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## **The Unification of Germany, 1815-1871, reasons for the delay of unification, course of unification of Germany, factors for the success of the unification**

Questions to ponder

1. Account for the delay of the unification of Germany before 1860/Examine the obstacles to Germany unification before 1860./Why were attempts to unify Germany unsuccessful before 1870?

(Give a brief introduction of unification of Germany and then identify and explain the factors that caused the delay/ obstacles for unifications of Germany before 1860).

2. Account for the success of Bismarck in unification of Germany between 1864 – 1871./Account for the success of Prussia in unification of Germany between 1864-1871/Account for the success of Germany unification by 1871./Examine the factors that favored the unification of Germany.

(Give a brief background of unification of Germany and then identify and explain the factors that led to the success of unifications of Germany 1860-1871).

3. Assess the role of Bismarck in unification of Germany/ “Bismarck was primarily responsible for unification of Germany.” Discuss./ “The unification of Germany was a result of one man, Bismarck.” Discuss

(Give a brief background introduction of Bismarck and then identify and explain the contribution of Bismarck to the unifications of Germany; identify and explain the role of other factors, a generalized conclusion)

### **Summary and course of the unification of Germany, 1815-1871**

The unification of Germany, also known as the **Deutsche Einigung**, was a complex process that took place between 1815 and 1871.

## Early Period (1815-1848)

- **Congress of Vienna (1815):** After Napoleon's defeat, the Congress of Vienna established the **German Confederation**, a loose association of 39 German states.
- **Rise of Nationalism:** The early 19th century saw the rise of German nationalism, inspired by the ideas of the **Romantic movement** and the **French Revolution**.

## Revolutions of 1848

- **Revolutions:** A series of uprisings in various German states aimed at achieving national unity and liberal reforms. These revolutions were ultimately suppressed by conservative forces.

## Mid-19th Century (1850-1866)

- **Prussian Leadership:** Prussia emerged as the dominant German state under the leadership of **Otto von Bismarck**, the Prime Minister.
- **Wars of Unification:** Prussia defeated Denmark in the **Second Schleswig War (1864)** and Austria in the **Austro-Prussian War (1866)**, leading to the exclusion of Austria from German affairs.

## Final Phase (1866-1871)

- **North German Confederation:** In 1867, Prussia formed the **North German Confederation**, a federal state comprising 22 northern German states.
- **Franco-Prussian War:** The final step in unification was the **Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871)**, which united the southern German states with the North German Confederation against a common enemy, France.
- **Proclamation of the German Empire:** On January 18, 1871, the German Empire was proclaimed in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, with **King Wilhelm I of Prussia** becoming the first German Emperor.

## Factors that hindered the unification of German before 1860

1. **Political Fragmentation:** Germany was divided into 39 independent states, each with its own government, laws, and customs. This fragmentation made it difficult to achieve political unity.
2. **Weak leadership.** That is William III and William IV were too weak and could not champion the unification of German.
3. **Austrian Dominance:** Austria was the leading power in the **German Confederation**, established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Austria's influence and control over many German states posed a significant obstacle to unification.

4. **Rivalry between Prussia and Austria:** The two dominant German states, Prussia and Austria, had conflicting interests and ambitions. Their rivalry complicated efforts to unify Germany.
5. **Lack of Nationalism:** Many Germans identified more with their local regions or city-states than with a unified German identity. This lack of national consciousness hindered the unification movement.
6. **Economic Differences:** The German states had varying levels of economic development, with some states being more industrialized than others. These economic disparities created challenges for unification.
7. **Foreign Powers:** Other European powers, such as France and Russia, were wary of a united Germany, fearing it would upset the balance of power in Europe. Their interventions often supported the status quo and hindered unification efforts.
8. **Conservative Rulers:** Many German rulers were conservative and resistant to liberal and nationalist ideas. They suppressed revolutionary movements and maintained strict censorship to prevent the spread of nationalist sentiments.
9. **The Metternich spy network.** Suppressed the unification efforts of Germany.
10. **Religious differences.** i.e. the North states (Prussia, Hanover, Hamburg, Saxony) were predominantly protestants while the southern states (Baden, Wittenberg) were Catholics.
11. **Lack of foreign assistance.** This was due to the congress system
12. **Lack of finances to fund the unification strategies.**
13. **Catholic Church Opposition.** The Catholic Church opposed the elimination of Austria from the German affairs.

### **Contributions of foreign powers to the delay of unification of Germany before 1860**

Foreign powers played a significant role in delaying the unification of Germany before 1860 through various means:

1. **Austrian Dominance:** Austria was the leading power in the **German Confederation**, established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Austria's influence and control over many German states posed a significant obstacle to unification.
2. **Metternich's Policies:** Austrian Chancellor **Klemens von Metternich** was vehemently opposed to nationalism and liberal movements. He used his influence to suppress revolutionary activities and maintain the conservative order.
3. **French Influence:** France, under **Napoleon III**, had its own interests in maintaining the balance of power in Europe. French support for certain German states and opposition to unification efforts complicated the process.
4. **British Diplomacy:** Britain, while not directly involved militarily, supported the status quo in Europe to prevent any significant changes that could upset the balance of power.
5. **The 1815 Vienna settlement.** The 1815 Vienna settlement frustrated the Germany unification by placing German states under the control of Austria.
6. **The congress system** hindered foreign assistance from major European powers.
7. **Catholic Church Opposition.** The Catholic Church headed by Pope Pius IX opposed the elimination of Austria from the German affairs.

## Factors that favored unification of Germany

1. **Nationalism:** A strong sense of national identity and patriotism among the German people played a key role in the unification process.
2. **Wars of Liberation:** The Napoleonic Wars had a profound impact on the German states, fostering a sense of unity against a common enemy.
3. **Leadership of Otto von Bismarck:** Bismarck, the Prussian statesman, skillfully orchestrated the unification of Germany through a series of wars and diplomatic maneuvers.
4. **Economic Integration:** The establishment of the **German Customs Union (Zollverein)** in 1834 promoted economic integration and cooperation among German states, paving the way for closer political ties.
5. **Military reforms strengthen Germany against Austria.**
6. **The rise in power of William I.** He appointed Bismarck a minister President in 1861 and contributed to the Germany unification.
7. **German Scholars** through writing disseminated the nationalism propaganda.
8. **Strong Prussian army** that defeated Denmark in 1864, Austria in 1866 and France in 1871 contributed to the success of the Germany unification.
9. **The improvement of transport and communication** facilitated the unification processes.
10. **Decline of Austrian Influence:** The weakening of Austrian power in the region allowed Prussia to emerge as the dominant force in German unification.
11. **The collapse of the congress system by 1830** left Austria alone with no foreign assistance to suppress the unification of Germany.
12. **Napoleon 1 influence.** Napoleon I in 1807 combined the 3000 Germany states into 39 states and then into 3 division which simplified mobilization for unification of Germany.
13. **The downfall of Metternich and his system in 1814.** Reduced Austrian influence in Germany affairs.

## Contributions of Bismarck to unification of Germany

Otto von Bismarck, often referred to as the "**Iron Chancellor**", was a statesman and Minister President of Prussia who played a pivotal role in the unification of Germany between 1864 and 1871.



otto von bismarck 1864-1871

He made the following contribution

1. Played indirect role in the Vienna settlement that created a loose confederation that brought Germans together.
2. He strengthened the Prussian economy that funded the unification activities.
3. **Danish War (1864)**: Bismarck orchestrated the conflict with Denmark over the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. The war ended with the Treaty of Vienna, which ceded both duchies to Prussia and Austria.
4. **Austro-Prussian War (1866)**: Also known as the **Seven Weeks' War**, this conflict resulted in a decisive Prussian victory over Austria. The war led to the exclusion of Austria from German affairs and the establishment of the **North German Confederation** under Prussian leadership.
5. **North German Confederation (1867)**: Bismarck played a key role in forming this federal state, which included 22 northern German states. This was a significant step towards unification.
6. **Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871)**: Bismarck provoked France into declaring war on Prussia, which rallied the southern German states to support Prussia. The war ended with the capture of Paris and the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles on January 18, 1871.
7. **Promoted Prussia's technological advancement** that availed her with better weapons, transport and communication networks.
8. **Promoted military reforms in Prussia**. He expanded the military that enabled Prussia to win unification wars.
9. **He made beneficial diplomatic ties with European powers like Britain.**
10. **He was pivotal in industrial revolution**: Rapid industrialization and economic growth created a sense of common interests among the various German states.

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