

Unification of Germany

Since 1815, 39 German states had formed a loose grouping called the German Confederation. The two largest states, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Prussia, dominated the confederation.

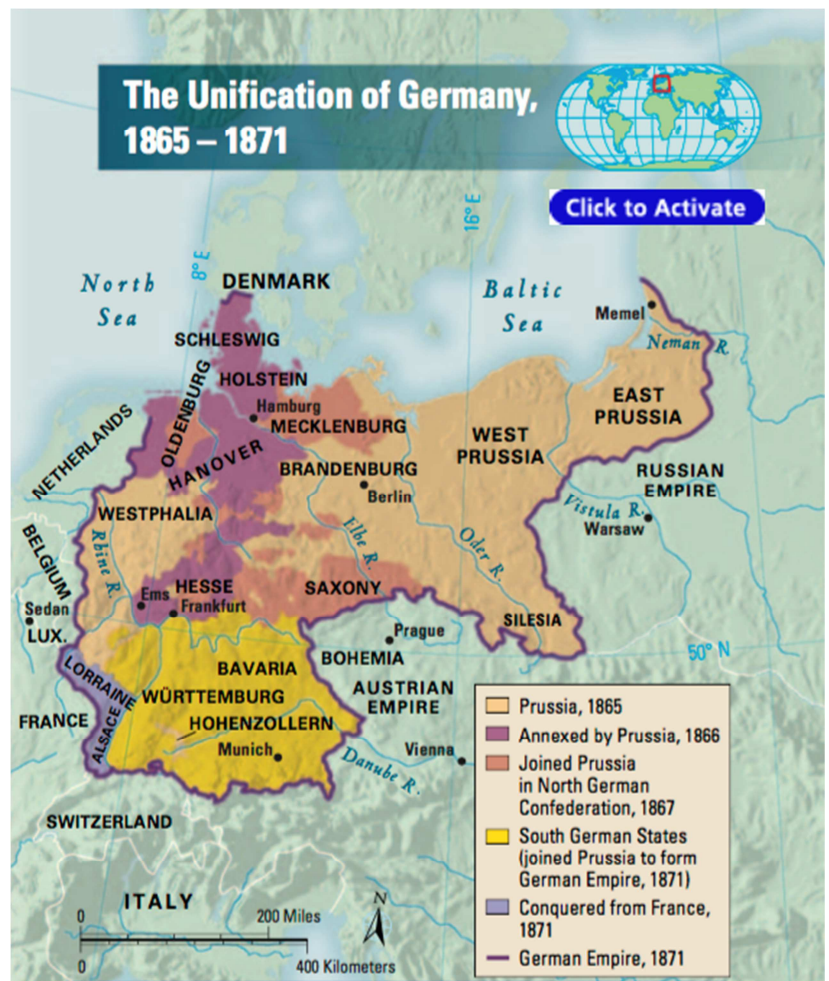
Prussia enjoyed several advantages that would help it forge a unified German state. Prussia, unlike other empires, consisted of a mainly German population. Nationalism of the German people had a strong force in the unification process.

In 1861, Prussian King Wilhelm I reformed the Prussian military, increasing its power and size. Wilhelm chose *Otto Von Bismarck* as his prime minister. Bismarck was a master of a political thought known as **realpolitik**. This German term means “the politics of reality.” This ideology described tough power politics with no room for idealism.

Prussia’s government, which consisted of a Parliament, restricted Bismarck’s role in government. Under King Wilhelm I’s approval, Bismarck declared that he would rule without the consent of parliament. Bismarck, in a speech to the Prussian parliament, declared, “The great questions of the day will not be settled by speeches or by majority decision but by **blood and iron**.”

In 1864, Bismarck took the first step towards creating a German nation. He first formed an alliance between Austria and Prussia. Together, they defeated Denmark and gained two territories. The victory increased national pride among Germans and Prussians. It also won the respect of having Prussia as the head of the unification process.

The alliance between Austria and Prussia was not long lived. Bismarck knew this arrangement would lead to friction, fitting into Bismarck’s plan of “blood and iron.” The Seven Week’s War was fought. Prussia was victorious forcing Austria to surrender more German territory to the Prussians. This territory united the eastern and western parts of the Prussian Kingdom.



By 1867, a few southern German states remained independent. Bismarck believed his policy “blood and iron” could win the support of the southern regions. He reasoned that a war with an outside nation would rally the south under Prussian pride.

The Franco-Prussian War occurred in 1870. The Prussian forces destroyed the French military and conquered the remaining German territories. This was the final stage in German unification. The nationalistic beliefs created among the German people of the Prussian controlled territories accepted Prussian leadership. In 1871, King Wilhelm I was crowned **Kaiser**, or emperor. The German Empire was created.

How did each of the following help lead to German unification?

Otto Von Bismarck	Realpolitik	Seven-Weeks War and Franco-Prussian War

_____ -Bismarck believed that the only way to unify Germany was through this policy. He believed Germans could be united through war and industrialization. In seven years, Bismarck led Prussia into three wars.

_____ -The politics of reality. Bismarck believed in tough power politics with no room for idealism.

Deutschlands Zukunft.



List the objects or people you see in this image.

Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.

Whose hand is holding the helmet? What nationality are the people under the helmet?

Explain the message of the cartoon.

Name:

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“...I wish only to express my conviction that, in the not too distant future, we shall have to fight for our existence against Austria and that it is not within our power to avoid that, since the course of events in Germany has no other solution.”

-Otto Von Bismarck

What policy is Bismarck illustrating in this statement?

What word in the statement allows you to come to that conclusion?