

HCC

THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY

STUDY GUIDE

#LETSBEEUNITED

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1. Letter from the Secretary General

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to ITUMUN 2026.

By choosing to take part in this conference, you have already done something meaningful: you have chosen dialogue over indifference, understanding over assumption, and engagement over silence. In a world increasingly shaped by division, conflict, and uncertainty, such choices matter.

Today's international landscape is marked by ongoing conflicts, humanitarian crises, and profound global challenges that demand more than rhetoric. They demand informed, open-minded, and principled individuals, particularly from the younger generation, who are willing to listen, to question, and to act responsibly. MUNs offers precisely this space: one where ideas are tested, diplomacy is practised, and perspectives are broadened.

As delegates, you are not merely representing states or institutions; you are actually engaging in the art of negotiation, the discipline of research, and the responsibility of decision-making. Approach this experience with curiosity, respect, and intellectual courage. Learn not only from debate, but from one another.

On behalf of the Secretariat, I sincerely hope that ITUMUN 2026 will challenge you, inspire you, and leave you better equipped to contribute to a more peaceful and cooperative world.

I wish you a rewarding conference and every success in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

Abdullah Kikati

Secretary-General

2. Letter from the Head of Crisis

Esteemed Delegates,

It is with deepest pride and greatest pleasure that I welcome you to the 2026 edition of the Istanbul Technical University Model United Nations (ITUMUN) Conference, where we will be hosting you with two crisis committees of HCC: The Unification of Germany and H-JCC: The End of the Great War. I am your Head of Crisis, Ege Kaval, and with my lovely Deputy, Azra Ece Öztürk, and our vast crisis team, we will be primarily focusing on making both of these committees proceed in a fashion that both entertains and educates you. With this year's edition of ITUMUN hosting an incredible 14 committees in total, we will also be attempting to entertain the remaining committees if their respective Under Secretaries General see it fit. Over the course of four days, I look forward to witnessing your intense debates, spanning from attempting to make the fractions of a future powerhouse of a nation whole all the way to one cabinet attempting to free Western Europe from the tyranny of the Germans, while the other believes they are the rightful rulers of Europe. My primary objective when it comes to both of these committees is to make you feel immersed and to ensure you have fun while being educated over the days to come.

Attached to this letter is a study guide to support your initial research and preparation for your respective committee. I would highly suggest you go beyond the guide to both ensure your readiness for the proceedings and to broaden your horizons. I would like to thank the board members of the committee for their efforts in creating this academic document for the conference.

Before concluding my letter, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to every member of our Executive and Organizational Team for their tireless efforts in preparing the framework for these committees to become a reality.

If you have any questions or need assistance regarding the committees, please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the crisis team. I am excited to see your diplomatic skills in action during the conference.

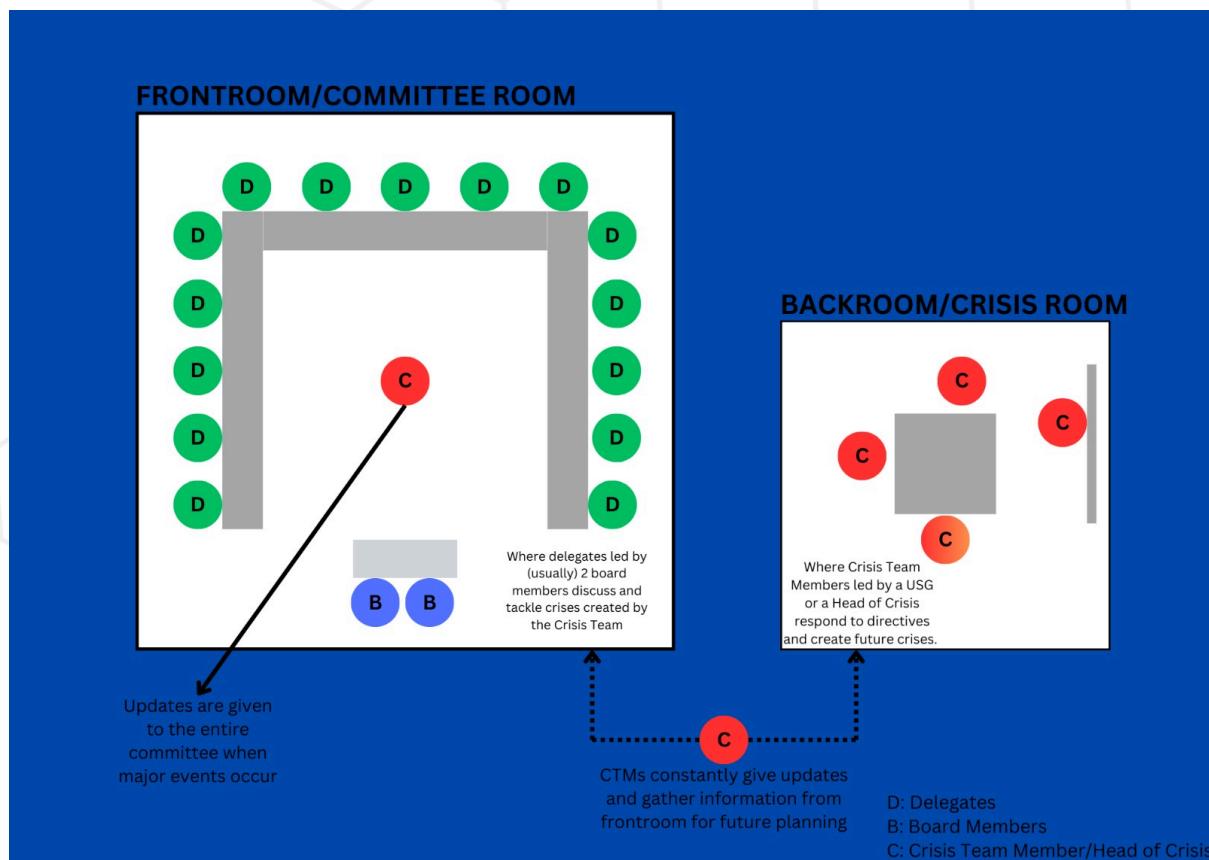
As a reminder and help for the conference, in case you need a bit of inspiration, consider the following quote:

"In the darkest times, hope is what you give yourself. That is the meaning of true inner strength."

Best regards,
Ege Kaval
Head of Crisis

3. Introduction to the Committee

Historical Crisis Committee: Unification of Germany aims to revive the political dynamics of the early 1860s through a cabinet including twenty members representing three different nations. However, the committee structure allows delegates to transcend historical limitations and exercise strategic creativity. Therefore, delegates are expected to pursue innovative policies to advance their country's interests while reshaping history. Delegates may utilize historical precedents and diplomatic strategies along with unconventional solutions. The period addressed in this study guide covers numerous conflicts involving numerous blocs, thereby providing delegates with extensive opportunities to exercise strategic thinking and creative policymaking throughout the upcoming four days.



Since this will be a crisis committee, for any first-timers that may be reading: a crisis committee is a dynamic, simulation-based, in this specific case, historical event recreation, where you, the delegates, are expected to tackle issues rapidly and directly. You will not be representing a country like in a regular General Assembly Committee, but rather you will be acting as the person you have been allocated to. While you are doing this, outside of the confines of your cabinet room, the Crisis Team will be planning how the proceedings will move. They are the historical recreation experts who will spend four days making sure your experience will be as satisfying and interactive as possible. You will be affecting the proceedings of the committee with your written directives, which are hand-written documents

sent by members of the committee to the Crisis Team for evaluation and response. Once your directives have been viewed by the team, you will be given updates, which will shape the potential crises that might be presented to you during proceedings. If all of these feel a bit overwhelming, please do not be scared, since we will be having a workshop covering all of this in detail in the first session of the conference.

4. Historical Background

a. The Congress of Vienna and German Confederation

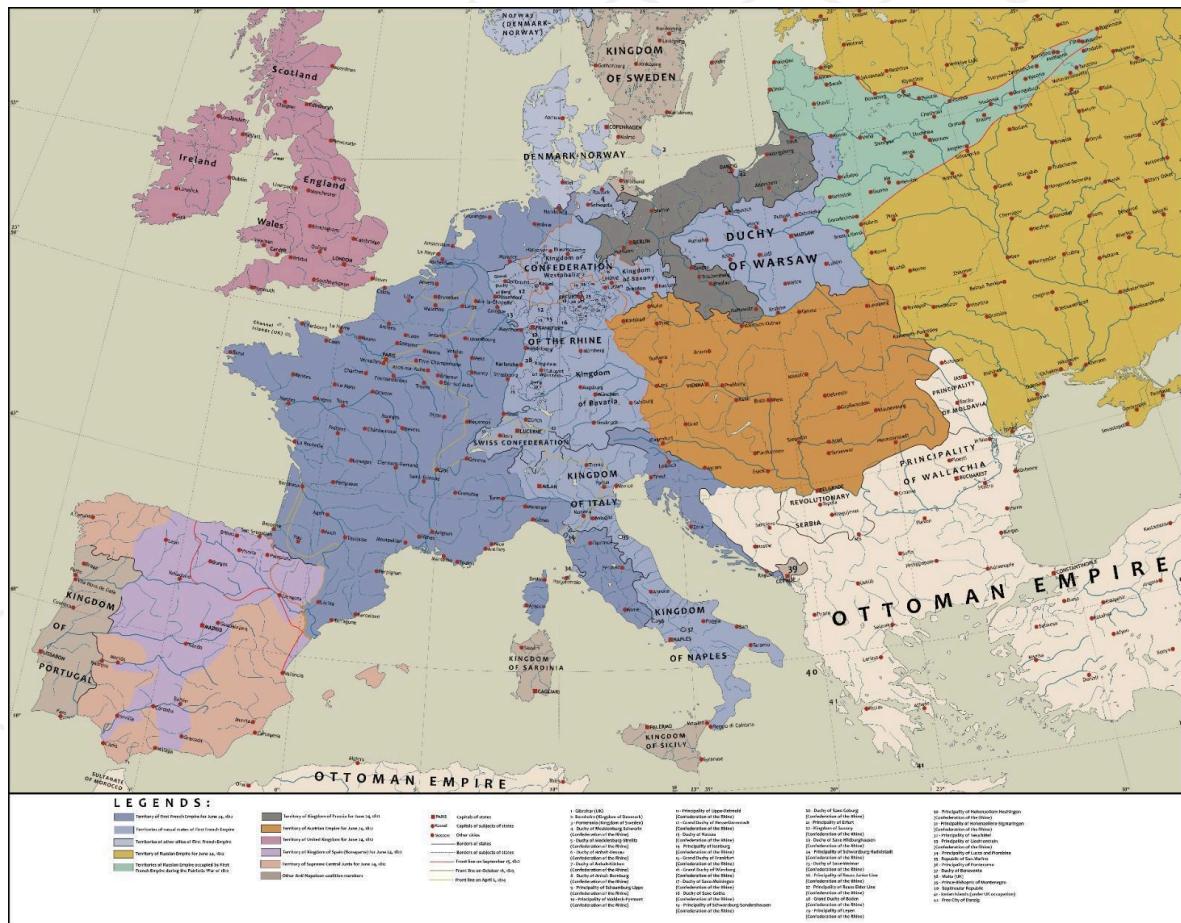
The Napoleonic Wars were a devastating conflict that changed the entire structure of Europe. Arguably, one of the biggest events that unfolded related to the Napoleonic Wars was the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, which was already in a steady decline before the wars. After many wars back to back in the Napoleonic Wars, there came the Congress of Vienna. European leaders met together to redraw the entire map of Europe after the war had ended. The main goal of the Congress of Vienna was not to just decide on some country borders, it was to restore the balance of power between all nations in Europe so that an event like the Napoleonic wars, where one nation dominated the entire continent, could never happen once again.



Borders in Europe before the Congress of Vienna

The key point that should be taken in this Congress is the creation of the German Federation. The German Confederation was a direct replacement of the Holy Roman Empire which consisted of hundreds of German states, now to be reformed as 39 after the Congress.

Even though the replacement was in place, it did not hold up well because Austria and Prussia were in direct conflict in each act the states wanted to take. These two great powers within the confederation created a dualism within. Austria wanted the confederation weak so it could maintain its dominance while Prussia was determined to expand its influence throughout the region. These contradictions between the two states were ultimately damaging the entire confederation. It was a clear sign that one of the major powers in the confederation had to leave for the better of other states and the confederation itself. The question was, who would be the one to leave?



The state of Europe after the Congress of Vienna

b. Political Fragmentation and Social Structure

The location of modern-day Germany once consisted of many different states and nations. These states were mostly in co-operation with each other in cases of revolutions or foreign invasion that could happen any time. This complicated many pressing matters in Europe, specifically, Germany.

Trade, communication, cooperation was almost impossible to be conducted because of this fragmentation. The trade could not hold up well with 39 sovereign states with each having different policies. Politics was also notoriously tough since the only centralized organ,

the Federal Convention in Frankfurt, required unanimity for all of the major decisions which was almost never seen since one vote would mean that the entire process would fail. A decentralized German state also meant that it was hard for the states to dominate or even hold up in Europe.

From the eye of the great powers, the decentralized German states were exactly what they wanted since their goal was to preserve the balance; no nation wanted the other powers to dominate Europe, this was already a problem which concerned nations like France and England with their constant rivalry and Russia also having a significant influence. Having a unified German state would stir the pot further in this power war and would further compromise their plans so a decentralized system was essential for these major powers. The major powers were ready to do anything in their hands to keep Germany from being unified so they could exert their influence over the weak sovereign states individually.

c. Early Nationalism and Liberal Ideas

Both Nationalism and Liberalism in this era were born from the French Revolution. After the birth, they spread out across Europe with the direct effect of Napoleon and his invasions on neighbouring countries. Even after Napoleon was defeated, the ideas were already spread and the rest of Europe had very little to do to stop it. With these ideas came the demand for freedom, rights, representation and much more, which became Europe's biggest nightmare because this would mean that each crown had to give their power away if they wanted to satisfy the people, which the crownland was strongly against such drastic changes, even though the people were demanding it.

Some people were fueled with the idea of a unified state within Germany as well. Many middle class people (Bуржоазия) and students wanted a change and unify the German states under one flag which also created further tension. Demand for a change would further be pressed when more people were accustomed to these new theories that would arise from people of the states. The nationalist and liberal ideas were also present and came into full effect in Italy as well, with the Unification of Italy.

i. Risorgimento (Unification of Italy)

Risorgimento is one of the events that also took inspiration from the era's nationalist ideas that came from the Napoleonic Wars and spread throughout Europe. Just as with the desire of being unified that is primarily seen in the German states, this was also the case for Italian provinces. Risorgimento, which means "Rising Again" in Italian is the unification movement that resulted in the formation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. The movement wanted the foreign dominated Italian states to be free and united under one flag which they ultimately achieved by a series of major events that took place in Italy.



Proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy

One of the biggest players in this movement was the Carbonari, which was the secret society in Italy that was advocating the early nationalism and liberal ideas within Italian provinces. The Carbonari had many influential people within their groups, ranging from nobility to the rising middle class of the 19th century.

The Congress of Vienna also affected Italy with many agreements resulting in increased dominance of Austria over the region, which further inspired the movements of getting free from the influence and becoming independent within Italy. Although most of the early movements resulted in failures, they would further result in the ideas of a revolution spreading, and thus make further events more successful.

Led by Piedmont, the Italian states would soon be unified after many, many wars. These would result in further weakening of Austrian influence over Europe, which eventually resulted in a redistribution of power in the continent that the major powers could not stop with the Congress of Vienna.

5. The Revolutions of 1848 and Their Failure

a. The Spring of Nations

The social state was entering a storm in central Europe in the 1840s. With the rise of nationalistic ideas in the Age of Enlightenment, people began to raise their demands towards

more liberal and democratic policies. Uprisings, revolts, and revolutions spread across the continent rapidly, starting with Switzerland in late 1847 and the Italian states in early 1848, and finally came to Prussia as well on March 18, 1848.



March 1848 with a barricade scene from Breite Strasse, Berlin

The period that built up until the German revolutions is called **Vormärz** (Before March). During this period of time, newspapers and pamphlets played a major role in the development of political awareness due to the censorship imposed by Austria and Prussia. In 1832, seven cantons in Switzerland had formed a liberal confederation against Catholic cantons; later on, more cantons joined to form the Swiss Confederation. This left no choice for the Catholic cantons but to form the Sonderbund alliance, which led up to the **Sonderbund War (1847)**, also called the Swiss Civil War. After the Sonderbund forces had been defeated by the confederation, the success of the democratic liberals resounded throughout Europe; the British support for the Swiss liberals avoided any intervention by Austria and Prussia.

On March 18, 1848, the public gathered in front of Frederick William's palace; gatherings had already started in universities and in the streets throughout all Germanic states in Europe, and eventually reached the government. The army and the public got into a skirmish, and many were dead. King Frederick William IV had no choice but to reassure the

citizens and was forced to pay homage to those who lost their lives. This was considered a victory for the citizens. As a result, on May 18, 1848, a constituent national assembly elected from various German states had gathered in Frankfurt to write a constitution.

The assembly failed to reach an action due to disagreements, and uprisings and revolts being overpowered by national armies ultimately led to the failure of the 1848 revolution. The people, who were already economically and socially weak, were not in a position to resist the great powers.

b. First Schleswig War (1848-1852)

In the heat of the revolutions, German rebels in the Danish-controlled Schleswig state revolted against the Danish Kingdom. German States supported the rebels with troops and volunteers from the states joining made it a war. German-Danish hostilities so on brought about diplomatic intervention from Britain and Russia, ultimately forcing Prussia to withdraw its troops from Schleswig, excluding Prussia from the war. In 1852, the states of Schleswig and Holstein both stayed under Danish rule.



Danish soldiers return to Copenhagen in 1849

c. Revival of the Confederation (1851)

In 1850, since the German Confederation had dissolved, Prussia took the opportunity to form a new union called the **Erfurt Union**. This didn't last too long because of Prussia's

internal affairs and the ongoing wars surrounding the country. In November 1850, Prussia had to accept the **Olmütz Proclamation** (or the Olmütz Agreement) by abandoning the Erfurt Union and allowing Austria to reinstate an Austrian-led German Confederation. Eventually, in 1851, the confederation was active again after the crises.

6. The Rise of Prussia and Otto von Bismarck (1862)

a. Prussia's Military and Political Strength

The tradition of the famous Prussian military excellence began with Frederick William I, who established the cantonal recruitment system and a professional officer corps, making the Prussian military the fourth largest in Europe despite the state's smaller population. Once he became the King, he immediately pushed for the renewal of military strength, which had not been significantly improved since 1806. The predominantly liberal assembly tried to block Wilhelm by refusing to fund it, which was one of the reasons Otto von Bismarck became his prime minister. Together with Minister of War Albrecht von Roon and Chief of Staff Helmuth von Moltke, a famous field marshal, they began reforming the army.

Moltke's idea was to increase the number of active soldiers, adopt new types of arms, master quicker and better mobilization, improve communication and deployment using modern technologies, and create a more professional and well-trained officer corps. While the field marshal worked on these, Bismarck worked on securing his political position and began forging the path to the ultimate goal of his government: the unification of Germany.

b. Appointment of Otto von Bismarck

In 1851, Frederick William IV appointed Bismarck as the Prussian representative to the federal Diet in Frankfurt, a clear reward for his loyalty to the monarchy. In Frankfurt, Bismarck began to reassess his view of German nationalism and the goals of Prussian foreign policy. With the defeat of the revolution in Central Europe, Austria had reasserted its supremacy in the German Confederation. Bismarck opposed close cooperation with Austria, arguing that it was forcing the strong Prussia to be bound to the weak old Austria. Bismarck had gained more popularity for his views.

In 1859, Bismarck was sent to Russia as Prussian ambassador, and not long after, in May 1862, he moved to Paris as ambassador to the court of Napoleon III. Thus, he had 11 years of experience in foreign affairs, which helped him eventually become the prime minister and foreign minister of Prussia in September 1862.

The appointment of Bismarck was the monarch's last desperate effort to avoid parliamentary sovereignty over the military. Bismarck showed the world what he promised and his policy, named after his famous speech known as **Blut und Eisen** (Blood and Iron) :

"Prussia must collect and keep its strength for the right moment, which has been missed several times already; Prussia's frontiers as laid down by the Vienna treaties are not conducive to a healthy national life; it is not by means of speeches and majority resolutions that the great issues of the day will be decided, that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849, but by blood and iron."

He was stating that he intended to use Prussia's military not for internal suppression but for the liberal goal of achieving national unification. The liberal opposition, however, chose to ignore these wills, and they informed William I that they would not deal with his prime minister any further. After eight months in office, Bismarck had failed to achieve any agreement with the parliamentary opposition.



Otto von Bismarck

7. The Danish War

Prussia and Austria declared war upon Denmark on January 16, 1864, for abrogating Denmark's November 1863 constitution. The Austro-Prussian demand provided for a joint settlement of the Schleswig-Holstein question, excluding the broader German Confederation. Fifteen days later, the Austro-Prussian army ignored the federal troops in Holstein and invaded Schleswig. Bismarck aimed to achieve the annexation of the duchies to Prussia and make Kiel serve as a Prussian naval base, marking Prussia's separation from federal policy. Within days of the first contact between the opposing armies, Danish forces began a general withdrawal, culminating on 6 February in the evacuation of Danewirk, where they had

attempted to maintain a frontal defence. This set the tone for the campaign, followed by Danish defenders finding themselves outnumbered and outgunned, especially in terms of artillery.

a. The London Conference (1864)

As the Austro-Prussian army advanced into Schleswig, the political situation of broader Europe was favourable for Austria and Prussia. Russia, unassertive after the Crimean War, was no longer supportive towards Denmark and now backed Austro-Prussian conservatism. In the absence of support from Great Britain, Bismarck signed a fresh alliance with Austria on 8 March to conclude the invasion of Denmark properly. Before they could fully decide on their military goals, this unusual alliance faced a European conference. The London Conference convened on April 25, 1864, and was delayed because of unavailing efforts to bring about an armistice first, the difficulty of securing the representation of the German Confederation, and Bismarck's deliberate effort to postpone the beginning until they were in possession of the whole of Denmark. Napoleon's proposal to consult the intentions of the populations was altered by Bismarck to separate Holstein and southern Schleswig from Denmark while letting the populations decide the frontier line and the question of independence or union with Prussia. The conference dispersed without conclusion due to Denmark rejecting the proposal of personal union being central to the March alliance.

b. The Convention of Gastein

The Convention of Gastein modified the condominium by assigning the internal administration of Holstein to Austria and that of Schleswig to Prussia. However, the arrangement was short-lived because the wider conflict within Germany led to the Seven Weeks' War between Austria and Prussia.

8. The Austro-Prussian War (1866)

Also known as the Seven Weeks' War, the Austro-Prussian War was between Prussia on the one side and Austria, Bavaria, Saxony, Hanover, and minor German states on the other. The war erupted as a result of the aforementioned dispute between Prussia and Austria over the administration of Schleswig-Holstein. In the middle of June 1866, hostilities between two parties actually broke out and Bismarck provoked Austria into a war, securing alliances with Italy and ensuring neutrality from France. The conflict began when Prussia occupied Holstein, leading to a swift mobilisation of Austrian forces. The Prussian victory was formally concluded on August 23 by the Treaty of Prague. Later, Hanover, Hesse-Kassel, Nassau, and Frankfurt were annexed, acquiring the territory separating the eastern and western parts of Prussia.

The Third War of Italian Independence, a theatre of the concurrent Austro-Prussian War, was between the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy. The 1866 Treaty of Vienna

was an agreement signed to conclude the hostilities of the sides and resulted in the transfer of Venetia to France. Prussia's overall victory in the war enabled it to establish the North German Confederation.

9. The North German Confederation (1867)

The North German Confederation was established in 1867, following Prussia's success, in order to organize German states north of the Main River under Prussian leadership, effectively sidelining Austria and its influence. Otto von Bismarck played a vital role in this unification process by manipulating political dynamics and fostering nationalist sentiment among various German states.

This confederation created a new governmental structure where King William I of Prussia served as the president and Bismarck as chancellor, overseeing foreign affairs and military command. The North German Confederation included a parliamentary body called the Reichstag, which allowed for some democratic participation, although legislative power was limited. Despite its brief existence of just four years, the confederation's structure and policies laid the groundwork for the eventual unification of Germany in 1871, leading to the establishment of the German Empire.



Map of the North German Confederation (1866–1871)

a. Austria-Hungary Compromise of 1867

Ausgleich, also known as the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, was concluded on February 8, 1867, and shaped the relations between Austria and Hungary and established the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. The Kingdom of Hungary had desired equal status with the Austrian Empire, which was weakened by its defeat in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. The Austrian Emperor gave Hungary full internal autonomy together with a responsible ministry, and in return Hungary agreed that the empire should still be a single state for purposes of war and foreign affairs, thus maintaining its dynastic prestige abroad.

10. The Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871)

In the years that preceded 1870, France grew increasingly weary of the increasing influence of the Germans, who were being led by Prussia. France had established itself as the true dominant power of Europe, but this self-proclaimed title was now under intense threat. The French Emperor, Napoleon III, wasn't completely opposed to the goal of German unification, as he believed that political unification of such a large group could lead to international cooperation. An attempt at negotiations was made, where France suggested a balance of power between the two nations and that French-speaking areas like Luxembourg should remain under their complete control. Prussia first saw this as an opportunity to neutralise a potential French threat and, until 1867, entertained Napoleon III's demands. The victory against Austria in the Seven Weeks' War boosted German morale immensely, which led to France demanding even more tolerance from the Prussians. At that point Prussia refused to listen to the demands of the French, and the opposing governments started to grow hostile towards each other.

These hostilities found their peak (in classic European fashion) in the form of a candidacy dispute in Spain. The Spanish provisional government sought to replace the ousted monarch, Queen Isabella II, and as the primary candidates seemed inadequate or refused to accept the vacant position, a distant relative of King William I, Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, was chosen as a potential candidate for the throne. The Prussians were hesitant in leaving Leopold in such an unsafe position of power; however, through the persuasion of Otto von Bismarck and Spanish officials, he was declared as a candidate. Bismarck specifically used this to provoke the French, whom he had worried were growing powerful by each passing day. The French government and its people took the bait, as they were outraged by even the notion of having a German prince on the Spanish throne. With the approval of King William, Leopold withdrew his candidacy shortly after the protest in France took place.



Leopold von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen

To ensure this situation would never arise again, the French foreign affairs minister, Antoine-Agénor-Alfred Gramont, warned the French ambassador to Berlin never to allow King William to reconsider his relative's candidacy. Bismarck saw potential in this yet again and spun the narrative into making it seem like France was ordering the King of Prussia. After this story was published in the newspapers, it ignited nationalist passions on both sides and ultimately resulted in France declaring war on Prussia on July 19, 1870. Napoleon III specifically called for this war due to his advisors convincing him that it was the only way to reassure his popularity among the French citizens. Prime Minister Bismarck had played his cards just right and, by manipulating both sides' inhabitants, managed to make France start a war, which, by his calculations, was impossible for them to come out on top of.

Prussia acted swiftly, convincing the Southern German states of Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, and Baden-Baden to join the North German Confederation (NGC). This was only possible due to France being the one to declare war on Prussia, thus labelling France as the aggressor. Another miscalculation on the French side was that they didn't have an invasion plan at hand, whereas the Prussians had been preparing for this event specifically. Chief of General Staff Helmuth von Moltke led large groups of troops in a highly efficient, orderly manner, mobilising them to attack the French aggressors in an extremely fast manner. France had made a major military reform in 1867, which could have been a winning factor for them, but it had been underfunded and incomplete, leaving the French troops disorganised and, quite frankly, out of their depth.



The major battles and how they resulted are as follows:

Battle of Wörth, August 6, 1870: Prussian troops mobilised in rapid fashion, as the French were slow to retaliate against the efforts made by the Germans. Resulted in heavy French casualties and a major Prussian victory.

Battle of Mars-la-Tour August 18, 1870: After taking their time and managing to gather strength, the French troops forced the Germans' hands. Despite their best efforts, France couldn't manage to break the Prussian defence and was overrun by cavalry units. Both sides suffered losses, but it ultimately resulted in Prussian advancement.

Siege of Metz, August 19-October 26, 1870: Following the Battle of Gravelotte, a battle held on the same day as the Mars-la-Tour, Marshal Bazaine retreated to the defences of Metz, where he held out for 2 months. The Germans acquired an immense amount of gains from the area after the surrender of the French troops, resulting in another major Prussian victory.



Battle of Sedan, September 1, 1870: The most decisive battle of the war, the Battle of Sedan, saw French troops trapped by the Prussians at Sedan. Napoleon III himself was among the trapped troops, and the next day the Germans rained artillery fire on them. After the losses of tens of thousands of men, the French were compelled to surrender after the capture of their ruler on the battlefield.

Following the surrender of Napoleon III, the opposition politicians in Paris declared the proclamation of the republic and abolished the French Empire. Led by Léon Gambetta, as the capital was being besieged, the remaining people tried to form a defensive line in a last-ditch attempt at stopping the Prussians. As the city was taken over by the Germans, Gambetta managed to make his escape via balloon, managed to rally troops at Tours, but was ultimately defeated on January 28, 1871, as Paris finally surrendered. On the same day an armistice was signed, which paved the way to the Treaty of Frankfurt on May 10th, 1871.

11. Proclamation of the German Empire (1871)

With the numerous victories achieved by the Prussians, the unification efforts that started all the way back with the Revolutions of 1848-1849 were seemingly reaching their climax. Before the surrender of Napoleon III, a delegation from the parliament of North Germany pleaded their case to King Wilhelm that he should announce himself as the Emperor of Germany. The plan was set, and on January 18, 1871, Wilhelm I announced himself as the Kaiser¹ of the new German Empire. With the French being swiftly handled, as well as the Austrian bloc yielding to the Prussians, even the sceptical Southern German states saw the potential in Wilhelm as an emperor. The people were content with the situation, but

¹ Emperor in German, added for dramatic effect

with Alsace-Lorraine under German control, fear of French revenge haunted the empire, as the dynamics of Europe were irreversibly altered, for better or for worse.



12. Global Outcomes of Unification

The unification of Germany in 1871 altered the balance of power in Europe, with Germany emerging as a dominant military and industrial force under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck. While it brought political and economic unity to German-speaking regions, it also sowed the seeds for future European conflicts. Today, the proclamation of the German Empire stands as a symbol of how strategic leadership, military strength, and nationalism can reshape history. It remains as a critical chapter in understanding the origins of modern Europe and the dynamics of power, identity, and diplomacy.

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