

Paper One: Sources

Liberalism and Nationalism in Italy and Germany, 1848–1871

The Austro-Prussian War

Read the sources and then answer both parts of the question. You should spend **1 hour** on this section.

When answering the question, you are advised to pay particular attention to the interpretation and evaluation of the sources, both individually and as a group.

SOURCE A

Every future historian of the German nation will proclaim the events of the year 1866 as a tremendous step forward. He will at the same time acknowledge the year of Prussia's independent action in its German policy as the year of the most magnificent upheaval that German history has ever known. In this year Count Bismarck entered upon his next phase of activity directed towards the further united development of Germany. The most urgent need is for us all to cease our grumbling at the catastrophe of 'blood and iron'. We have all been saying to each other, over and over again, especially since 1849, that things would never get better or move forward in Germany except by way of 'force' or 'revolution' or 'war and civil war'. Now that this prediction has been fulfilled, have we any reason to be morally upset at the reality of what has been regarded as inevitable by so many people?

I would not hesitate to sacrifice even the last spark of freedom temporarily for the sake of the completion of unity. As a former member of the Frankfurt Parliament I should have liked to see the constitution of 1849 form the basis of the new German order. But action itself is more important than fulfilment of that desire. The nation will be served not by fruitless party arguments, but only by action which will bring the work of unity and freedom to completion as soon as possible.

From a book entitled 'Prussia's German Policy', by a Prussian liberal, published in 1867.

SOURCE B

A true German policy is only possible when Austria and Prussia are united and take the lead. We consider working together is the best way to consolidate the successes we have won. We consider combination (such as the joint action in waging war which is our immediate political purpose) as the foundation of a lasting unity. If Prussia and Austria are not united, politically Germany does not exist.

Quarrelling has left some of the smaller states unsure, and made others troublesome. If we hesitate or weaken, the collapse of Germany will be brought about by allowing the policies of our two countries to be decided by a few, unarmed small states. If, on the contrary, we come forward firmly, they will conform as soon as they see the firm will of Austria and Prussia.

Bismarck writing to the Prussian Ambassador in Austria, August 1864.

SOURCE C

Never has a war been provoked so shamelessly as the one that Bismarck is currently trying to start against Austria. My innermost feelings are revolted by this violation of every moral principle. I am no friend of Austria and I am devoted to the idea of Prussian influence in north Germany, even though I have little sympathy for the present political system in Prussia. But I would rather cut off my hand than use it in such a disgusting operation as Prussian policy is now launching against Austria. Austria is supposed to be mobilising against Prussia! Any child knows that the opposite is the case. The saddest thing about it all is that once the struggle is under way principles of right and wrong must conflict with interests. Whom should we wish victorious, Austria or Prussia? We have no choice, we must come down on the side of the unjust cause, because we cannot tolerate the possibility of Austria gaining the upper hand in Germany. Nobody here is comfortable with the idea that the war will have the result we desire – the dominance of Prussia.

A letter from one Prussian liberal to another, May 1866.

SOURCE D

We have to avoid wounding Austria too severely; we have to avoid leaving Austria unnecessarily bitter or desiring revenge. We ought to keep the possibility of becoming friends again. If Austria were severely injured she would become the ally of France and of every opponent of ours. German Austria we could neither wholly nor partly make use of. The acquisition of provinces like Austrian Silesia and part of Bohemia could not strengthen the Prussian state; it would not lead to an amalgamation of German Austria with Prussia, and Vienna could not be governed by Berlin as a mere dependency.

A letter from Bismarck to King William I, July 1866.

Answer **both** parts of the question with reference to the sources.

(a) To what extent do Sources A and C agree about Bismarck's actions? [15]

(b) 'Bismarck was the key cause of the war with Austria.' How far do these sources support this judgement? [25]