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# eGUIDE//History

## Historical Investigations and Interpretations

Unit AS 1

Option 4: Italy and Germany 1815–71

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## Introduction

In this option, students focus on the unification of Italy and Germany between 1815 and 1871. Students analyse the growth of liberalism, nationalism and cultural movements in the period 1815–48, concentrating, in particular, on the causes and reasons for the failure of the revolutions that broke out in Italy and Germany in 1848. The main focus is on the unification process in both countries. Students examine the contribution of individuals such as Bismarck and Cavour, economic developments and the favourable international situation.

This option is assessed in a written examination lasting one hour 30 minutes. Candidates answer two questions. Question 1 is a short response question and candidates answer one question from a choice of two. Question 2 is a source-based question with two parts. In Question 2(a) candidates assess the usefulness of a primary and/or contemporary source to an historian studying a particular historical event or development. In Question 2(b) candidates assess which of two different interpretations of a particular historical event or development they find more convincing.

Question 1 targets Assessment Objective A01: the candidate's ability to demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance. Question 2(a) tests Assessment Objective A02: the candidate's ability to analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within its historical context. Question 2(b) targets Assessment Objective A03: the candidate's ability to analyse and evaluate, in relation to the historical context, different ways in which aspects of the past have been interpreted.

For ease of consultation, the following study is divided into four sections:

1. Germany 1815–48
2. German Unification 1849–71
3. Italy 1815–48
4. Italian Unification 1849–70



# 1. Germany 1815–48

## (a) German liberal and nationalist ideas

In 1815 Germany was a geographical expression as opposed to a political entity. At that time there were 39 German states, of which Prussia was by far the largest. Although they all joined the German Confederation when it was set up in June 1815, each individual state was independent, having its own ruler, government and army. The dominant figure in the German Confederation between 1815 and 1848 was the Austrian Foreign Minister and later Chancellor, Prince Clemens von Metternich. He sought to maintain Austria's influence over the German states and was a fierce opponent of liberal and nationalist ideas. However, in spite of Metternich's repressive policies, liberal and nationalist ideas did begin to emerge in the German states in the period 1815–48.

In the period directly after the defeat of Napoleon, nationalist ideas were most closely associated with student societies (*Burschenschaften*) and at the Wartburg Festival in October 1817 students celebrated their national German identity and demanded liberal reforms. Nationalist ideas were also promoted by poets, musicians, historians and philosophers, such as Friedrich Hegel and Johann Herder. A festival held in Hambach (Bavaria) in 1832 attracted 25,000 nationalists who demanded the unification of Germany. External threats also led to an upsurge in nationalism. Nationalist feelings were aroused in the Rhineland in 1840 when France laid claim to German territory on the left bank of the Rhine, while the attempt by the King of Denmark in 1846 to include not just Schleswig but also Holstein into his kingdom provoked widespread protests in Germany and a rise in nationalist sentiments.

Many nationalists were also liberals, who believed that freedom of speech, press and worship could only be achieved in a united Germany. The influence of events in France on German liberalism should not be underestimated. It was no coincidence that Baden and Württemberg, which both shared a border with France, were the strongholds of German liberalism and the revolution in Paris in July 1830 prompted demonstrations and demands in South West Germany for greater liberalisation. The call for liberal reforms culminated in a meeting of liberals from South West Germany in Heppenheim in October 1847, who drew up a long list of demands, including the establishment of a national parliament.

These liberal and nationalist developments deeply alarmed Metternich who initiated a series of repressive measures. In response to the Wartburg Festival, he introduced the Carlsbad Decrees in 1819 to restrict the student movement and impose more control over the press, while his riposte to the Hambach Festival was, with the support of Prussia, to impose the Six Acts which gave the Diet more control over universities and the press. Although these repressive measures restricted the growth of liberal and nationalist ideas in Germany between 1815 and 1848, Metternich was unable to stifle the economic developments in this period which in many ways laid the basis for the future unification of Germany.



## (b) Economic developments in the German states

Between 1815 and 1848 significant economic developments took place in some of the German states, in particular Prussia. In 1815 each of the 39 German states had its own tariffs and custom duties which hindered economic growth. In 1818 the Prussian Customs Union was created as Prussia sought to spread free trade across other German states. The success of this venture led to the creation of the *Zollverein* in 1834, which included 18 states with a population of almost 25 million. Prussia was boosted economically by the success of the *Zollverein* and by 1844 only Austria and five other German states were not members.

The *Zollverein* states established a common system of tariffs and abolished internal customs barriers. Railways were also extended to help improve trade links between member states of the organisation. The railway network expanded from 600 miles of track in 1840 to 4,000 miles in 1850, stimulating the growth of industry and urbanisation. Even though Austria had refused to join the *Zollverein*, it retained political control of the German Confederation in 1848. However, Prussia had without doubt become the economic leader of Germany and even at this stage many northern states viewed Prussia as the potential leader of a unified German state.

### Questions for discussion:

1. What were the origins of the *Zollverein*?
2. What were the economic effects of the *Zollverein* up to 1848?
3. What political impact did the *Zollverein* have up to 1848?

## (c) The causes of the revolutions in Germany in 1848

The first three months of 1848 witnessed a wave of revolutions across Europe. The first took place in Palermo (Sicily) on 12 January but the events which took place in Paris on 24 February were of much greater significance. Louis Philippe fled the French capital and a republic was declared two days later. The following day a large demonstration in Mannheim (Baden) demanded freedom of the press, democratic government and the establishment of a German parliament. But the most important developments took place on 13 March 1848 in Vienna. In response to calls for the introduction of constitutional government, Metternich, the embodiment of repression, tendered his resignation as Austrian Chancellor and five days later violence also broke out in Berlin, where some 300 demonstrators were shot dead. Shocked by the violence, the King of Prussia, Frederick William IV, made a series of concessions, including the appointment of a liberal government. The rulers of many of the other German states adopted the same strategy of accepting the demands of the revolutionaries in order to retain power.

Why did the revolutions of 1848 occur? The leaders were generally well-educated liberals and nationalists, 51 of whom convened in Heidelberg on 5 March to discuss the establishment of a German Parliament. In Prussia, Frederick William IV appointed several prominent liberals after the revolution, including David Hansemann as Finance Minister and Ludolf Camphausen as Minister-President. Middle class businessmen, such as Hansemann and Camphausen, were frustrated at their lack of political influence, even though they had become economically powerful as a result of the establishment of the *Zollverein*. Similarly, teachers, lawyers, doctors and, in particular, civil servants took part in the revolutions because of their restricted career opportunities. In fact, prior to 1848 practically all senior civil servants were members of the nobility.



Economic factors also played an important part in the outbreak of the revolutions. In urban areas, working and living conditions were generally poor and sometimes appalling. An economic turndown in 1847 led to an increase in unemployment which had a severe impact on the textile industry. Artisans and craftsmen were badly affected. The plight of the handloom weavers was especially unenviable and in many respects they were the flagbearers of the 1848 revolutions. Their once secure livelihood and high social status was under threat from the introduction of new technology and, in response, they demanded higher wages and shorter working hours. Their precarious economic position was made worse by an acute food shortage as a result of harvest failures in 1846 and 1847 and a severe outbreak of potato blight. They demanded job protection, the cheap import of raw materials, export subsidies and welfare measures for the elderly.

Economic deprivation in the countryside was also widespread and the peasants were hit hard by the food crisis of 1846–47. They demanded more food at cheaper prices and in areas where they had become tenant farmers as opposed to landless labourers they also called for cheaper rents. The peasants were often motivated by regional or local grievances. For instance, their calls for better economic conditions were most vocal in areas where they had less freedom, such as in parts of the Rhineland, Silesia and South West Germany. However, even in areas where they had gained some independence, they still had to pay feudal dues to the landowners and on the eve of the revolution just 22 per cent of peasants in Saxony were self-supporting.

#### **(d) The achievements of the Frankfurt Parliament**

The Frankfurt Parliament met for the first time in May 1848. Its members, who were drawn from each of the 39 German states, were elected by approximately 75 per cent of the adult male population. The Parliament made some key decisions, taking advantage of the power vacuum created by the 1848 revolutions. In December 1848 it issued the Fifty Articles of the German Citizens which represented a major political achievement. The Fifty Articles promised legal equality, freedom of worship and greater press freedom. After much deliberation, it eventually agreed a German constitution in March 1849. In the same month the Frankfurt Parliament offered to elect the Prussian King as Emperor of Germany, which William declined as he refused to 'pick up a crown from the gutter'.

The actions of the Prussian King and the rejection of the proposed German constitution by some German states, including Prussia and Bavaria, persuaded many members to leave Frankfurt and return home. The Parliament was forced to move to Stuttgart, where it was dispersed by force in June 1849. How far was the Frankfurt Parliament responsible for its own downfall? The next section will assess the reasons for its failure.

#### **(e) The reasons for the failure of the Frankfurt Parliament**

There is no doubt that the Frankfurt Parliament contributed significantly to its own downfall. Its members were politically inexperienced and too academic. In fact, some 80 per cent of them were university graduates. Heinrich von Gagern, the leader of the Parliament, was moderate and well-meaning but proved to be ineffectual. Only four artisans and one peasant were elected to the Parliament, even though these groups had played a key part in the revolution. The Frankfurt Parliament acted too slowly and the revolution lost momentum. For example, it took almost a year to draft a constitution. Another key shortcoming of the Frankfurt Parliament was that it lacked power. The Parliament was not able to raise taxes and, crucially, it did not have its own army. Its weakness was illustrated by events in Schleswig-Holstein in April 1848 when the



Parliament had to rely on Prussian troops to intervene on its behalf and was powerless to prevent Prussia's subsequent withdrawal from the disputed duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.

The Frankfurt Parliament was beset by religious and regional divisions, while there were also ideological differences between the liberals, nationalists and radicals. This was particularly true of Southern Germany, where Friedrich Hecker briefly proclaimed the establishment of a republic in Constance in April 1848. The Parliament was divided on many issues, the most important of which was whether Austria should be excluded from the future Germany. The majority of the mainly Protestant North German states wanted the exclusion of Austria; on the other hand, most of the South German states, which had a predominantly Catholic population, demanded the inclusion of Austria. The fate of the Frankfurt Parliament depended to a large degree on Prussia. However, the Liberal Government in Berlin showed little interest in becoming the leader of a unified Germany, while King Frederick William IV turned down the chance to become Emperor of Germany in March 1849.

However, the failure of the Frankfurt Parliament was also partly due to the political skill and astuteness of the counter-revolutionary forces. The rulers of many of the German states gave concessions to the liberal revolutionaries in 1848 in order to hold on to power. In fact, King Ludwig I of Bavaria was the only German monarch to be deposed in 1848 and that was due to his affair with the divorced Irish dancer, Lola Montez. Since the revolutionaries in 1848 did not replace the rulers of the German states, these counter-revolutionary forces were in a position to regain power in the second half of 1848 by a dual strategy of making some concessions but also introducing coercive measures. For instance, in Berlin public works schemes were introduced to help the unemployed, while, on the other hand, the Civic Guard shot peaceful demonstrators in October 1848. However, the failure of the revolutions in the German states in 1849 must also be viewed in the wider context of the failure of the revolutions which had broken out in other parts of Europe in 1848.

#### Questions for discussion:

1. What were the aims of the participants in the revolutions in the German states in 1848?
2. How far were the leaders of the revolutions responsible for their failure?



#### Teaching and Learning Activity

Source evaluation and analysis

Read the source and answer the question which follows:

### The reasons for the failure of the revolutions in Germany in 1848

#### Source 1

Extract from the memoirs of Carl Schurz, published in 1913. Schurz was heavily involved in the German revolutions of 1848.

The political horizon which after the revolution in March looked so glorious soon began to darken. In South Germany, a republican uprising took place under the leadership of the brilliant Friedrich Hecker, which was speedily suppressed by force of arms. The majority of liberal opinion did not desire anything more than national unity and a constitutional monarchy on a broad democratic basis. The National Parliament at Frankfurt soon showed



a dangerous tendency to waste the time which was needed for prompt and decisive action if the successes of the revolution were to be secured. But our eyes turned anxiously to Berlin. Prussia was by far the strongest of the purely German states. Its attitude would be decisive in determining the fate of the revolution. For a while the Prussian King, Frederick William IV, seemed to be pleased with the role of leader of the national movement which the revolution had made him assume. But as events unfolded the King increasingly responded to voices appealing to old sympathies.

**Study Source 1.** How useful is Source 1 as evidence for an historian studying the problems faced by the revolutionaries in Germany in 1848?



## 2. German Unification 1849–71

### (a) The changing balance of power between Austria and Prussia 1849–59

Despite the failure of the revolutions of 1848 and the refusal of Frederick William IV to become Emperor of Germany, the balance of power in Austro-Prussia relations shifted towards Prussia in the period 1849–59, especially in the economic domain.

Prussia's attempt in 1849 through its 'Prussian Union Plan' to establish a 'German' political institution which excluded Austria ended in the humiliation of Olmütz in November 1850 when Prussia was forced to drop the plan. As a result the German Confederation was restored in May 1851. However, in spite of this political defeat, Prussia underwent a period of consolidation during the 1850s. Its Minister-President Edwin Manteuffel, though a Conservative who governed without Parliament from 1850 to 1858, introduced a series of economic reforms which gave the peasants greater freedom and improved working conditions in the towns.

In economic affairs the balance of power between Austria and Prussia shifted sharply towards Prussia during the 1850s. While Prussia experienced a sharp increase in industrial production and foreign trade, Austria found itself in serious economic difficulties. Prussia's economic and industrial success was based on its excellent natural resources. It had no fewer than four major industrial areas (the Ruhr, Saar, Saxony and Silesia) which had plentiful supplies of zinc, iron and, above all, coal. Prussia's flourishing industries were supported by credit banks and 115 joint stock companies were founded in the period 1850–58. Financiers, such as Gerson Bleichröder, and industrialists, such as Alfred Krupp, also played an important role. The *Zollverein* was another important factor in Prussia's growing prosperity because the removal of tariff barriers helped its iron, steel and textile production. Economic growth was also promoted by the sharp increase in Prussia's population from 15.1 million in 1841 to 19.5 million in 1866. Its education system also enjoyed a high reputation. Another important reason for Prussia's economic superiority over Austria was its impressive railway network. The length of its railway track rose from 2,967 kilometres in 1850 to 11,460 kilometres in 1870. This was almost twice the length of the entire network in Austria-Hungary. While Prussia avoided armed conflicts in the 1850s, Austria incurred high military expenditure in the Crimean War and the North Italian War which further weakened its already precarious economic position. To sum up, Austria had fallen behind Prussia in all economic areas by 1859 and this economic dominance also had political consequences for German unification.

#### Questions for discussion:

1. Did the Prussian state promote or hinder Prussia's economic growth?
2. What were the political and economic weaknesses of Austria in the period 1849–59?



## (b) Prussia's growing military strength

Although Prussia had not taken part in the North Italian War in 1859, it had mobilised its army in support of Austria. However, the mobilisation revealed such fundamental weaknesses in the organisation of the Prussian army that the war was over before the mobilisation process had been fully completed. As a result, Prince William of Prussia, regent since 1858, appointed General Albrecht von Roon to undertake a major reform of the Prussian army. Roon's Army Bill, introduced in 1860, proposed to increase the size of the military forces from 50,000 to 110,000 men, extend military service from 2 to 3 years, improve the quality of its weapons and downgrade the importance of the *Landwehr*. However, the Liberals, who had a majority in the Lower House of the Prussian Parliament, rejected the Bill. They expressed misgivings about the tax increases which would result from the Bill but their main concern was that the reformed army might be used for internal rather than external purposes, as had been the case in 1848.

This led to the Constitutional Crisis of 1860–62. The liberals repeatedly rejected the Army Bill and the King responded by dissolving parliament and holding new elections which saw an increase in support for the liberals. At the election held in December 1861 the newly established Progressive Party was returned as the largest party and actually strengthened its position in the election of May 1862. In September 1862 the Prussian Parliament once again rejected the Army Bill. Such was the desperation of the King that he seriously considered abdication. It was against this background that on 22 September 1862 King William accepted Roon's advice to appoint Otto von Bismarck as Prussia's new Minister-President in an attempt to solve this constitutional crisis. Eight days after his appointment, Bismarck made his memorable 'Blood and Iron speech' to the Lower House of the Prussian Parliament. He argued that:

*'Germany does not look to Prussia's liberalism but to its power. Not by means of speeches and majority verdicts will the great decisions of the day be made – that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849 – but by iron and blood.'*

Bismarck's speech further alienated the liberals but he was able to outmanoeuvre them by continuing to collect taxes even though the Lower House of the Prussian Parliament had not approved them. The Minister-President justified his action by referring to the so-called 'gap theory'. He maintained that, since the Constitution did not stipulate whether the Crown or Parliament had to give way in the event of conflict between them, the Crown's views would prevail since 'the State cannot stand still'. But Bismarck skilfully manipulated the Liberals in another way in the period 1862–66 because he spent the money they were attempting to deny him on an aggressive foreign policy which aimed to achieve their most cherished aspiration – the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership. This policy culminated in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866.



### Web Audio

For an excellent discussion of Bismarck, including his role in the constitutional crisis, listen to a podcast of a programme on Radio 4 on 22 March 2007 at: [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00775pm/broadcasts](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00775pm/broadcasts)



## (c) The Austro-Prussian Conflict

### (i) The Schleswig-Holstein Affair, the Danish War and Austro-Prussian relations

Who ruled Schleswig and Holstein had long since been a contentious issue and Prussia had sent troops into the duchies as recently as April 1848. In 1852 the Great Powers through the London Protocol agreed that Christian IX would succeed the King of Denmark, Frederick VII, who died in 1863. Schleswig was populated by both Danes and Germans, while Holstein was almost exclusively German. The crisis reignited when the new Danish King sent troops into Schleswig in November 1863, making it part of Denmark. In response to the Danish actions the German Confederation sent an army into Holstein in support of the German claimant to the Danish throne.

Bismarck sought to use this crisis to advance his own ambitions and the power of Prussia. In January 1864 Prussian and Austrian troops entered the two duchies but the two powers had different aims. Austria supported the Duke of Augustenburg who claimed the Danish throne, whilst Bismarck secretly hoped to make the two duchies part of Prussia. Denmark agreed to a Great Power Conference to solve the Schleswig-Holstein crisis but the participants in the London Conference (April–June 1864) failed to reach a consensus. Hostilities broke out again and Denmark was defeated. The Treaty of Vienna of October 1864 stipulated that Austria and Prussia would jointly control the two duchies. At the Gastein Convention in August of the following year, it was agreed that Austria would have control over Holstein, while Prussia would govern Schleswig. This allowed ample scope for conflict between the two powers, particularly since Holstein was closer to Prussia than Schleswig. During the first half of 1866 Austria adopted an increasingly belligerent attitude towards Prussia and Bismarck raised the stakes by submitting a contentious plan to reform the German Confederation which would have excluded Austria from the organisation. In addition, the plan stipulated that all troops in Northern Germany would be commanded by Prussia. These proposals led directly to the outbreak of hostilities, with Austria issuing a declaration of war on 18 June 1866 and Prussia reciprocating on the following day.

### (ii) The causes of the Austro-Prussian War

While the conflict over Schleswig-Holstein provided the short-term issue for the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War, the origins of their rivalry can be traced back to at least 1815. One of the reasons for the failure of the Frankfurt Parliament was the divisions among the German states about whether Austria should be included or excluded from a united Germany. Austria achieved a notable victory over Prussia at Olmütz in 1850 and relations between the two states worsened further in 1855 when the German Diet, under Bismarck's influence, decided not to send troops to help Austria in the Crimean War. Austro-Prussian relations deteriorated further in 1859 when Prussia made its support for Austria dependent on it taking control of the armies on the Rhine if France launched an attack.

There was also economic rivalry between Austria and Prussia. In 1851, the Austrian Minister of Trade and Finance, Karl Ludwig von Bruck, unsuccessfully tried to launch a rival customs union to the *Zollverein*. On 1 January 1866, some six months before the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War, Prussia succeeded in renewing the *Zollverein* for a further twelve years, despite opposition from Austria.

In attributing responsibility for the Austro-Prussian War, it should be borne in mind that Bismarck had a strong motive for provoking the conflict. As noted above, he became embroiled in the Constitutional Crisis with the Liberals in September 1862 and plunged Prussia into a serious domestic conflict which remained unresolved at the beginning of 1866. However, Prussia's victory in the war solved the crisis because the successes on



the battlefield split the Liberals, some of whom maintained their opposition to Bismarck, while others supported him because of his military achievements and the fact that he was pursuing their goal of German unification.

In the period 1862–66 Bismarck took steps to gain the support, or at least secure the neutrality, of the Great Powers in the event of a conflict with Austria. In 1863 he offered Russia military support to put down the Polish Revolt and this friendship with Russia proved useful for Bismarck in 1866 and 1870. He also tried to secure French neutrality in the event of a war against Austria, meeting Napoleon III at Biarritz in October 1865. In addition, he signed a Treaty with Italy on 8 April 1866, according to which, for a period of three months, Italy would go to war against Austria if Prussia did.

The war itself was short and conclusive with Prussia securing a crucial victory at the Battle of Sadowa (Königgrätz) on 3 July 1866. In the ensuing Treaty of Prague, signed in August 1866, Bismarck imposed lenient peace terms on Austria which, in addition to Holstein, only lost Venetia. However, the Treaty of Prague did bring German unification closer because Prussia gained four German states, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Frankfurt and Nassau. In addition, the German Confederation was replaced by a North German Confederation dominated by Prussia.

### **(iii) The reasons for Prussia's victory in the Austro-Prussian War**

Many expected Austria to defeat Prussia in the war and none of the powers expected such a swift and decisive Prussian victory, particularly since Austria had the support of most of the other German states.

An important reason for Prussia's victory was its superior political and military leaders. Bismarck was the leading politician of his day and his Austrian counterparts were no match for him. As noted above, he managed to secure French neutrality and Italian support in the event of a conflict with Austria. The pledge of Italian support in the Prussian-Italian Treaty of April 1866 was extremely important because it meant that Austria had to split up its army, sending 100,000 of its 275,000 troops southwards to fight the Italians. Prussia also had excellent military leaders. Roon's modernisation of the Prussian army was an important factor in Prussia's military success, as was the Chief of General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke, who proved to be a much more accomplished military commander than his Austrian counterpart, General Ludwig von Benedek. Moltke set up a body responsible for organising the transportation of troops to the battlefield.

Prussia's economic superiority over Austria also laid the basis for its military success. In 1860 its coal and steel production far outstripped that of Austria. Its superior railway network had a major impact on its military campaign during the war; in 1870, the length of Prussia's railway network was 19,000 kilometres, double that of Austria. Some railway lines had been built for military purposes and Prussia was able to mobilise its troops far more swiftly than the Austrians. Prussia also had superior weaponry and its needle gun inflicted heavy casualties on the Austrian army. The outcome of the war was not just determined by Prussia's strengths but also Austria's weaknesses. Its diplomatic position was weak and its finances were in a very precarious state.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. How important was the Schleswig-Holstein affair in the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War?
2. Was Prussia or Austria mainly responsible for the outbreak of the Austro-Prussian War?
3. Why did Bismarck impose a lenient peace on Austria in the Treaty of Prague?

**(d) Bismarck's attitude to German unification**

Bismarck's motives in conducting Prussian foreign policy between 1862 and 1871 continue to be a source of debate among historians. One issue is whether he was first and foremost a Prussian rather than German nationalist. Was his primary aim to create a united Germany or to increase the power and territory of Prussia? There is also much debate about the methods Bismarck used to bring about the unification of Germany. For example, what role did war play in his foreign policy? Particular discussion has focused on whether Bismarck was a supreme planner who had long-term aims or an opportunist who responded to events. His memoirs suggest that he meticulously planned the unification of Germany. However, it would be unwise to accept his own views at face value, especially since he frequently contradicted himself. Most contemporary historians would accept that Bismarck's policy was characterised by its flexibility. At any particular time the Prussian Minister-President had several alternative strategies depending on the outcome of events. His policies were not based on principles or moral scruples but simply on what best suited his particular political objective at that time.

**Questions for discussion:**

1. Was Bismarck's primary aim to create a united Germany or to increase the power of Prussia?
2. Did Bismarck have long-term aims or was he a skilful political opportunist?

**(e) Bismarck and the Southern German states**

As noted above, Prussia made territorial gains in the Treaty of Prague, while the other North German states became members of the newly established North German Confederation dominated by Prussia. However, the four Southern German states – Hesse-Darmstadt, Baden, Württemberg and, above all, Bavaria – were fiercely independent and deeply alarmed at the prospect of German unification under Prussian leadership.

The hostility of the Southern German states to Prussia was partly a result of their traditionally close ties with their neighbour, Austria. Religion was another key factor. While the Southern German states were mainly Catholic, Prussia was predominantly Protestant. 'Political Catholicism' or Ultramontanism was widespread in the Southern German states at this time since the Catholic Church was mounting fierce opposition to the introduction of civil marriages and secular education. A further issue was that the political structures in Baden, Württemberg and Bavaria were more liberal than in Prussia. Baden and Württemberg were well known as bastions of liberalism and in Baden universal male suffrage was guaranteed in the constitution which came into force in 1849. In Bavaria all taxpayers had the vote, whereas, in contrast, the three-class voting system remained in operation in Prussia.

Even though the Southern German states regarded Prussia's control of Northern and Central Germany as a danger to their own autonomy, they recognised the need to form military alliances with Prussia as a safeguard against a possible French attack. It was agreed that the Southern German states would give Prussia military support in the



event of a war against France, placing both their armies and railway lines under Prussian control. In addition, the four southern states joined the Customs Parliament in 1867. However, widespread dislike and fear of Prussia remained and in the elections to the Customs Parliament, held in 1868, parties supporting German unification gained very little support and in Württemberg the German Party experienced an overwhelming defeat. It was the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War which fundamentally changed the attitude of the Southern German states to unification. Nationalist, anti-French sentiments held sway in Baden, Württemberg and, to a lesser degree, Bavaria. Moreover, their political leaders recognised the dangers of remaining outside a unified Germany.

## **(f) The Franco-Prussian War**

### **(i) The causes of the war**

The reasons for the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War date back to the events of 1866. Napoleon III was shocked by Prussia's swift victory in the Seven Weeks' War and concerned about the likely emergence of a unified and powerful Germany on its border. Although the French Emperor claimed that, at their meeting at Biarritz in October 1865, Bismarck had promised him territorial rewards in return for French neutrality in the event of conflict between Austria and Prussia, the Prussian Minister-President denied this accusation. Against this background, Napoleon III wanted to achieve a diplomatic success to reassert France's credentials to be a great European power. This led to a sharp deterioration in Franco-Prussian relations which ultimately led to war in 1870.

The first contentious issue was Luxemburg. Early in 1867 the Dutch King agreed to sell Luxemburg to France, subject to the approval of the Prussian King. Bismarck used this to stir up nationalist feelings, describing Luxemburg as a 'German territory' and calling for a Great Power conference to solve this crisis. This was held in London in May 1867. It was agreed that Luxemburg would be independent and neutral and Prussian troops would leave the Duchy. But the key point was that France did not acquire any new territory which represented another humiliating diplomatic defeat for Napoleon III.

The second major crisis concerned the Hohenzollern Candidature. When Queen Isabella of Spain lost her throne in September 1868, there was no obvious candidate to replace her. Consequently, the Spanish government asked Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen to become its new King. However, as head of the Hohenzollern family, William I of Prussia had to approve this offer. The King, conscious that this would alarm Napoleon, initially refused but Bismarck persuaded him to change his mind. When news of this development was leaked, it provoked national outrage in France, and Napoleon III threatened war unless Leopold's candidature was withdrawn. William I concurred but was outraged at Napoleon's demand for an apology and an assurance that he would never again support Leopold's candidature. On 13 July 1870 the King's secretary sent Bismarck a telegram from Ems which the Prussian Minister-President skilfully edited to make the King's rejection of French demands more uncompromising. Napoleon III, outraged by this insult to French prestige, declared war on Prussia on 19 July 1870. In response Bismarck declared that France was the aggressor and the Southern German states responded positively to Bismarck's call for them to honour the terms of their military alliance with Prussia and join the war effort.

### **(ii) The reasons for Prussia's victory**

Although called the Franco-Prussian War, it was fought between the French army and German, not just Prussian, troops. At the beginning of the war the Prussian/German army gained several victories, prompting some 180,000 French troops to retreat to Metz in



August 1870, where they were under siege until their surrender in the following October. In the meantime, the remainder of the French armed forces suffered a heavy defeat at the Battle of Sedan on 1 September. The Germans took some 85,000 prisoners, including the French Emperor himself, leading to the collapse of the Second Empire. German troops besieged Paris from September 1870 until January 1871, when it eventually surrendered. The unification of Germany had been completed and on 18 January 1871 the new German Emperor was formally proclaimed in Paris.

Prussia's victory in the Franco-Prussian War was a product of its strengths and French weaknesses. Its army had a significant numerical advantage over the French because, for the first time, it included not only Prussian troops but also forces from the other German states. In fact, at the outset of the conflict the 500,000-strong German army was opposed by 300,000 French troops. There was also a huge difference in the quality of the Prussian and French military leaders. While the Prussian Chief of Staff, Helmuth von Moltke, was an outstanding commander, his French counterpart, Marshall François Bazaine, committed an important tactical mistake when he withdrew his troops to Metz in August 1870. Prussia's troop mobilisation under Moltke was much quicker and better organised than that of the French. Prussia's impressive railway network was another key factor and, while it had six lines leading to the Franco-German border, France had only two. Prussia's military superiority over France was also partly due to the army reforms introduced by General Albrecht von Roon in the first half of the 1860s. Although the French army had more effective weapons than the Prussian soldiers, especially the *chassepot* rifle and the *mitrailleuse* machine gun, this advantage was more than offset by the excellence of the Prussian artillery. In terms of political leadership, Napoleon III was no match for Bismarck and this also contributed to France's defeat in the war. The international situation was also favourable to Prussia. Austria decided not to take part in the war because its leaders were aware that, if they intervened on the side of France, Russia would support Prussia. Denmark considered supporting France to regain Schleswig but in the end decided not to join in. Britain's suspicion of France was reinforced by Bismarck's publication of a document which suggested that Napoleon III was considering an invasion of Belgium, a country whose independence Britain had guaranteed.

#### **Questions for discussion:**

1. Was France or Prussia mainly responsible for the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War?
2. Why did Bismarck edit the Ems telegram?
3. Was Prussia's victory primarily due to its strengths or French weaknesses?

#### **(g) The reasons for German unification**

There is agreement among historians that a large number of different factors contributed to the unification of Germany. However, there is much disagreement about the relative importance of the individual factors. In particular, historians continue to debate the importance of Bismarck's role in the unification process. While very few, if any, historians would share Bismarck's own view that he carefully planned the unification of Germany from the outset of his political career, there is disagreement about the degree to which his foreign policy was the product of planning or opportunism. Another issue is the extent to which his achievements were aided by good fortune. Some historians argue that Bismarck benefited from the unusually favourable international climate, while others would maintain that his consummate diplomatic skill created any luck he enjoyed. It is certainly true that Bismarck was able to exploit the economic, political and military decline of Austria and the weaknesses of France's political and military leaders. A key reason for German unification was Prussia's economic strength which, after all, represented the basis for its impressive railway network and its military weaponry, factors which contributed



significantly to its victories in the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars. German nationalism also played a part in unification, especially in the North German states, and the National Society, established in 1859, helped to spread the virtues of nationalism and liberalism among middle-class professionals. However, there was little enthusiasm at grassroots level for a Prussian-led unification of Germany, especially in the Southern German states. The unification of Germany was brought about 'from above' rather than 'from below'; in other words, it was not the product of mass support but was achieved by the political elites.



### Teaching and Learning Activity

Historical Interpretations

Read Interpretation A and Interpretation B and answer the question which follows:

## The reasons for the unification of Germany

### Interpretation A

Extract from Michael Gorman, *The Unification of Germany*, published in 2004.

Bismarck was a great opportunist and constantly sought to exploit situations to his advantage. For example, he resolved the constitutional crisis in Prussia by claiming that there was a "gap" in the constitution. By 1865 Bismarck was looking for the opportunity to completely exclude Austria from German affairs and, in the war which followed in the summer of 1866, Prussia defeated Austria within six weeks. One of the greatest challenges Bismarck faced was the problem of the Southern German states – Baden, Württemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt and Bavaria – which did not want to become part of a unified Germany. Bismarck's strategy was to tie the Southern German states to Prussia by a series of military agreements and he knew that a successful war against France would stir up patriotic enthusiasm in Southern Germany.

### Interpretation B

Extract from Alan Farmer and Andrina Stiles, *The Unification of Germany 1815–1919*, published in 2008.

German unification was the result of three short wars – against Denmark (1864), Austria (1866) and France (1870–1871). The Prussian army thus made Germany a reality. The economic and financial strength of Prussia provided the military resources it needed to challenge first Austria and then France. Popular nationalism, strongest in the Protestant north, was a force that Bismarck could not ignore. Meanwhile, Austria was a power in decline after the events of 1848–1849. The fact that Prussia was regarded as a second-rate power in 1862 helped Bismarck because he was able to achieve Prussian supremacy in Germany without arousing the hostility of its neighbours.

**Study Interpretation A and Interpretation B.** Historians have different views about particular issues. Using both interpretations, and your understanding of the historical context, which of these different interpretations of the reasons for German unification under Prussian leadership do you find more convincing?



### Web Audio

For an insightful discussion of Bismarck, listen to a talk by Professor Steinburg entitled 'Personality and Power: The Case of Otto von Bismarck' at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Xie5\\_WJD5E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Xie5_WJD5E)



## 3. Italy 1815–48

### (a) Liberal and nationalist ideas and cultural movements

In 1815 'Italy', like 'Germany', was no more than a geographical expression. From 1796 until 1815 Italy had been under the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte. On his defeat in 1815, the Congress of Vienna permitted Italy's former rulers to return and many of them had close links with Austria, led by its Chancellor Clemens von Metternich, who has been justifiably regarded as an arch-reactionary.

#### (i) Liberal and nationalist ideas

The Liberals were one of the key political groups in 1815. They were generally well educated, middle class and opposed to violence. They aimed to establish a constitutional monarchy which guaranteed certain rights, such as freedom of speech and the right to a fair trial. For Italian nationalists, the desire for independence and freedom from foreign rule was of paramount importance. In fact, the most important unifying factor among Italian nationalists was hostility to Austrian rule, especially in Piedmont, Naples, Tuscany, Venice and the Papal States. Historians and novelists also played an important role in spreading nationalist ideas among the educated elites by focusing on Italian history and literature. Use of the Italian language, which at that time was only spoken by some 2 per cent of the population, also became an instrument for the growth of a national identity. While liberal and nationalist ideas in Italy between 1815 and 1848 were closely interlinked, there were also important differences. For example, unlike Italian liberals, some nationalists advocated the establishment of a republic rather than a constitutional monarchy. However, irrespective of these disagreements, the point to stress is that both liberals and nationalists were opposed to the restored monarchies after 1815 and the importance of nationalist and liberal ideas increased in the 1830s and 1840s.

#### (ii) Radicals, secret societies and the Revolutions of 1820–21 and 1831–32

Unlike the Liberals, radicals frequently advocated a greater equality in society, as well as the introduction of social reforms. Many were also willing to employ violence to achieve their political objectives and belonged to the revolutionary secret societies which flourished in the Italian states after 1815. In fact, it has been estimated that there were as many as 300,000 of them in 1820. The most famous of these secret societies was the *Carbonari*. They operated in southern Italy and were particularly strong in Naples, where some of their members played an important part in the revolution which erupted in 1820.

The revolution was initially successful, aided by the defection of one of the Government's commanding officers, General Guglielmo Pepe, to the rebels. At the same time, unrest occurred in Palermo, the capital of Sicily, where the leaders of the revolution demanded independence from Naples. A revolution also broke out in Piedmont in 1820 which resulted in the abdication of King Victor Emmanuel I and the establishment of a liberal constitution. However, the success of these three revolutions was short-lived. In March 1821 Austrian troops defeated the revolutionaries in Naples, while their compatriots in Piedmont suffered the same fate at the Battle of Novara in April of the same year. In 1831–32 further uprisings occurred in Modena, Parma and the Papal States but were again put down by the Austrian army.

**(iii) The ideas and role of Mazzini**

The failure of the revolutions of 1831–32 had a profound impact on one of Italy's most famous revolutionaries, Giuseppe Mazzini, who was once described by Metternich as 'the most dangerous man in Europe'. Mazzini concluded that the secret societies were incapable of bringing about revolution and, in the absence of French support for the uprisings, the unification of Italy could only be achieved by Italians themselves. Therefore, in October 1831 he founded 'Young Italy', an organisation which promoted national aims, to be achieved through mass insurrection. Despite supporting the establishment of a republic from 'below', Mazzini was willing to accept a constitutional monarchy 'from above' as an interim solution. In 1831 he offered to support Charles Albert of Piedmont as King of a new unified Italy if Charles was willing to achieve Italian independence by expelling the Austrians from the Italian states. The offer was rejected and Mazzini was forced to flee into exile in 1831 where he was to spend most of the next forty-one years. The fact that the unification of Italy was eventually secured from 'above' rather than from 'below' suggests that Mazzini's career can be regarded as a failure. In fact, he compared the unified Italy to a 'dead corpse'. Nonetheless he made a crucial contribution to Italian unification because his vigorous and enthusiastic promotion of Italian nationalism over many years provided inspiration for future nationalists. He attracted loyal support and one of his earliest followers, Giuseppe Garibaldi, was to have a huge impact on the unification of the Italian states.

**(iv) The ideas of Gioberti, Balbo and d'Azeglio**

In contrast to Mazzini, a number of influential writers put forward more moderate ideas for Italian unification during the 1840s. In 1843, Vincenzo Gioberti, a priest and writer from Piedmont, produced a programme for the unification of Italy. He suggested that, although the princes in the Italian states would retain their autonomy, they would unite in a Confederation under the Pope's leadership. In response to this proposal Cesare Balbo, a Piedmontese writer, produced a book in 1844 entitled *The Hopes of Italy*, which advocated the establishment of a Federal Italy under the leadership of Piedmont. In 1846 Massimo d'Azeglio put forward a similar idea.

There is, then, no doubt that the 1840s witnessed an upsurge in liberal and nationalist ideas which culminated in the revolutions of 1848.

**(b) The revolutions of 1848**

In 1848 Europe witnessed revolutions in many states, including Italy. While the fall of Louis Philippe in Paris on 24 February and the flight of Metternich from Vienna on 13 March had far-reaching consequences for Europe, the first revolution actually occurred in the Sicilian capital of Palermo in January 1848 which quickly spread to Naples. In the following months, revolutions also broke out in Lombardy, Parma, Modena, Milan and Venice, while, following the flight of the Pope from Rome in the spring of 1849, a republic was established under the leadership of Mazzini, in partnership with Giuseppe Garibaldi.

**(i) The causes of the revolutions**

As shown above, the growth in the popularity of liberalism and nationalism by the 1840s owed much to a number of individuals and they played a key role in the revolutions of 1848. For example, the revolution in Venice was led by the lawyer Daniele Manin, while Mazzini's Roman Republic was in power for 100 days in 1849.

One of the most important reasons for the outbreak of the revolutions in the Italian states was the election in June 1846 of Pope Pius IX, whose reputation as a liberal appeared



to be confirmed by his initial actions. He granted an amnesty to some 2,000 political prisoners and introduced constitutional government in Rome. He also allowed freedom of the press, leading to the publication of as many as 100 newspapers in the Papal States in 1848. He set up a civic guard and proposed the establishment of an Italian customs union similar to the German *Zollverein*. The Pope's apparently liberal views caused consternation in Vienna, where Metternich remarked: 'We were prepared for anything, except a liberal Pope'. Although the Pope later announced a radical change in policy, when he rescinded his support for liberalism and nationalism, his initial identification with the liberal and nationalist causes contributed to the outbreak of revolutions in the Italian states in 1848.

Another reason for the outbreak of the revolutions was the impact in Northern Italy of events in nearby Switzerland, where Civil War led to the establishment of constitutional government in 1848.

The revolutions of 1848 can also be attributed to the perceived financial and military weakness of Austria, the deeply unpopular ruler of large parts of Northern Italy, including Lombardy and Venetia. The appointment of a new Archbishop of Milan with Italian sympathies reinforced the idea of Austrian weakness and encouraged the revolutionary groups to believe that they could overthrow Austrian rule.

Economic and social grievances were also a key factor in the outbreak of the revolutions in the Italian states in 1848. Although only some 10 per cent of Italians lived in the towns, their economic grievances represented a greater threat to the political status quo than rural discontent because they could organise themselves more effectively than their compatriots in the countryside. High food prices following the poor harvests of 1845 and 1846 led to riots in a number of towns, while the unemployment rate was particularly high in the Papal States. Many artisans were badly affected by a slump in trade. Workers in Rome destroyed machinery, while the unrest which took place in the Tuscan port of Livorno in 1847–48 was also motivated by economic factors. There was also unrest in rural areas. Italian agriculture was notoriously inefficient and therefore vulnerable to foreign competition. The price of bread doubled as a result of the harvests failures of 1845 and 1846, meaning that many peasants were unable to feed their families and played an active role in the revolution in Palermo, one of poorest parts of Italy, in January 1848.

### **(ii) The aims of the participants**

The most important unifying factor among those who took part in the revolutions in the Italian states in 1848 was opposition to Austrian rule and in the first half of 1848 Naples, Tuscany, Piedmont and the Papal States collaborated against the common enemy. Nationalist views were articulated by many of the revolutionary leaders, supported by intellectuals and some members of the nobility. The other key demand of the leaders of the revolutions was the introduction of liberal constitutional government.

The main aim of Charles Albert, King of Piedmont, was to annex Lombardy. Meanwhile a republic led by Daniele Manin was established in Venice, where there was also deep hostility to Austrian rule. By contrast, liberals in Sicily staged a revolt against rule from Naples rather than Vienna, while the participants in the unrest in Rome at the end of 1848 called for an end to rule by the Papacy.

While the revolutionary leaders were motivated by political aims, the mass support they gained was invariably based on economic grievances. For example, the rioters in Rome and other Italian cities in 1847–48 demanded more and cheaper food. In Rome they also called for higher taxes on the rich to aid the fight against poverty, while workers in the Papal States demanded public workshops to combat unemployment. However, in 1848



most Italians still lived in the countryside, where support for the revolutions was much less widespread. Although some disturbances in rural areas had political aims, such as the rebellion by the peasants in Lombardy against Austrian rule, most were motivated by local grievances, such as land ownership or grazing rights. In Tuscany peasants called for a reduction in the length of the working week.

### **(iii) The reasons for the failure of the revolutions**

A key reason for the ultimate failure of the revolutions in Italy was the disunity among their leaders. This was particularly evident in the strained relations between the revolutionaries in Sicily and Naples. It was also a major issue in Piedmont because Charles Albert refused to co-operate with revolutionary forces from other states unless they expressed support for the royal family in Piedmont. There were also fundamental differences in the aims of the revolutionaries in the different states. While the main aim of those in Northern Italy was to expel Austria, the revolutionary leaders in Sicily wanted independence from Naples rather than Vienna and their counterparts in Venice favoured the establishment of a republic as opposed to a constitutional monarchy. There were also divisions between leaders in the same state and in Milan the conservatives wanted union with Sardinia but the liberals under the leadership of Carlo Cattaneo favoured a republic. In short, the leaders of the revolutions had little or no political experience, lacked military support and a charismatic national leader capable of unifying the different groups.

However, the divisions were not confined to the diverse aims of the leaders of the revolutions. There were also huge differences between the objectives of the leaders and the mass support which was essential to their success. In Venice, for example, Manin did not give his backing to the economic and social demands of the artisans, craftsmen and workers who had played an important part in the success of the revolt. Similarly, few liberals had much sympathy for the grievances of the peasants, such as low wages, high food prices and long working hours. Moreover, even if the revolutionary leaders had been sympathetic, they would have been powerless to resolve many of the local issues concerning grazing rights or complaints about the landowners for whom the peasants worked.

Another crucial reason for the failure of the revolutions was the military strength of the counter-revolutionary forces. When the Austrian Government recovered its nerve and regained control of Vienna, its military forces were able to defeat the revolutionaries because they were larger, better equipped and had superior leaders. This was illustrated by Radetzky's victory over Charles Albert's army at the Battle of Custoza on 24 July 1848.

Just as the election in 1846 of an apparently liberal Pope who seemed to support the nationalist cause was an important factor in the outbreak of the revolutions in the Italian states, his abrupt policy reversal contributed to their failure. He refused to permit papal troops to eject the Austrians from Rome and proved unwilling to participate in a war against Austria, a Catholic country. But the Pope's actions had more far-reaching consequences. In order to stand much chance of success, the Italian revolutionaries needed foreign support. However, France, the country most likely to intervene on the side of the revolutionaries, failed to do so because Louis Napoleon Bonaparte wanted to demonstrate support for the Pope in order to gain the confidence of French Catholics. In fact, France's only participation in the war was to defeat Mazzini's Roman Republic, a blow to the cause of Italian nationalism.



**Web Article**

For a good article on the revolutions in the Italian states in 1848, see: [www.age-of-the-sage.org/history/1848/revolution\\_of\\_1848.html](http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/history/1848/revolution_of_1848.html)



## 4. Italian Unification 1849–70

### (a) Economic developments in Piedmont in the 1850s and Cavour's domestic reforms

In March 1849 Charles Albert abdicated and his son Victor Emmanuel became the new King of Piedmont. Despite its military defeats by Austria at Custoza and later Novara, and the failure of the revolutions, Piedmont retained its constitution, the so-called *Statuto*, granted by Charles Albert in March 1848. It represented the only success Italy derived from the events of 1848. After his succession to the throne, Victor Emmanuel II negotiated an armistice with Austria which included a war indemnity of 75 million lira. Despite this financial burden, Piedmont became the leading state in Italy by 1860, both economically and politically. This was initially due to the Government of Massimo d'Azeglio (1849–1852) which operated the new democratic system effectively. However, the most important reason for the growing economic and political importance of Piedmont in the 1850s was without doubt the economic and domestic policies of Camillo di Cavour.

Although Cavour did not become involved in politics until 1848, he was a very influential figure from the beginning. In June 1847 he jointly founded a liberal periodical called the *Risorgimento*. Cavour's importance was at first mainly in the economic domain. In 1850 he was appointed Minister of Agriculture and Commerce and in 1851, Minister of Finance. Under his leadership agricultural reforms were introduced, and he also promoted commercial and industrial developments. He reduced tariffs between Piedmont and Austria, Britain, Belgium and France, as well as the German *Zollverein*. This contributed decisively to the trebling of Piedmont's trade during the 1850s. He provided banks with subsidies and founded the National Bank. He also gave subsidies to roads and railways and by 1859 the railway network in Piedmont and Liguria totalled some 850 kilometres, practically half that of the whole of Italy. Under his leadership the size of Piedmont's merchant fleet increased and its first steamship was built in Genoa. These projects were financed by massive borrowing from abroad and in 1859 Piedmont's debts amounted to 725 million lira as opposed to 120 million in 1847. But, although Cavour's policies left Piedmont with huge debts, its economy in 1860 was by far the most advanced in Italy.

In the field of domestic policy Cavour promoted unification by pursuing anticlerical policies and therefore reducing the influence of the Catholic Church, an important obstacle to unity because of its support for Austria. In particular, he sought to reduce clerical influence on education policy and clamp down on the monasteries. He also augmented the power of the government by implementing reforms which gave the Minister of Justice responsibility for all judicial appointments. Cavour also managed to secure the support of democrats during the 1850s. This group, which included Mazzini, Cattaneo and Ferrari, was deeply divided but some of them, such as Giorgio Pallavicino, a native of Lombardy, founded the Italian National Society which not only promoted Italian unification but also pledged support for King Victor Emmanuel II and Piedmont. Its members included Giuseppe Garibaldi. This organisation attempted to instigate insurrection all over Italy without Cavour or Piedmont being associated in these plans.



## (b) Cavour's foreign policy

It was in the field of foreign policy that Cavour achieved his greatest successes. Following the defeat of the revolutions in the Italian states in 1848, he recognised that Austria could not be expelled from Italy without foreign help. His aim was to form a military alliance with Napoleon III, who also wanted to see a reduction in the power of Austria in Northern Italy, without provoking French fears about the security of their troops in Rome. However, this did not necessarily mean that Cavour supported the unification of Italy (as opposed to the expansion of Piedmont) prior to 1859.

Cavour's first major involvement in foreign affairs occurred in 1854 when Piedmont joined France and Britain against Russia in the Crimean War. Victor Emmanuel II was more enthusiastic than Cavour about taking part in the conflict but Piedmont's 18,000 troops played a significant part in the eventual surrender of Sebastopol and Cavour was present at the Paris Peace Conference as one of the victors. Even though Piedmont made no territorial gains, the issue of Italian unification was debated at the conference and Cavour's participation alongside the major European powers was in itself a triumph.

After the Paris Peace Conference, Cavour remained on good terms with Napoleon III but curiously it was an attempt to assassinate the Emperor by Felice Orsini, an Italian republican, in January 1858 which led to closer relations between France and Piedmont. In the wake of the assassination attempt, Cavour responded positively to Napoleon's demands that he suppress the republicans in Piedmont but the French Emperor also accepted that there might be further attempts on his life if he failed to support the nationalists in the Italian states. As a result, Napoleon III held secret negotiations with Cavour at Plombières in July 1858 and it was agreed that they would declare war on Austria when a suitable opportunity arose. This eventually occurred in April 1859 when Austria declared war on Piedmont. Napoleon III's 200,000 troops were victorious at the Battle of Magenta (4 June 1859), while French and Piedmontese troops won the Battle of Solferino (24 June). However, much to Cavour's annoyance, Napoleon III became alarmed about the possible escalation of the war, and signed the Truce of Villafranca with Francis Joseph on 11 July 1859. In response Cavour submitted his resignation as Prime Minister. At the peace conference, which took place in Zurich in November 1859, Piedmont's only gain was a large part of Lombardy, while Austria retained Venetia. Nevertheless, some progress had been made on the road to Italian unification because, as agreed at Plombières, Piedmontese troops moved in when the Duchess-Regent of Parma and the Duke of Modena fled in June 1859, while Tuscany was annexed by Piedmont in April 1859. All these actions were ratified by plebiscites held in March 1860 when Tuscany and the newly-established state of Emilia formally formed part of Piedmont. Returning as Prime Minister, Cavour agreed in the Treaty of Turin in March 1860 to cede Savoy and Nice to Napoleon III, subject to the wishes of their populations. However, as will be seen in the next section, Cavour lost the initiative in the spring of 1860 when Giuseppe Garibaldi set out on his famous expedition to Sicily, Naples and Rome.

**Teaching and Learning Activity**

Source evaluation and analysis

Read the source and answer the question which follows:

**The expansion of Piedmont in Northern Italy 1848–1860****Source 1**

Extract from a secret telegram from Constantino Nigra to Camillo Cavour, Prime Minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, 9 May 1858. Nigra was Cavour's personal representative in Paris.

This morning I presented your letter to Henri Conneau, the private doctor of Emperor Napoleon III of France. I asked him to read the letter to the Emperor. Later, Conneau gave me the Emperor's response. He said that your proposal for the expansion of Piedmont was extremely important. The Emperor agreed with the three points you made. He supports the proposed marriage between his nephew, Prince Napoleon, and King Victor Emmanuel's daughter, Clotilde. He promises French support for Piedmont in the event of a war against Austria and supports the establishment of a Kingdom of Northern Italy. But he added that it was essential to find a plausible motive for the war because it must be justified in the eyes of the French people. The Emperor did not provide any more details but stressed that absolute secrecy was essential.

**Study Source 1.** How useful is Source 1 as evidence for an historian studying the attitude of France in 1858 to Cavour's plans for the expansion of Piedmont in Northern Italy?

**(c) The role of Garibaldi in achieving Italian unification**

Garibaldi was an Italian nationalist and democrat whose main contribution to the unification of Italy was as an outstanding and charismatic military leader. Garibaldi's political views were heavily influenced by a chance meeting with Mazzini and he joined 'Young Italy' after it was founded in 1831. He also played a part in Mazzini's planned insurrection in Piedmont in 1833. As a result, he was sentenced to death in his absence and fled to South America. Garibaldi's support for a united Italy outweighed his republican sympathies and, after his return to Italy in 1848, he offered his services to Charles Albert, King of Piedmont, believing that only he could eject the Austrians from Italian soil. Between May and July 1849 Garibaldi led a staunch but ultimately unsuccessful defence of the Roman Republic under Mazzini's leadership.

Giuseppe Garibaldi further enhanced his military reputation during the Austro-Italian War of 1859, achieving victory at both the Battles of Como and Varese. However, Garibaldi's most important contribution to the unification of Italy was his military campaign with his 1087 men in the south of Italy where his achievements were all the remarkable due to Cavour's attempts to sabotage his plans and the fact that his volunteers had inadequate weapons and very little ammunition. To general astonishment Garibaldi gained control of Palermo in May 1860 and began to govern Sicily. Four months later Garibaldi captured Naples without opposition and was victorious at the Battle of Voltorno (near Caserta) in early October. In the plebiscites held in Naples and Sicily the vast majority of the population voted in favour of 'One Italy One Victor Emmanuel'.

However, Garibaldi's most important objective was to capture Rome rather than Naples. This was a source of great concern to both Cavour and Napoleon III. In response Cavour thwarted this plan by dispatching the Piedmontese army to the Papal States and on 26 October 1860 Garibaldi handed over the territory he had conquered to Victor Emmanuel II.



Garibaldi embarked on another march on Rome in 1862, but suffered defeat at the Battle of Aspromonte by King Victor Emmanuel's army. Garibaldi suffered another military reverse in 1867 when he once again attempted to take Rome.

#### **(d) The relationship between Cavour and Garibaldi**

Cavour and Garibaldi were both from Piedmont but differed in almost every other respect. Their background and personalities were completely dissimilar. Cavour was a well-educated, suave, highly intelligent aristocrat who proved to be a prudent, pragmatic and very accomplished diplomat, while Garibaldi was an uneducated but charismatic individual who was an exceptional leader of men. Garibaldi was from the outset fully committed to achieving the unification of Italy by expelling Austria from Italian soil; on the other hand, Cavour's attitude to Italian unity was more lukewarm and, even when he met Napoleon III at Plombières in 1858, he was still not a committed advocate of unification. Cavour was suspicious of Garibaldi's identification with Mazzini's 'Young Italy' in the 1830s and his initial support for a republic, even though he subsequently gave his backing to Victor Emmanuel II.

One of the most important issues which led to the tense relationship between Cavour and Garibaldi was Piedmont's loss of Savoy and Nice to France in the Treaty of Turin in March 1860. This infuriated Garibaldi, above all because he was a native of Nice. A second issue was Cavour's efforts to undermine Garibaldi's famous expedition to liberate Sicily. The Prime Minister of Piedmont dismissed it as a 'mad scheme' and feared that Garibaldi might attack the French in an attempt to regain Nice. However, Cavour was unable to stop the enterprise because he surmised that King Victor Emmanuel might secretly support it. However, Cavour did manage to ensure that Garibaldi did not obtain the 12,000 modern rifles which had been set aside for the operation, acquiring instead only rusty old-fashioned flintlocks. Garibaldi was infuriated at the way he had been treated and this permanently damaged his relationship with Cavour.

The contrasting attitude of Garibaldi and Cavour towards France was an important underlying source of the tension between the two men. Garibaldi was annoyed at what he regarded as Cavour's failure to espouse nationalism in case it led to a clash with France. However, Cavour's foreign policy was based on his alliance with Napoleon III and he feared that, if Garibaldi attacked Rome, it might lead to a war with France since its troops were stationed there to defend the Pope. The relationship between Garibaldi and Cavour plummeted to an all-time low on 18 April 1861 when, in a parliamentary speech, Garibaldi denounced Cavour for engaging in a 'fratricidal war'. While this allegation appeared unwarranted at the time, evidence later emerged that Cavour had ordered Garibaldi's men to be driven into the sea if they did not surrender Naples. Garibaldi was also very bitter about the treatment of his volunteers following their extraordinary military successes. When they transferred into the Italian army, Garibaldi expected that they would all be accepted and would keep their original military rank but Cavour concurred with the view of War Minister General Fanti that a distinction would be made between the regulars and Garibaldi's volunteers.

**Teaching and Learning Activity**

Historical Interpretations

Read Interpretation A and Interpretation B and answer the question which follows:

**The role of Cavour in the unification of Italy****Interpretation A**Extract from G. Darby, *The Unification of Italy*, published in 1994.

Of course, once he had achieved unification he became a firm advocate of it and subsequently he was dubbed its architect. However, this was not true. Cavour was not a planner, but he was a great opportunist. He himself stated that ‘everything depends on accident’. The alliance with France was not of his making. That this alliance created opportunities for Piedmont was as much to do with Napoleon’s lack of resolve and Austria’s subsequent weakness as it was to do with Cavour’s talent and foresight, and, as we have seen, unification itself was forced upon him by Garibaldi’s remarkable achievements.

**Interpretation B**Extract from H. Hearder, *Cavour*, published in 1972.

Throughout his life, Cavour wanted considerable change, though change in the direction rather of Italian independence than unification. Because he wrote in passionate terms of the need to secure Italy’s independence from foreign powers – which meant, in effect, from Austria – it has sometimes been assumed that he wanted to create a united nation state. The fact that he did not believe such a development to be remotely possible until the shattering effects of 1860 transformed the situation should not obscure the sincerity with which he anticipated the independence of all Italian states.

**Study Interpretation A and Interpretation B.** Historians have different views about particular issues. Using both interpretations, and your understanding of the historical context, which of these different interpretations of Cavour’s role in the unification of Italy do you find more convincing?

**(e) The completion of Italian unification 1861–70**

Although King Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed King of Italy in March 1861, the unification of Italy was not complete because Venetia remained under Austrian rule, while Pope Pius IX retained control of Rome and its surrounding areas. Italy gained Venetia as a result of the Austro-Prussian War. On 8 April 1866 Italy and Prussia signed a Treaty, according to which, for a period of three months, Italy would go to war against Austria if Prussia did. While, in the ensuing conflict, the Italians suffered defeat at the hands of Austria at the Battle of Custoza and at sea at Lissa, the Prussian army was victorious at the Battle of Sadowa and, as a result, Venetia was ceded to Italy in October 1866. Eventually it was the Franco-Prussian War in 1870–71 which brought the completion of Italian unification. When Napoleon III withdrew his armed forces from Rome to fight against the Prussians, the Italian Government under Giovanni Lanza authorised his troops to occupy Rome in September 1870, overcoming the token resistance of the Papal Army in just ten days. The city was captured on 20 September and proclaimed the capital of Italy, despite fierce opposition from the Pope who retained only the Vatican City.



### **(f) The relative importance of the factors which contributed to Italian unification**

There is still much debate among historians about the relative importance of the various factors which contributed to the unification of Italy. Some have focused on the role played by individuals, in particular Cavour and King Victor Emmanuel II. Another key factor in the unification of Italy was the favourable international situation. Particular attention has been paid to the role of Napoleon III in bringing about Italian unity but the attitude of several of the other major powers was also important. The British Government supported the establishment of constitutional government in Italy, while British public opinion revered the exploits of Garibaldi. Prussia was also supportive. After all, both Prussia and Italy had Austria as a common enemy and fought together against Austria in the Austro-Prussian War. For these reasons, it has been argued that the unification of Italy was achieved 'from above', in other words due to the actions of the political elites. For example, the North Italian War of 1859 was orchestrated by Napoleon III and Cavour and there was no pressure 'from below' to engage in the conflict. To quote Lucy Riall: 'Apart from a brief moment in 1860, the democratic movement was unable to unite ordinary Italians behind its ideal of national unity. United Italy was the creation of kings, not of the people'.

At the same time, nationalist ideas undoubtedly played a part in bringing about unification through the work of intellectuals, such as Mazzini, and Garibaldi's extraordinary military achievements. A key instrument for spreading nationalist ideas to the educated middle classes was the National Society, established in 1856 by Daniele Manin and Giorgio Pallavicino. Although its membership never exceeded 2,000, it proved influential among writers and journalists and helped to disseminate anti-Austrian ideas. Other historians argue the economic, political and military strength of Piedmont was instrumental in bringing about the unification of Italy. They are referring, in particular, to Piedmont's economic progress in the 1850s, the fact that its constitution, the *Statuto*, survived the counter-revolutionary backlash after 1848 and its army was respected. While historians differ in the relative importance they attribute to the various factors which contributed to the unification of Italy in 1870, there is a consensus that it was a huge achievement, especially since the process did not begin until 1858.