

The Fight for Supremacy and the Course of German History: The Battle of Königgratz as a Contributing Factor in German Unification

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Since the earliest accounts of the nineteenth-century German unification, historians have clashed over the explanation of this momentous event. This discussion has given rise to a rich set of historical literature dealing with the factors that aided in the formation of modern Germany. While many factors were involved in the formation of the German nation-state and German national consciousness, recent scholarship has highlighted that the two did not emerge simultaneously. Rather, the political, economic and military unification in 1871 preceded the full development of German national identity – what Hughes calls a ‘spiritual’ unification.¹ Among the many factors that aided in Germany’s *political* development were the German Wars of Unification. This work seeks to contribute a perspective on the role of the Battle of Königgrätz (and, consequently, the Austro-Prussian War) in this process and to locate it as a factor in the context of the broader historical framework. Hence, for the purposes of this work, German *unification* refers to the political, military and economic unification that occurred in 1871. To contextualize the discussion, it briefly outlines both the main origins and causes of the war and provides a synopsis of the major event of the war: the Battle of Königgrätz. Furthermore, it seeks to establish that this battle conclusively decided the outcome of the war. In the second part, the key implications of the Prussian victory for the eventual unification of Germany are explored. Firstly, it detects several immediate consequences of the war and the eventuating peace treaties. Secondly, it recognizes a number of longer-term effects that stemmed from the Prussian victory. Consequently, it identifies both indirect, long-term consequences and immediate outcomes with implications for the unification. In the final section, the paper acknowledges several crucial considerations regarding the broader historical debates and cautions against any over-emphasis on the factors analyzed in the essay. Due to the constraints of length, a full treatment of this dimension cannot be provided. Nevertheless, brief mention is made of

¹ Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 144.

the relationship between the Austro- and Franco-Prussian Wars and of the broader historiographical debate over the formation of the German nation-state. On this basis, this study contends that the Battle of Königgrätz and the wider Austro-Prussian War had important long- and short-term consequences for the political unity of Germany. Most meaningfully, it brought greater clarity to the potential future scope of a German nation-state by excluding Austria and establishing Prussian hegemony. It also laid significant groundworks for the Franco-Prussian War that was to play a substantial military role in later developments. Hence, this essay argues that, although perhaps not a primary factor, the Prussian victory over Austria did have significant ramifications for German unity.

The lead up to the commencement of hostilities in 1866 is complex and has historical causes extending back centuries. For this work, a short overview will suffice. The chief cause of the war was the extended rivalry between Prussia and Austria, and, as Carr has observed, this was fed by numerous constitutional, ideological, economic and military factors and circumstances.² It had become clear that this rivalry prevented any realistic unification outcome between the two states. As Freidjung explains, neither Prussia nor Austria were willing to accept a unified Germany ‘except as leader’, and it was this intense competition that eventually ended in war.³ In Bismarck’s words: ‘There is no room for both of us’.⁴ However, this German rivalry was not a new development. Carr points out that a degree of tension had existed between the powers even during the time of Frederick the Great, who had fought repeated wars against Austria to retain the province of Silesia.⁵ Earlier in the nineteenth century, there had also been disagreements and political and economic conflicts between the two states.⁶ Between October 1864 and June 1866, however, the tension in the

² William Carr, *The Origins of the Wars of German Unifications* (London and New York: Longman, 1991), 89-136; William Carr, “The Unification of Germany,” in *The State of Germany*, ed. John Breuilly (London: Longman, 1992), 81-85.

³ Heinrich Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy in Germany, 1859-1866* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1935), 23.

⁴ Quoted in Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 58.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95-112; Enno E. Kraehe, “Austria and the problem of reform in the German Confederation, 1851-1863,” *The American Historical Review* 56, no. 2 (1951): 276-294, accessed April 18, 2020, doi:10.2307/1840443.

rivalry ascended to new heights.⁷ By mid-1865, Helmuth von Moltke could state that, '[w]ar with Austria sooner or later is probably...not to be avoided'.⁸ As Craig explains, the Austro-Prussian conflict was merely the 'culminating event in a rivalry that began' in the seventeenth century, or, as Carr places it, in the mid-eighteenth century.⁹ A broad range of factors combined in the fifties and sixties to, as Carr says, 'confer a new intensity on the old rivalry'.¹⁰ After the Second Schleswig War of 1864, in which Austria and Prussia invaded the Danish duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, disputes arose between the two German powers over the rulership of the duchies.¹¹ Austria and Prussia had previously decided to settle the Schleswig-Holstein question without reference to the Federal Diet of the German Confederation; however, as neither could agree, Austria referred the matter to both the estates of Holstein and the Federal Diet.¹² In response, Prussia occupied Holstein. When, on 14 June, the majority of the Diet approved a motion by Austria requesting the mobilization of the federal troops, Prussia declared that the federal constitution had been breached and declared war on Saxony, Hanover and the Electorate of

⁷ William Carr, *A History of Germany, 1815-1945*, 2nd edn (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 91-93; Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 119.

⁸ "Document 91: Note by Moltke of the meetings of Ministers, 29 May 1865," in *The Foundations of the German Empire*, ed. Helmut Böhme (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁹ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 90-91; Gordon A. Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1964), 2.

¹⁰ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 91.

¹¹ Carr, *A History of Germany*, 101-103; Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany, 1840-1945* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 176-178; Christian Anthony Ahlers, "The Importance of the Schleswig-Holstein Conflicts in German Unification: A Primordial Case Study, 1839-1871," (M.A. diss., North Dakota State University, 2018), 2, 78 and 85-86; Eric Dorn Brose, *Germany History 1789-1871*, Revised e-Book edn (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 328-330, accessed May 31, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qdbjsj.1>.

¹² "Document 86: Draft of a treaty to be completed between Austria and Prussia over Schleswig-Holstein-Lauenburg and Lombardy, 24 August 1864," in *The Foundations of the German Empire*, ed. Helmut Böhme (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Brose, *Germany History*, 331; Carr, *A History of Germany*, 102 and 104; Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 39; William Harbutt Dawson, *The German Empire, 1867-1914, and the Unity Movement*, 2 vols, e-Book edn (New York: N.P., 1919), i, 226-227, accessed May 31, 2020, <https://www.questia.com/read/3600383>; Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 180.

Hesse.¹³ Consequently, Hesse asked for federal states to provide military support to those states that were under attack, and Austria agreed to do so.¹⁴ Prussia, who along with Austria and Saxony had been mobilizing for some time now, interpreted this as an effective declaration of war by Austria.¹⁵

When the fighting began, the superiority of Moltke's tactics and the Prussian army soon became apparent. Apart from the defeat of General Bonin's force at Trautmanau by Ludwig von Gablenz, the Prussians experienced no significant setbacks.¹⁶ This was contrary to the expectations throughout France and in the diplomatic circles in Austria.¹⁷ For years now, Moltke had been anticipating and planning for a conflict with Austria, and the Prussians now used their sophisticated railway system to great effect in mobilizing their forces.¹⁸ Moltke had organized the Prussian army into three formations: the First Army, under Prince Frederick Karl; the Second Army, under the Prussian Crown Prince Frederick, and the Elbe Army under General Herwarth von Bittenfeld.¹⁹ Advancing aggressively, the Prussian force successfully drove the Austrians and Saxons (under Ludwig von Benedek) to the defensive.²⁰ On 2 July, the First Army encountered Benedek's entire force along the Bistritz River between Sadowa and Königgrätz, and Prince Karl resolved

¹³ "Document 103: Prussian proclamation 'To the German People', Saturday, 16 June 1866," in *The Foundations of the German Empire*, ed. Helmut Böhme (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 39; Dawson, *The German Empire*, i, 226-227; Arthur L. Wagner, *The Campaign of Königgrätz*, e-Book edn, (Fort Leavenworth: Project Gutenberg, 2015), 39-43, accessed April 13, 2020, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/50554>.

¹⁴ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 134.

¹⁵ Carr, *A History of Germany*, 103-104; Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 134.

¹⁶ Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 62-64; Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 217.

¹⁷ Carr, *A History of Germany*, 105; Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 5-6; Ann E. Pottinger, *Napoleon III and the German Crisis, 1865-1866* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 82-86.

¹⁸ Helmuth von Moltke, "Memorandum on the Possible War between Prussia and Austria (1866)," accessed May 25, 2020, http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=346; Brose, *German History*, 332; Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 183.

¹⁹ Dawson, *The German Empire*, i, 236.

²⁰ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 136-137; Brose, *German History*, 332-333; Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 220-225; Wagner, *The Campaign of Königgrätz*, 35-37.

to attack, supported by Herwarth's Army, in the morning.²¹ Meanwhile, the Second Army, which was still some distance away, was ordered to attack Benedek's right flank.²² After a morning of brutal fighting in which neither army obtained a clear advantage, the first of the Crown Prince's formations appeared on the battlefield and engaged the weak, disorganized Austrian flank.²³ Despite desperate counterattacks, the Austrian army was forced to retreat to avoid encirclement.²⁴ Covered skillfully by their cavalry and artillery, the bulk of the Austro-Saxon force was able to avoid capture and retire toward the fortress-city of Königgrätz.²⁵ Despite the escape, the outcome was what Holborn calls a 'shattering defeat' for Austria.²⁶ While only 22 000 prisoners were taken from the Austrian force, their casualties were far higher than those of the Prussians and, after their disorganized retreat, few units had the capacity or appetite for further fighting.²⁷

Although it was not the last clash during the 1866 war, Königgrätz was undoubtedly the decisive battle. According to Conze, the other encounters 'pale in significance' when compared with it.²⁸ As Craig points out, after Königgrätz, there was 'no real doubt' about the outcome of the war; the Austrian army had been shattered.²⁹ In fact, Craig goes so far as to claim that the decision for German unification itself was made 'on the battlefield of Königgrätz'.³⁰ As noted above, the Austrian losses were severe, in part due to their old-fashioned tactics of charging *en masse* against Prussian breech-loading needle guns (although the effect of this

²¹ Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 84-85.

²² Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 230-231.

²³ Brose, *German History*, 333-334; Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 133-137 and 139-140.

²⁴ Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 233-234; Wagner, *The Campaign of Königgrätz*, 139-146.

²⁵ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 137; Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 152-161; Dawson, *The German Empire*, i, 237-238; Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 186.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 161-162 and 165-167.

²⁸ Werner Conze, *The Shaping of the German Nation* (London: George Prior Publishers, 1979), 52.

²⁹ Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 166.

³⁰ Gordon A. Craig, *Germany, 1866-1871*, e-Book edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 1-2, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.une.edu.au/2027/heb.00821>.

was greatly exaggerated in many contemporary observations of the war).³¹ Around 180 000 of the Austrian army were able to escape the battlefield; however, these were in no state to fight.³² According to the Austrian estimate, 1313 officers and 41 499 men were casualties – dead, wounded, missing or captured.³³ The smaller Saxon army had lost fifty-five officers and 1446 men, while the Prussian army lost just 359 officers and 8794 men.³⁴ In a telegram to his wife after the battle, King William himself recognized the totality of his victory: ‘Complete victory over the Austrian army won today in eight hour battle... Losses of enemy and trophies not yet counted, but significant’.³⁵ The Austrians also recognized this and immediately sought an armistice with the victors, although it was quite some time before this transpired.³⁶ At that time a staunch opponent of Prussia, Baroness Spitzemberg lamented that ‘Austria [had] perhaps never before suffered such a frightful defeat’ as it did at Königgrätz.³⁷ As Freidjung wrote rather melodramatically in his magisterial work *The Struggle for Supremacy in Germany*, after Königgrätz, ‘the war was at an end, for more than an army had been defeated’ that day.³⁸ The battle had devastated the Austrian army and effectively ensured the outcome of the war; it was, in Carr’s words, ‘the turning-point of the war’.³⁹

With the signing of the preliminary Peace of Nikolsburg (26 July) and the later Peace of Prague (23 August) came several significant immediate outcomes for the unification of Germany. Perhaps the most momentous direct consequence of the 1866 war, as reflected in the treaties,

³¹ W.H. Russell, “The Austrian Defeat: The Battle of Sadowa,” *The Times*, July 11, 1866, 11; Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 137; Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 183.

³² Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 161-162 and 165-167.

³³ Cited in Ibid, 166.

³⁴ Cited in Ibid.

³⁵ Quoted in Ibid, 163.

³⁶ Anon. “Foreign and Colonial Intelligence: The War,” *The Illustrated London News*, July 14, 1866, 26; Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 165.

³⁷ “Document 103: Extract from the diary of Baroness Spitzemberg,” in *The Foundations of the German Empire*, ed. Helmut Böhme (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

³⁸ Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 235-236.

³⁹ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 136.

was the total exclusion of Austria from Germany.⁴⁰ In Schulze's words, the Battle of Königgrätz put Austria 'out of the power-game'.⁴¹ From the start, Prussia made clear that it would not allow Austria to be a part of the German Confederation or any reformed version of it.⁴² In signing the post-war treaties, Emperor Franz Josef I agreed to the dissolution of the old German Confederation and Austria's exclusion from the new organization of Germany.⁴³ Hence, the conflict between the *Grossdeutsch* and *Kleindeutsch* models of a united Germany was definitively resolved in favor of the latter. In Taylor's words: 'The defeat of Austria broke down the balance which had existed in Germany ever since...the sixteenth century'.⁴⁴ Königgrätz had struck a fatal blow at the prestige of Austria within Germany and across Europe, leaving Prussia the supreme German state. In Craig's words, the battle had 'solved the long-vexed German question', and this it did in Prussia's favor.⁴⁵ With the anticipated creation of the new North German Confederation, Prussia would attain hegemony in the north and center of Germany as well as significant influence over the southern states.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the treaty permitted the annexations by Prussia of not only Schleswig-Holstein but the Kingdom of Hanover, Electoral Hesse, Hess-Hamburg, Nassau and Frankfurt, significantly increasing her influence and power.⁴⁷ As Taylor puts it so provocatively, the Battle of Königgrätz was effectively '[t]he conquest of Germany by Prussia'.⁴⁸ Ultimately, along with the exclusion of Austria from Germany,

⁴⁰ Anon., "Preliminary Peace of Nikolsburg (July 26, 1866)," *German History in Documents and Images*, accessed May 25, 2020, http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1846; Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 138; Craig, *Germany*, 4-7; Conze, *Shaping of the German Nation*, 53 and 63.

⁴¹ Hagan Schulz, *The Course of German Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 95.

⁴² Friedjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 246.

⁴³ Anon., "Preliminary Peace of Nikolsburg"; Brose, *German History*, 334-335; Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 167-170; Pottinger, *Napoleon III and the German Crisis*, 181.

⁴⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History*, e-Book edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 124, accessed May 30, 2020, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/lib/une/detail.action?docID=243318>.

⁴⁵ Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 170.

⁴⁶ Anon., "Preliminary Peace of Nikolsburg"; Conze, *Shaping of the German Nation*, 55; Craig, *Germany*, 6-7; Friedjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 271; Hughes, *Nationalism and Society*, 121; Schultz, *The Course of German Nationalism*, 95.

⁴⁷ Carr, *A History of Germany*, 105-106; Friedjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 267-269; Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 189.

⁴⁸ Taylor, *The Course of German History*, 110.

the creation of the North German Confederation and the increase of Prussia's power were factors conducive to the later unification of Germany under Prussia.

Nevertheless, the War of 1866 had consequences extending beyond the immediate aftermath. One of the most obvious was its effects on the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. Prussia's war against France was ultimately a more significant factor, *per se*, in the production of a German nation-state. However, the 1866 war had several implications of importance in bringing about the Franco-Prussian War and in ensuring its outcome. Firstly, along with the reforms mentioned above, Prussia succeeded in confirming several important military alliances with the south German states. Between 13 and 22 August, Bismarck concluded military treaties with Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg under which they promised to place their military forces under Prussian command in the event of war.⁴⁹ These alliances were coupled with a second factor, namely, an increase in anti-French sentiment across Germany. Even in Prussia, the Austro-Prussian War was initially intensely unpopular, but when news of the first Prussian victories reached Berlin, the public began to view the war more positively.⁵⁰ Even before the news of the decisive victory at Königgrätz, the elections to the Prussian Landtag had seen massive swings to the Conservatives. While the Liberals lost forty-five seats and the Progressives lost sixty, the Conservatives gained a massive one hundred and fourteen seats, enabling them to control the lower house with the support of just nine Old Liberals.⁵¹ Many historians have argued that the Battle of Königgrätz signaled the end of the liberal nationalist movement as a capable, independent force in Prussia.⁵² As Conze argues, the battle opened the door for greater cooperation between the liberals and the Prussian government.⁵³ Furthermore, Carr argues that the victory

⁴⁹ Brose, *German History*, 335; Conze, *Shaping of the German Nation*, 55; Craig, *Germany*, 6-7 and 11-12; Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 296; Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 188-189; Pottinger, *Napoleon III and the German Crisis*, 2.

⁵⁰ Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 61-62; Taylor, *The Course of German History*, 121.

⁵¹ Carr, *A History of Germany*, 110; Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 140.

⁵² Brose, *German History*, 336-337; Carr, *A History of Germany*, 111; Craig, *Germany*, 7-11; Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 190-192; Hughes, *Nationalism and Society*, 121-122; Schulze, *The Course of Germany Nationalism*, 95; Taylor, *The Course of German History*, 122-123.

⁵³ Conze, *Shaping of the German Nation*, 55.

awakened a national feeling in ‘wide sections’ of the North German population.⁵⁴ This coincided with the rising anti-French sentiment in the south, which was spurred on by the genuine post-war threat of French intervention.⁵⁵ Whether, as Carr suggests, this same national feeling was kept ‘on the surface’ until the Franco-Prussian War is less obvious.⁵⁶ Clearly, however, when war broke out between France and Germany, this sentiment re-emerged with significant strength. It aided greatly in maintaining the unity, against a common enemy, of the combined forces of South and North Germany.⁵⁷

Finally, while the Franco-Prussian War did not inevitably follow that of 1866, the outcome of the Austro-Prussian War provided an international context conducive to it. Prussia’s military performance at Königgrätz had alarmed the French government, which frantically sought to improve its military situation.⁵⁸ Prussia, on the other hand, in light of its new-found status in Germany and, consequently, in Europe, tended to be more diplomatically assertive and less inclined to act peaceably.⁵⁹ For example, in the peace talks following the Battle of Königgrätz, Bismarck refused to agree to French annexations; something Brose suggests made war with France more likely.⁶⁰ Among others, both of these factors added to the international tension leading up to the Franco-Prussian War. Without the heightened diplomatic and military strain in Europe, the Franco-Prussian War may not have transpired quite so readily. Hence, while certainly not rendering it unavoidable, the 1866 war made the likelihood of a Franco-Prussian War greater.⁶¹ Furthermore, the decisive nature of the Prussian victories against Austria, coupled with the rapidity of Prussia’s early victories against France, discouraged Austria from joining with them, something that, according to Stürmer, many prominent

⁵⁴ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 139; Carr, “The Unification of Germany,” 91.

⁵⁵ Carr, *A History of Germany*, 105; Carr, “The Unification of Germany,” 91; Pottinger, *Napoleon III and the German Crisis*, 166-167 and 188-189; Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 188.

⁵⁶ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 202.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 167-169; Carr, “The Unification of Germany,” 27-28 and 101.

⁵⁸ Carr, *A History of Germany*, 108-109; Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 269-270; Pottinger, *Napoleon III and the German Crisis*, 154-156 and 188-189.

⁵⁹ Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 208.

⁶⁰ Brose, *German History*, 335; Freidjung, *The Struggle for Supremacy*, 295-300.

⁶¹ Michael Stürmer, “France and German unification,” in *Nation-Building in Central Europe*, ed. Hagan Schulz (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), 148.

Austrians actively supported.⁶² Bismarck suggested that this was his reason for providing such agreeable terms to Austria in the post-war treaties:

...we had to avoid leaving behind in [Austria] any unnecessary bitterness of feeling or desire for revenge... If Austria were severely injured, she would become the ally of France and of every other opponent of ours....⁶³

In other words, Bismarck hoped to avoid causing any more anti-Prussian resentment in Austria than was necessary to exclude it from a reformed Germany.⁶⁴ Hence, the post-war treaties did not require Austria to make any significant territorial surrenders.⁶⁵ While it is imperative to avoid attributing too significant a role to the Prussian victory of 1866, it is clear that it resulted in various significant long-term consequences for German unity.

It is essential, at this point, to place the role of the Battle of Königgrätz and the Austro-Prussian War into perspective alongside other factors involved in the German unification. While it did have important implications, these were often indirect or of relatively minor significance. For example, in terms of military factors, the role of the Austro-Prussian War is quickly overshadowed by that of the Franco-Prussian War that immediately preceded political unification. Breuille, for instance, while mentioning the outcome of the Austro-Prussian War as a step toward final unification, attributes the 1870-1871 war with the substantial military role in the unification.⁶⁶ Therefore, particularly with regard to its implications for the French war, the Austro-Prussian War only indirectly influence the course of the unification. As mentioned above, it aided in forming an international context more conducive to the Franco-Prussian War that

⁶² Carr, *The Origins of the Wars*, 177-178; Stürmer, "France and German unification," 145.

⁶³ Paul Halsall, ed., "19th Century Austria and Germany: Otto von Bismarck: 1866," *The Internet History Sourcebooks Project*, accessed April 15, 2020, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/modsbook22.asp>.

⁶⁴ Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 188.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ John Breuille, "The national idea in modern German history," in *The State of Germany*, ed. John Breuille (London: Longman, 1992), 12.

would eventually spark the unification. The Austro-Prussian War also eliminated Austria from the Confederation and increased Prussia's influence in Germany. Once again, however, the effects were indirect. Prussian hegemony in Germany did not directly lead to unification but rather nudged Germany in that direction. As Schulze argues, the Prussian victory over Austria led to greater clarity over what was to eventually comprise Germany; it was a practical step toward unification.⁶⁷ To different degrees, one must also take into account the various other factors that contributed to resolution of the German question. In this field, much work has been done to critique past scholarly treatments of the factors leading to both political unification and the development of nationalism.⁶⁸ Many recent scholars have also attempted to better balance the extent to which factors like, among others, German nationalism, Prussian military reform, industrialization, various economic and social currents, and Prussian particularism influenced the eventual unification.⁶⁹ Hence, while the Battle of Königgrätz and the War of 1866 provide important insights into the groundwork for German unification, they must be understood in their broader context, and their impact must not be over-stated.

In conclusion, this essay has explored the complicated relationship between the War of 1866 and the eventual political unification of Germany

⁶⁷ Hagan Schulze, "The revolution of the European Order and the rise of German nationalism," in *Nation-Building in Central Europe*, ed. Hagan Schulze (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), 14-15.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Robert M. Berdahl, "New Thoughts on German Nationalism," *The American Historical Review* 77, no. 1 (1972), 65-80, accessed 13 April 2020, doi:10.2307/1856594; David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*, e-Book edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), accessed April 15, 2020, <https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.une.edu.au/2027/heb.01286>; Geoff Eley, *From Unification to Nazism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1986); H.J. Hahn, *German Thought and Culture* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

⁶⁹ See, for example, Carr, "The Unification of Germany," 81-102; Blackbourn and Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*; Dieter Düding, "The 19th century German nationalist movement as a movement of societies," in *The State of Germany*, ed. John Breuilly (London: Longman, 1992); Theodore S. Hamerow, *Social Foundations of German Unification, 1858-1871*, 2 vols, e-Book edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969-1972), i-ii, accessed May 30, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x0r9v.1>; Hughes, *Nationalism and Society*; Hubert Kiesewetter, "Economic preconditions for Germany's nation-building in the 19th century," in *The State of Germany*, ed. John Breuilly (London: Longman, 1992); Schulze, *The Couse of German Nationalism*.

in 1871. After reviewing the historical context, examining the numerous short- and long-term consequences and placing the war as a factor of unification into the context of the wider historiographical debates, the work concluded that the Austro-Prussian War clearly had some important impacts on the unification of Germany. Of particular significance are outcomes like the Austrian exclusion from Germany and the reorganization of the Confederation under Prussian leadership. Due to the lack of scholarship on the subject, however, it is impossible to draw definite conclusions concerning the longer-term effects of the war on national identity and the development of nationalism in Germany after political unification. As suggested in the introduction to this work, scholars like Breuille and Hughes have suggested that, although the political and military union of Germany under Prussian leadership was achieved in 1871, it was much later before a real ‘spiritual’ unification took place.⁷⁰ Alongside other factors, the wars of 1866 and 1870-1871 were responsible for the political, economic and military unification of Germany, but, inevitably, the development of a national consciousness took much longer. A historical treatment of this subject would be hugely beneficial for understanding the enduring effects of the war, if any, on German national development. There is also a distinct lack of up-to-date scholarship treating, explicitly, the implications of the Austro-Prussian War for political unification, although this is treated indirectly in some depth in works like Carr’s *The Origins of the Wars of Unification* and older volumes like Craig’s seminal work, *The Battle of Königgrätz*.⁷¹ Ultimately, this work hopes to have contributed a valuable overview of the major implications that the 1866 war had for the German unification.

⁷⁰ Breuille, “The national idea in modern German history,” 12-21; Hughes, *Nationalism and Society*, 128-149.

⁷¹ Carr, *The Origins of the Wars of Unification*, 89-140, 144, 161-163, 167-169, 171-174, 177 and 202; Craig, *The Battle of Königgrätz*, 163-179.

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