

Finally, Most historians would have to agree that the introduction of Bismarck in 1862 was a fundamental reason that German unification was achieved by 1871. His importance is considered as key as, in consideration nationalist movements had been occurring since 1815 with no real success, yet after he becomes a prominent figure it is achieved within just nine years. For this reason, he is often considered to have had a catalytic effect on German unity. Firstly, it was Bismarck who came to the rescue during the constitutional crisis and against the wished of the ruling elite, illegally collected taxes to reform the army. It was this action, which transformed the Prussian army into a proficient fighting force, doubling their size and placing Prussia in key position to be leader of the unification of Germany. From the onset, Bismarck argued that Prussians would have to fight to be unified. In one of his most famous speeches, he said "Not by speeches and majorities will the great questions of the day be decided ... but by iron and blood". Bismarck, after solving the constitutional crisis, was appointed prime minister by King Frederick Wilhelm and the king nearly always took his advice after that. Bismarck led his state into three wars, later known as the wars of unification. Bismarck's political acumen can be most clearly seen in the duration of these wars. The war with Denmark in 1864 occurred mainly because of a dispute concerning the two duchies of the border between Denmark and the German Bund: Schleswig and Holstein. It was arranged in the London protocol that these areas would remain mainly independent under the control of the Dukes who ruled them. However, in 1864, Denmark attempted to annex these areas, one of which, Holstein, was a member of the Bund. Bismarck showed his initiative and was quick to react. Realising an opportunity to show his support of unification and to demonstrate the success of the army reforms, Bismarck then convinced Austria to fight with her, leaving Denmark isolated against the daunting combined force of Prussia and Austria and so quickly backed down. At the end of the war, Austria was given control of Holstein and Prussia was given control of Schleswig, this gave Prussia an edge as she now controlled any access to Holstein. Over the next two years, Prussia sought to isolate Austria and managed due to a succession of agreements: Napoleon III was met at Biarritz and left with the idea that remaining neutral during a Prussian war with Austria would lead to him gaining land "wherever French is spoken", Prussia helped Russia crush a Polish uprising after the Crimean war, the Tsar felt indebted to Bismarck and so agreed to remain neutral. Bismarck allied with Italy who was promised Venetia in return for the significant difficulties imposed on Austria by a two front war. Thus, by 1866 Austria found herself without allies facing a war against Prussia after she violated the terms of the Gastein Convention and was forced to declare war after Bismarck provoked her by calling for the creation of a German state excluding Austria. Finally, Austria was defeated which led to not only the formation of a North German Confederation but also the South German States being separated from Austria.