THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY ON THE BASIS OF THE

'IRON AND BLOOD' POLICY

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Abstract: This article scientifically analyzes the process of the political unification of Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, the essence of the 'iron and blood' policy, and the role of military force and diplomacy in the unification of Germany. The study highlights the causes, course, and consequences of the Austro–Prussian–Danish War, the Gastein Convention, and the Austro–Prussian War, which led to the establishment of the German Empire under Prussian leadership.

Keywords: German unification, Bismarck's policy, Prussia, Austria, Denmark, Schleswig, Holstein, Gastein Convention, German Empire, nineteenth-century European history, military-political processes.

One of the most important political processes in nineteenth-century European history was the unification of Germany. This process is directly connected with the name of the Prussian chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who unified Germany through diplomacy and wars. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the territory of Germany consisted of more than thirty independent and semi-independent German states that existed within the German Confederation. Among these states, the most powerful were Prussia and Austria, and it was precisely between these two that a sharp rivalry for leadership in Germany existed. Although Austria had long held a leading position in the German Confederation, by the 1850s and 1860s Prussia's economic and military power increased rapidly. Through its industry, railway network, and modern well-armed army, Prussia began to surpass Austria. Austria, on the other hand, was a multiethnic empire, and internal national conflicts weakened its military strength. In 1862 Otto von Bismarck was appointed Prussian chancellor. He supported the unification of Germany not through revolution but through force, and this policy became known in history as the policy of 'iron and blood.' Bismarck's main task was not only to conduct successive wars on the path toward German unification but also to prevent the interference of other great powers. Therefore, he pursued complex diplomatic relations with Russia, France, and England." "Russian Emperor Alexander II and Foreign Minister Alexander Gorchakov did not consider Prussia's leadership in Germany to be a danger to Russia, because the weakening of Austria corresponded to Russian interests. French Emperor Napoleon III also maintained neutrality for a certain time in the hope of obtaining territorial concessions from Prussia. England, for its part, supported the preservation of the balance of power in Europe. The outbreak of the Austro–Prussian–Danish War in 1864 was caused by the childless death of Danish King Frederick VII and the issue of control over the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Although these duchies had been under the Danish crown on the basis of a personal union, the majority of their population consisted of Germans. When the Danish government attempted to fully incorporate Schleswig into Denmark, Prussia and Austria sharply opposed this move. After Denmark rejected the ultimatum, Austrian and Prussian troops invaded the territory of Schleswig on February 1, 1864. The war continued in the regions of Schleswig and Jutland. Although the Danish navy dominated at sea, the land military operations were decided in favor of Prussia. On April 18, 1864, the Düppel fortifications were captured, on

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April 25 the city of Fredericia was taken, and on June 29 the island of Als was occupied. On October 30, 1864, the final peace treaty was signed in Vienna, and Denmark completely renounced Schleswig, Holstein, and Lauenburg. According to the Gastein Convention concluded in 1865, Holstein passed under Austrian administration, while Schleswig and Lauenburg came under Prussian control. This agreement was temporary and further intensified the contradictions between the two states. As a result, the Austro–Prussian War broke out in 1866, in which Prussia achieved victory and Austria was expelled from the German Confederation. This war became the decisive stage on the road to German unification. The Franco–Prussian War of 1870–1871 also became a logical continuation of Bismarck's policy. Prussia defeated France, and on January 18, 1871, the German Empire was proclaimed in Versailles. The establishment of the German Empire fundamentally changed the balance of political power in Europe. From then on, Germany began to transform into a leading industrial, military, and political state. The unification of Germany led to immense changes not only in the political sphere but also in the social and economic spheres. A unified market was formed, industry developed rapidly, railways connected distant regions, new cities emerged, and the way of life of the population changed. At the same time, the unification of Germany also laid the foundation for the strengthening of aggressive foreign policy. Bismarck's diplomacy became a form in which war and politics were closely intertwined. He was able to set rival European states against one another and place German interests above all else. After the formation of the German Empire, the balance of power in Europe changed completely, and this situation laid the foundation for the geopolitical processes that later led to the First World War. The unification of Germany became one of the most important turning points in European history and formed the basis of the political processes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The unification of Germany on the basis of the 'iron and blood' policy became one of the most important political processes in nineteenth-century European history. This process was directly connected with the name of the Prussian chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who unified Germany through diplomacy and wars. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the territory of Germany consisted of more than thirty independent and semi-independent German states that existed within the German Confederation." "Among these states the most powerful were Prussia and Austria, and it was precisely between these two that a sharp rivalry for leadership in Germany existed. Although Austria had long been the leading power within the German Confederation, by the 1850s and 1860s Prussia's economic and military strength increased rapidly. Through industrial development, the expansion of the railway network, and a modern well-armed army, Prussia began to surpass Austria. Austria, on the other hand, was a multi-ethnic empire, and internal national conflicts weakened its military power. In 1862 Otto von Bismarck was appointed Prussian chancellor. He supported the unification of Germany not through revolution but through force, and this policy became known in history as the policy of 'iron and blood.' Bismarck's main task was to wage consecutive wars on the road to German unification while at the same time preventing the interference of other great powers. Therefore, he conducted complex diplomatic relations with Russia, France, and England. Russian Emperor Alexander II and Foreign Minister Alexander Gorchakov did not regard Prussia's leadership in Germany as a danger to Russia, because the weakening of Austria corresponded to Russian interests. French Emperor Napoleon III also maintained neutrality for a certain period in the hope of obtaining territorial concessions from Prussia. England, for its part, supported the preservation of the balance of power in Europe. The Austro–Prussian–Danish War that began in 1864 was caused by the childless death of Danish King Frederick VII and the issue of control over the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Although these duchies had long been under the Danish crown in the form of a personal union, the majority of their population consisted of Germans. When the

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