindered the revolution's ability to bring about significant change.
- **Conservative strength and military power:** The monarchs, particularly in Prussia and Austria, had strong armies and the means to enforce their authority. They were able to suppress uprisings, dissolve revolutionary assemblies, and assert their

control over the state. The revolutionaries lacked the military power to challenge the conservative forces effectively.

Overall, a combination of factors, including the wavering stance of Frederick William IV, divisions within the revolutionary movement, conservative resistance, loss of popular support, and lack of military strength, contributed to the failure of the German revolutions of 1848-1849.

Prussia's Position in Relation to Austria and the German States after 1848:

- After the revolutions of 1848, Prussia's position in relation to Austria and the other German states was marked by tension and competition. Prussia and Austria were the two leading powers in the German Confederation, but they had different visions for the future of Germany. Prussia, under King Frederick William IV and later under King William I, sought to assert its dominance and leadership in a unified Germany, excluding Austria. On the other hand, Austria, under the leadership of Chancellor Schwarzenberg, aimed to maintain its influence and control over the German Confederation, including both the German-speaking territories and the non-German territories of the Habsburg Empire. This rivalry between Prussia and Austria set the stage for the conflicts and power struggles that would shape German unification.
- Bismarck's Significance in Prussian and German Politics: Otto von Bismarck was a highly significant figure in Prussian and later German politics. As the Chief Minister of Prussia from 1862 to 1890 and the first Chancellor of the German Empire from 1871 to 1890, Bismarck played a crucial role in shaping the course of German unification. He was known for his skilful diplomacy, realpolitik (pragmatic politics), and ability to manipulate international relations to achieve his goals.
- Bismarck was significant in Prussian and German politics because he successfully pursued a policy of consolidating Prussian power and achieving German unification under Prussian leadership. He implemented a series of domestic and foreign policies that aimed to strengthen Prussia economically, militarily, and politically. Bismarck skillfully used diplomacy and war to achieve his objectives, including the Wars of Unification against Denmark (1864), Austria (1866), and France (1870-1871).
 - The dispute over the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein created tension between Austria and Prussia.
 - Austria supported the Augustenburg claim to the Duchies, while Prussia had expansionist ambitions.
 - The London Conference failed to resolve the issue, and Denmark ultimately surrendered its rights over the Duchies.

The Convention of Gastein:

- In 1865, the Convention of Gastein was agreed upon, dividing the administration of the Duchies between Austria and Prussia.
- Austria administered Holstein, while Prussia administered Schleswig.
- The joint sovereignty over the Duchies created an ongoing tension between the two powers.

Bismarck's motives and the meeting at Biarritz:

- Bismarck aimed to strengthen Prussia's international position and avoid war.
- In 1865, Bismarck met with Emperor Napoleon III of France at Biarritz.
- The exact details of their agreement are debated, but Bismarck secured the Emperor's neutrality in the event of a war.

War with Austria:

- Prussian-Austrian relations deteriorated, and Austria's position weakened.
- In April 1866, a secret alliance was made between Prussia and Italy, with Italy agreeing to join Prussia in a war against Austria.
- Bismarck stoked tension over Holstein and proposed reforms to the German Confederation.
- Austria mobilized its forces, and Prussia responded in May.
- Proposals for a Congress to discuss the situation were rejected, leading to escalating tensions.

The Seven Weeks' War:

- Prussia had better preparations and efficient mobilization, thanks to advance planning.
- Most German states supported Austria, and Austria had a larger army.
- Italy joined Prussia in the war but was defeated by Austria in the south.
- Prussia invaded Bohemia, and the Battle of Sadowa (Königgrätz) took place on July 3, 1866.
- The Prussian army's superior weaponry and tactics led to a decisive victory.
- Austria recognized the need to end the fighting and accepted Prussia's terms.

Prussian Dominance:

- Bismarck returned to Berlin as a hero and gained favour among wealthy Prussians.
- He was promoted to Major General, which ended his insecurity about wearing civilian clothes during military meetings.
- Prussia's victory established Prussian dominance and laid the foundation for Bismarck's future political influence in Germany.

Overall, the Austro-Prussian War marked a significant step in the process of German unification under Prussian leadership, setting the stage for Bismarck's subsequent efforts to create a united German Empire.

The Treaty of Prague

- July 1866: Prussia and Austria signed an armistice
- August: Concluded the Treaty of Prague, which primarily reconfigured North German borders:
 - Prussia annexed swathes of territory, including Schleswig and Holstein, Hesse-Cassel, Hanover, Nassau and Frankfurt
 - All other German states north of the River Main, including Saxony, were now part of a North German Confederation under Prussian leadership
- Bismarck still cautious about moving too fast with an all out unification; threat of French intervention, and worried keeping control might be more trouble than worth
- The four Catholic states south of the River Main – Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt – retained their independence
 - These four states agreed to sign a secret military alliance with Prussia: would have to place arms under Prussian King's command in case of war
- Germany was now divided in three distinct territories: (1) North German Confederation, (2) The Four Southern German States, (3) The Austrian Empire
- The question of the vacant Spanish throne arose in 1868, which drove the Spanish queen out.
- In 1870, Bismarck provoked France by attempting to place a Hohenzollern prince, Leopold, on the Spanish throne.
- The Ems Telegram incident occurred on July 13-14, 1870, which further escalated tensions between France and Prussia.
- France blundered into war on July 19, 1870, and the war turned out to be disastrous for France.
- Franco-Prussian War:
 - The German armies, led by Prussia, were highly disciplined, well-trained, and outnumbered the French forces.
 - The French were outgunned, outmanoeuvred, and suffered defeats in major battles, including the Battle of Sedan in September 1870 and the Battle of Metz in October 1870.
 - The Siege of Paris from September 1870 to January 1871 forced the city to surrender due to starvation.
- Bismarck's Plans and France's Concerns:
 - After Prussia's victory over Austria in 1866, the main challenge to Prussia's expansionism and the emergence of a powerful German Empire came from France.
 - Napoleon III had ambitions to restore France's influence over Europe but was war-wary and lacked the ruthlessness of his uncle, Napoleon I.
 - Bismarck and Napoleon III had several meetings, including one in 1855 in Paris and an important encounter in October 1865 at Biarritz.
 - The exact nature of their discussions and any promises exchanged is a matter of speculation, but it is believed that Bismarck might have hinted at French territorial expansion opportunities after a Prussian victory over Austria.
- However, Bismarck did not commit to any specific agreements, and there was a general show of goodwill and support between the two leaders.

Relations between Bismarck and Napoleon III:

- Napoleon III's expectations from the Austro-Prussian War were shattered by Prussia's swift and comprehensive victory.
- Bismarck declined Napoleon's offer of mediation and instead sent a message that Prussia's expansion would be limited to the north.
- Bismarck was aware that a rapidly unified Germany would be seen as a threat to France, so he presented the division of Germany (under the Treaty of Prague) as a reward to Napoleon.
- Prussia's dominance over the German states, including through the Zollparlament, was perceived as a symbol of its political ascendancy, which concerned France.

Overall, the Franco-Prussian War marked the culmination of Bismarck's efforts to unify Germany and solidify Prussian dominance.

The war had disastrous consequences for France, leading to the establishment of the German Empire and the subsequent unification of Germany under Prussian leadership.

Luxembourg Crisis:

- In the late 1860s, Bismarck began encouraging nationalist sentiment in Luxembourg and declared that surrendering it to France would be a humiliation to German national feelings.
- Bismarck disclosed secret military alliances with the southern German states, indicating that the North German Confederation was not as independent as it appeared.
- Napoleon III pursued negotiations with the Dutch King to acquire Luxembourg, but the King agreed to sell it to Prussia, subject to the approval of the Prussian King, which was unlikely to be given.
- Bismarck threatened the King of the Netherlands not to give up Luxembourg, using German patriotic fervour as an excuse.
- The Luxembourg question was eventually settled in a conference in London, which guaranteed Luxembourg's independence and neutrality, but there was no territorial gain for France.

Franco-German Relations and Bismarck's Intentions:

- Franco-German relations became strained from 1867 to 1870, with a tense peace prevailing.
- Bismarck feared French military strength and the possibility of Napoleon III finding allies against Prussia.
- Efforts by Napoleon III and Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph to reach an agreement came to nothing, as most German Austrians opposed a pro-French and anti-Prussian policy.
- The Luxembourg crisis is seen as the point where Bismarck shifted from being a Prussian patriot to a German one, but his motivations were more cynical.
- Bismarck stirred up German national feelings to increase Prussian influence over the other German states and use it against France.
- He wanted to unite Germany under Prussian influence but understood that it would not happen easily or quickly.
- Bismarck believed that a war with France would raise national consciousness and bring all Germans together, accelerating the process of German unification.

Bismarck's Public Image:

- In a September 1867 interview with a British journalist, Bismarck presented himself as a peaceful actor and expressed a desire for peace.
- He aimed to allay British fears about Prussian intentions and prevent a British alliance with France.
- Bismarck was skilled in public relations and understood the value of presenting himself and his policies in a favourable light.
- It is difficult to judge his true intentions from his public statements, as he often said things he did not believe or believed things he did not say.

Hohenzollern Candidature Crisis:

- In 1868, the Queen of Spain was driven out, and the Spanish government sought a new monarch from the royal houses of Europe.
- In February 1870, Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern received an official offer to become the King of Spain.
- King William I of Prussia, as head of the Hohenzollern family, initially wanted to refuse consent to avoid French hostility.
- Bismarck convinced William to change his mind, arguing that it was in Germany's political interest for the House of Hohenzollern to gain esteem and an exalted position.
- Bismarck secretly sent envoys with bribes to Spain to push Leopold's candidacy, and under pressure, Leopold accepted.
- The news of Leopold's acceptance leaked, leading to outrage in France, as they saw it as a threat to their interests and the European balance of power.
- French demands for an official renunciation from William on behalf of Leopold were deeply insulting, and William refused to give additional guarantees.
- Bismarck received a telegram from Ems, which he edited to make it appear as an uncompromising response to French demands.
- The edited Ems telegram, published in newspapers, caused eruptions in France, and public opinion favoured war.
- On July 19, 1870, Napoleon III declared war on Prussia.

Bismarck's Role and French Blunders:

- Bismarck played a significant role in manipulating the crisis to provoke a war with France.
- He ensured that the amended version of the Ems telegram was published, knowing it would provoke France.
- Bismarck wanted a defensive war against France, brought about by French aggression, to unite the south German states with Prussia.
- French diplomatic blunders and a readiness to fight among the French Emperor and people also contributed to the

escalation of the crisis.

- Bismarck called on the southern German states for support, citing France as the aggressor, and they agreed to support Prussia.

Overall, while Bismarck manoeuvred the Hohenzollern affair to create an opportunity for war, the French diplomatic blunders and readiness for war played a significant role in the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War.

Early German Success:

- The combined Prussian-German army mobilized quickly and had superior transportation infrastructure.
- General Moltke led the German troops, while Napoleon III and Marshal Bazaine faced initial defeats.
- French troops initially fought well, but the firepower of the Prussian Krupp artillery proved decisive.
- German armies crossed the Moselle River, cut off the French escape route to Paris, and besieged the French Army of the Rhine in Metz.
- The French forces in Metz remained trapped and out of action until they surrendered in October.
- Napoleon and General MacMahon formed a new army, the Army of Chalons, to relieve the besieged Army of the Rhine.
- However, the Prussians outmanoeuvred the French at every turn and drove them back towards Sedan.
- The Prussians encircled the French forces and took up positions on the hills surrounding Sedan.
- The French attempted to repel the Prussians but faced superior artillery and found themselves in an unwinnable situation.
- The battle of Sedan began, with German leaders observing from a hill, and the French repeatedly failed to break out of the encirclement.
- Prussian reinforcements arrived, tightening the noose around the French.
- The German guns bombarded Sedan, and despite severe losses, MacMahon refused to consider a retreat.
- Napoleon hoped for a bullet or shell to spare him the disgrace of surrender but found none.

These events marked a significant turning point in the war, leading to the eventual capture of Napoleon III and the collapse of the

French forces at Sedan

- After the Battle of Sedan, Napoleon III surrendered to the German forces led by Bismarck and Moltke. The French Army of Chalons was defeated, and Napoleon remained a prisoner until 1872.
- The news of the defeat and the capture of Napoleon III led to the abolition of the Second Empire and the proclamation of the Third French Republic.
- The war continued for another six months, with the German forces surrounding Paris and starving the city into surrender.
- In January 1871, the French government finally accepted an armistice.
- Bismarck had worked towards his goal of Prussian ascendancy in German affairs and ensured that King William I of Prussia became the Emperor of Germany.
- The four southern German states joined the German Empire, strengthening Bismarck's negotiating position.
- The German Empire was established as a federal state, with constituent states retaining their monarchies and having extensive power over internal matters.
- King William I was proclaimed Kaiser, or German Emperor, in Versailles, which added to the humiliation of the French.
- The peace treaty between France and Germany, known as the Treaty of Frankfurt, was signed in May 1871. It imposed heavy fines on France, annexed Alsace and the eastern half of Lorraine to Germany, and caused consternation in France.
- Bismarck aimed to ensure that France posed no future threat to Germany and believed in punishing France for its defeat.
- The annexation of Alsace and Lorraine had strategic importance, and the German press portrayed France as the guilty party during the war.
- The war upset the existing balance of power in Europe, with the newly created German Empire wielding significant territorial, political, and economic influence.
- The political cohesion of the German Empire enabled economic growth and expansion.