

## Otto Von Bismarck: The Chief Architect of Germany

Ghulam Murtaza Pitafi <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Rawalpindi Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

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Correspondence addressed to Ghulam Murtaza Pitafi. ✉ [ghulam.murtaza@f.rwu.edu.pk](mailto:ghulam.murtaza@f.rwu.edu.pk)

**Abstract:** The cultivation of a distinct cultural identity within the German Empire was achieved through a deliberate process of Germanization, targeting both Germans and racial communities. This cultural assimilation granted Germany dominance over non-Germanic languages. The transformative era witnessed comprehensive reforms that propelled Germany to a position of prominence in military, economic, and societal domains, a legacy shaped under the watchful eye of Bismarck. The impact of these shifts in power dynamics reverberated throughout Europe, only to be later revoked from Germany. Post-unification, Bismarck directed his political endeavors towards preserving European peace, demonstrating adept foreign diplomatic strategies. His successful initiatives, including alliance formations and strategic wars, earned him the title of the Iron Chancellor of Prussia. Bismarck's leadership style in domestic affairs was marked by a lack of definitive principles, navigating complexities, unresolved issues, and conflicting interests. His support for Kulturkampf intensified opposition from nationalists and liberals, complicating governance. While granting voting rights in 1863, Bismarck, perhaps misjudging the evolving Prussian landscape, inadvertently destabilized the German government. His authoritarian measures aimed at protecting monarchy and Junkers further alienated Jews, liberals, Catholics, socialists, and democratic factions. The underestimation of Prussian transformation underscored the challenges in his political decisions.

**Key Words:** German Empire, Germany, Bismarck, Military, Economic, Leadership

### Introduction

Otto von Bismarck was born in the town of Schonhausen, Brandenburg. He belonged to an aristocratic family. His father, Ferdinand, was a Junker by profession. He hailed from a Swabian family that was settled in Pomerania as an estate owner. Pomerania was a part of Germany that had not yet seen industrialization, and the estate owners relied on the laboring peasantry to make a living. Otto von Bismarck's mother, meanwhile, hailed from a wealthy bourgeois family that included academics and higher-ranking government employees. She grabbed the opportunity to move from the house when Bismarck was seven years old since she was so bored of living in the agricultural regions. She moved herself to Berlin, the capital of Prussia, and registered him in a prestigious school. Bismarck struggled from high school and a small period in university before joining the Prussian civil service. But he left it after his mother passed away in 1839. He eventually went back to his father's estate and settled home there. The 1848 revolution increased Bismarck's commitment to supporting conventional feudal society, and he also formulated a strategy that none of the conservatives could have predicted. The authoritarian system would sustain the manipulation of all classes. In 1849, Bismarck won an election and was elected to the lower house of Prussia, and he stood exclusively intending to uphold the power structure. Later, in 1851, he was selected as a Prussian representative in Frankfurt by the Prussian king. He agreed to appoint only him to the federal diet. His eight years in Frankfurt taught him two things: Austria was politically superior, and South Germany was becoming more industrialized and commercialized, making Prussia a weaker power. As a result of Prussia's leadership in a unified Germany, Bismarck started to consider

ending the division that Germany had already been witnessing during the Thirty Years' War. After serving for a brief time as France's and Russia's ambassadors. (Gray & Kent, 1980)

In 1862, Otto von Bismarck assumed the positions of prime minister and foreign minister, defying the preference of the lower house but enjoying substantial support from the king. His primary objective was to fortify Prussia's military dominance. Bismarck aimed to acquire Schleswig for Prussia and Holstein for Austria by manipulating military alliances and diplomatic maneuvers. To achieve this, he orchestrated a conflict with Denmark by persuading Austria to wage war. Simultaneously, he fanned the flames of Hungarian national revolt within the Austrian Empire, resulting in Austria's decisive defeat. The northern German states rallied behind Prussia during its confrontation with a weakened Austria, leading to the unification of the northern section of Germany. However, resistance persisted in the south. Bismarck employed strategic warfare to overcome this opposition, successfully leveraging nationalist sentiments. In 1871, the four southern states joined the German Confederation, contributing to the formation of the new German Empire with Berlin as its capital. Bismarck garnered support from industry and business in his endeavors to dismantle the smaller states, erase their borders, and eliminate numerous customs charges. Despite initial opposition from the liberal bourgeoisie, who had once championed German unification, Bismarck emerged as a hero in their eyes. His motivations, however, were not driven by a desire to please the liberals but rather to safeguard the pre-existing political order. Subsequently, Bismarck turned his attention to internal threats to the empire, employing a combination of strategic concessions and apparent repression. Between 1878 and 1890, Bismarck implemented measures such as banning and suppressing the socialist party. Concurrently, he established public health insurance, retirement plans, and accident insurance, laying the groundwork for Germany's social security system. This social legislation aimed not only to address internal challenges but also to secure the stability of the newly formed German Empire. (Khoudour-Castéras, 2008)

However, these strategies failed. The Social Democrats, the Catholic Centre, and the Progressives won most seats in the 1890 elections. The king ordered the resignation of his prime minister to avoid a dispute that might erupt into civil war. The final eight years of Bismarck's life were spent in intense bitterness. Additionally, he published his memoirs, which extended his legacy that dominated the entire Germany. Germany's unification was extremely necessary due to the rise in trade driven by industrialization. Bismarck aimed to unite Germany. He nurtured the situations that made it possible for a capitalist state to be constituted.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The research addresses a critical gap in the existing literature on Germany's unification and emergence as a European power by offering a comprehensive analysis of Otto von Bismarck's early life, professional trajectory, and later political career. While numerous works explore Germany's historical context, there is a need for a focused examination of the key figure instrumental in shaping its destiny. The study delves into Bismarck's formative years, shedding light on his aristocratic upbringing and early education. It navigates through his challenges and achievements, dissecting the various phases of his political struggles. Notably, the research provides nuanced insights into Bismarck's strategic alliances, particularly his collaboration with the National Liberals, offering a deeper understanding of the political dynamics that influenced Germany's trajectory during this crucial period. By unraveling the complexities of Bismarck's life, the study contributes to a more profound comprehension of Germany's historical evolution and its role in shaping European geopolitics.

### **Scope and Significance of the Study**

The study provides an analytical understanding of the life of Otto Von Bismarck and his role in Germany's domestic policy and foreign policy. It will provide a unique justification for its domestic policy and foreign policy, and it provides how policies shape Germany's unification process.

This study will examine the role of Bismarck in German foreign policies. This study covers the period from 1862 to 1898. It was a time of Otto van Bismarck's triumph in Germany's unification. Further, it discusses Bismarck's diplomatic policies that led to Germany becoming the superpower in Europe. The study also compares the major socio- political developments in the German empire of Bismarck. The study centered on Bismarck's life, struggle, diplomatic policies, and German development.

### **Objectives of the Research**

The objectives of the research include.

- a) Explore Bismarck's Early Life and Upbringing
- b) To explore an analytical understanding of the role of Otto von Bismarck.
- c) Analyze Bismarck's Political Struggles and Alliances

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

- a) Describing the life and career of Otto Von Bismarck.
- b) Analyzing Bismarck's domestic and foreign policies from 1862 to 1898.
- c) Describing Bismarck's reforms and welfare state.

### **Methodology**

By combining both descriptive and analytical methodologies, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Otto Von Bismarck's role in shaping the trajectory of social reforms and the establishment of a welfare state, contributing to the broader field of political science and historical analysis.

### **Early Life, Education, and Career**

On April 1, 1805, Otto von Bismarck was born in Schonhausen, the small town of Brandenburg. He belonged to an aristocratic family. His father, Ferdinand, was a Junker by profession. He hailed from a Swabian family that was settled in Pomerania as an estate owner. He served in the military. His mother, Wilhelmine Mencken, was a completely different person. She came from a well-educated and middle-class family that produced several academics and higher- ranking government officials. (Steinberg, 2013) She married Ferdinand von Bismarck when she was sixteen years old. Her hopes were entirely focused on her children. She wished to provide their children with the academic life that she had been denied. But she encouraged them strongly. She never expressed affection for them in the sense that she always wanted to give them quality education and a standard of living. She entirely focused on their academic and upcoming life. Otto von Bismarck was ungrateful for the inheritance and resentful that her mother did not share her affection for him, and he always expected love from her mother instead of ideas and intellectual fostering. She picked a different path for him in terms of education. Wilhelmine Mencken was very worried about her children receiving a good education. Bismarck attended Berlin Grammar School, where middle-class boys surrounded him. Bismarck had the opportunity to make friendship terms with the young Hohenzollerns and was always in the royal circle. Later, his mother sent him to the University of Gottingen in Hanover, which was located outside of Prussia. (Steinberg, 2013) Where he was supposed to study law, her mother encouraged him to study law. He was

fond of reading books. But he was more interested in studying history than law. Moreover, Bismarck was an average student who spent a massive amount of time drinking and hanging out with his friends in aristocratic society. During his brief stay at Berlin University, he read many classical English novels. With time, he challenged university discipline in both his behavior and his beliefs. And there, he rejected the republican upbringing. That he received in elementary school, he became a member of the Burschenschaften Student Unions, which maintained the spirit of the war of liberation.

In 1835, Otto von Bismarck succeeded in the exam, and then he joined the Prussian Civil Service. He was only 20 years old at that time. But unfortunately, his short civil service career was a failure. In 1836, he was dispatched to Aachen in the Prussian Rhineland after a few weeks of training in Potsdam. In 1839, he resigned from the Prussian bureaucracy after completing his years of service. (Seligmann, 2011) His main objective was to pursue a career as a political leader in a free constitution. In the same year, his mother died. His family's finances were in very bad condition. Then, he and his brother seized control of the Pomeranian estate for themselves. He and his brother were able to recover family finances again. But through time, he found his Junker neighbor's way of life intolerable. Boredom and hopelessness drove him insane, and he became very intoxicated. He lived an ordinary life around his neighbors as a Prussian countryside landowner from 1839 until 1847. He then cherished these years spent on the farm and pondered why he had given up a dream life for the uncertainties of a career in politics. Then, he met Johanna von Putt Kamer and married her in 1847. She was the daughter of a traditionalist aristocratic family renowned for its extreme pietism. She was an intelligent woman, and she encouraged her intelligence. She found it difficult in the initial years of her marriage to devote so much time to public service, but she accepted it and found great solace in her three children, William, Herbert, and Marie, who were born in the years 1848, 1849, and 1852, respectively. Johanna held highly democratic beliefs and lacked both egoism and vanity. She was also a wonderful host. Although she was not particularly good at conversation, she could make people talk well and showed keen insight when deciding which issues to bring up. Because of her friendliness and graciousness, she was able to host legislative gatherings with remarkable success, which boosted her husband's popularity. (Taylor, 2002).

Otto von Bismarck's political views were very conservative. He strongly believed in the idea of a Christian state whose orders were approved by God, as one of the brothers von Gerlach's circles of religious conservatives, who were steadfast guardians of the aristocratic estate against the intrusions of bureaucratic centralization. He participated in the Prussian United Diet in 1847, where he made speeches opposing Jewish emancipation and current liberalism, earning him the label of a rustic conservative. Frederick William IV selected Bismarck to represent Prussia in the Frankfurt Parliament of the German Confederation in 1851. His performance was good enough for him to move to ambassadorial posts in Vienna, then in St. Petersburg, and then in Paris until 1862. It provided him with valuable information about the weaknesses of Europe's major powers. (Barkin & Pflanze, 1992) William I, who succeeded Frederick William in 1862, experienced a massive crisis. He wanted to build Prussian foreign policy on a larger standing army, but he was unable to win parliamentary approval for this proposal. As a result, he required a strong minister-president who would speak in the face of opposition majorities. The King was convinced by War Minister Roon to give Bismarck control of the government. William tried to bind the appointment to take effect on September 22, 1862, with an agreement restricting the chief minister's involvement in foreign matters. But he simply ended up breaking apart this restriction. Foreign affairs became Bismarck's main concern.

He was confident that Schleswig and Holstein duchies would be annexed by Prussia at Denmark's expense. Schleswig-history Holstein's over the previous two decades had been chaotic, and there had been

several competing claims to sovereignty over the various territories. The Duke of Augustenburg formed a court in Holstein in December 1863 after Bismarck permitted the Hohenzollerns, the Prussian reigning dynasty, to support him in his claim. Then, however, Bismarck encouraged Count Rechberg of Austria to take part in a military takeover against the Hohenzollern. In February 1864, Austro-Prussian soldiers invaded Schleswig and occupied Holstein. The "1865 Austro-Prussians Gastein Convention" disclosed Rechberg's foolishness in involving Austrian troops in an enterprise prompted by the Austro-Prussian army defeat in 1864. Only Prussia could be benefited from that. Prussia constructed, acquired, and managed both the canal and a naval station. Austria occupied Schleswig, while Prussia occupied Holstein. (Pflanze, 1990).

## **Bismarck Reforms**

Short-term speculative events were sparked by Germany's unification. After the economic downturn that struck Germany in 1873 and spread to the rest of Europe, Bismarck was compelled to make such an agreement to resolve the issue and was forced to agree with the demands for taxes made by the agricultural and industrial interests. Bismarck knew the potential advantages of economic imitation. Bismarck seized the chance to boost indirect tax revenues despite rejecting any strategy to introduce the government revenue because it would be simpler to keep this measure out of the Reichstag's hands. Following the "National Liberals" resistance, he finally was prepared to dissolve the alliance. It indicates that to obtain the Center Party's support, he may renounce the fundamental principles of kulturkampf. However, Bismarck decided to strengthen his bond with the Catholics and the Catholic Church. His efforts were acknowledged in 1879 due to his struggle to safeguard taxes over the "National Liberals" opposition. The adoption of the tariff reform was Bismarck's most significant accomplishment because he collaborated with the Conservatives and Center Parties. In addition to the imposition of new tariffs, Bismarck promoted a strict economic strategy that resulted in a 5% rise in Germany's annual productivity between 1871 and 1873. Bismarck authorized the construction of several iron and steel factories due to the fast rise in railroad construction. (Pflanze, 2014) The introduction of Bismarck's credit policies and the injection of liquid capital into the economy helped in the expansion of numerous factories. This funding was utilized to pay off war loans as well as several military projects. Following that, the German currency reform increased the amount of free trade capital in the German economy by around 762,000,000 marks. The Reichstag authorized and approved joint stock firms in 1870. Forty-nine more banks were introduced in Prussia in 1872. The banks put their investment in these partnerships.

The German education system, which was more advanced than that of other European nations, was one of Bismarck's most brilliant reforms for the Empire. Almost 33,000 primary schools were introduced in Prussia during the unification and formation of Germany, educating over four million students. By 1911, this number had climbed to 39,000 schools, educating 6.5 million students. Due to this, the literacy rate among German inhabitants was high. According to data, no less than 50 out of every 1,000 Germans could read and write in the late nineteenth century. With such an outstanding number of schools, Germany's educational system was better able to cultivate a sense of loyalty and nationalism in an already culturally and religiously divided population. Bismarck argued that to achieve thorough reform, students' minds should be cultivated with ideals like respect for the monarchy, loyalty to the government, and respect for the law. Through the teachings and great emphasis on German history, culture, and language, schools operated as advocates of the Germans. Bismarck engineered a framework that facilitated the engagement of students in joyous celebrations, involving them in flag-bearing parades and other national festivities both within schools and on the streets. The educational agenda under Bismarck's administration encouraged schoolchildren to hold deep admiration for their monarch, portraying the king as a devoted ruler with unwavering faith in God. Despite

these celebratory aspects, Bismarck's educational reforms served as a mechanism to anchor German residents in their current locations rather than fostering migration. While a considerable number of Germans participated in primary education, the progression to secondary education remained accessible primarily to those who possessed the financial means to afford it. (Baev, 2020)

The Military was one more organization that underwent reform under Bismarck's direction. The military, which serves as the country's "school," is a potent force for stability and conservatism in the Empire. Some historians claim that due to Bismarck's military expansion—the army had only 400,000 soldiers prior to unification—Germany became militarized. Later, upon the foundation of the new Empire, it rose to 864,000. It was mandatory for all German citizens to enlist in the military and serve for two to three years in order to cultivate discipline, social identity, and ideological commitment. The military and school system in Germany served to preserve the country's power and influence. As part of his reform, Bismarck ensured that the army's aristocratic mindset persisted in order to prevent Social Democrats from assuming officer roles. As a result of the Bismarckian military reform, the army became a very conservative organization. Its main duty was to protect the German Empire. (Horn et al., 1979)

Several cultural beliefs and ideologies were adopted in the time of Otto von Bismarck, which changed the political and judicial system as a result. Women, for instance, were treated very badly. They were not even represented in political and legal matters. Gennan societies marked the widespread discrimination between both men and women in every field. Women were mostly treated in a bad manner. The Bismarckian laws reflected extreme discrimination against women. Women were forced to give away all their property and rights when they got married. However, they still have little rights when it comes to child custody. In 1908, women were not permitted to vote, join political parties' trade unions, attend political gatherings, or create political organizations. They were only permitted to take part in charitable and humanitarian work. The Social Democrats were the only political party to pay attention to women's issues. Unfortunately, they failed badly in this effort. However, after 1890, when feminism adopted a tough, aggressive strategy to demand their voting freedoms, women's political activities began to rise. The term "women's rights" was highlighted, and several women's groups eventually discovered a platform beyond party politics.<sup>10</sup> There was only a slight improvement in women's rights in Germany before the start of the war. The length of women's working days was shortened. Women obtained an increase in enrollment in schools and were given education and healthcare professions. The best thing was that married women obtained full legal rights. Women did not enjoy their rights fully until the full implementation and constitutional amendments were done. In 1880, To better the standard of living of the working class, Otto von Bismarck introduced social reform legislation. The Social Democrats rejected several of Bismarck's social reform initiatives because they would offend the industrialists on whose support he relied, especially his efforts to shorten working days, restrict child and female labor, and impose a minimum wage. Kaiser introduced a social insurance program in 1883. (Kreklau, 1988) Since payments were high and the majority of those eligible for this package were elderly, few people benefited from it. It is a fact that the adoption of the reform did not calm or console the workers due to the Social Democrats' aggressive and authoritarian attitude against Bismarck's many policies.

After Bismarck's downfall in 1890, his social reforms underwent revisions to make them more progressive. Sunday working was abolished. "Accident Insurance" was expanded in the working class around the 1900s, and the funds were put aside for a program to provide housing for workers. Employment policies sheltered children, and insurance programs protected the working class. Even though "Bismarck's social reform" initiatives did not fully serve the German citizens, they served as a guide for the establishment of many social welfare programs. (Kitschelt 1993)

## **Bismarck's Welfare State**

Bismarck held sufficient power to enforce social laws in the Prussian state. Bismarck believed that social legislation needs to be enforced. After the growth of such political parties: The Social Democratic Party, Anti-government, and Revolutionaries. In 1880, he decided that their growing influence and power needed to be reduced not just by negative or oppressive means but by the positive or good. The social welfare laws could gain their favor and support. However, compared to Britain, trade unions were a recent growth in Germany, and as a result, their impact was much weaker. Instead of trade unions, German workers in Bismarck's era turned to the Social Democratic Party for help and support despite strong resistance from liberals, progressives, and socialists. The conservative groups in Germany drafted and implemented social insurance laws. His social ideas were thoroughly conservative due to his religious beliefs and status in the Prussian landed aristocracy. Bismarck was greatly influenced this time by Ferdinand Lassalle. Lassalle's scheme for state-funded cooperatives was rejected by Bismarck, but he did embrace the equal right to vote as the basis for German Reichstag elections. However, at the time, Bismarck believed that universal suffrage might help the conservative monarchy by uniting the easily convinced people against the liberal bourgeoisie. However, attitudes change frequently over time. Later, in 1890, when they were no longer submissive, German industrial masses chose socialist Deputies for the Reichstag and denounced Bismarck's policies. Bismarck seriously contemplated limiting universal suffrage by employing a military coup. It was not until 1878 that he started to worry genuinely about the socialists' threat to the state. Their number of votes had grown steadily. All his initiatives for securing the new empire were rejected by their delegates in the Reichstag. They promoted the elimination of the capitalist state and the Marxian principles of social revolution in their speeches and propaganda.

Two mentally unstable young men made two attempts in 1878 to kill the elderly Emperor William. Even though they were not Social Democrats, Bismarck used their revolver shots as the reason for introducing a bill that was extremely restrictive toward the Social Democrats and any subversive activity. It called for the repression of socialist gatherings and publications, as well as the prosecution or removal of socialist activists. The National Liberals, Catholics, Progressives, and Socialists all opposed Bismarck's first anti-socialist legislation, which was devastated in the Reichstag by a clear majority of 281 to 57 votes. But, in the second assassination attempt on William, Bismarck dismissed Reichstag, demanded new elections, and requested harsh anti-socialist legislation. By a three-to-two vote in October 1878, the anti-socialist law was approved for a little time. Later, according to socialist estimates, it resulted in the dissolution of 352 of their groups, the suppression of 1299 publications, the eviction of 893 people from their homes, and the imposition of prison terms totaling 850 years, five months, and 14 days. (Fay, 1950)

## **Social Repression**

German smugglers brought socialist publications into the country that were printed in Switzerland and England, and they were disseminated widely underground as a result of persecution; the Social Democratic Party gained support and more Reichstag members in each election, growing stronger and stronger. Soon after passing the anti-socialism law, Bismarck realized that it did not completely meet the socialist threat. Only unfavorable oppressive laws were in place. The German state must be made to feel like the industrial workers' friend, not their enemy, and this can only be done by doing something to improve their situation. To nurture a feeling of gratitude toward the German state among the workers, he desired the German state to pay for the cost of healthcare along with businesses and employees. The workers would be happier and less inclined to

pay attention to socialist agitators in the hope that they would have less need to worry and that the state would be on their side. Bismarck expected that by doing this, the Social Democratic Party's influence would be reduced. His social welfare laws fall victim to failure after 1890, in his later years. If a worker was accidentally killed or hurt, the Employer's Liability Act of 1871 was designed to offer compensation. However, it was widely acknowledged that the law was extremely deficient and inadequate. The worker was frequently involved in drawn-out, expensive lawsuits as a result of having to establish that the incident was not his fault, and in the majority of cases, he received absolutely no compensation. (Pflanze 1971)

In April 1880, Louis Baare, a Rhine-Westphalian mining industrialist, put out a proposal for worker accident and injury insurance. It received Bismarck's approval and catalyzed his strong involvement in social insurance and legislative advocacy. He requested that Baare develop his idea into written law. Theodor Lohmann, a Westphalian Lutheran pastor's son, was a religiously conservative with notable talent and unwavering independence of spirit. He has spent many years exploring social welfare from a theoretical and practical perspective. His beliefs were far different from Bismarck's political considerations. He opposed the state contributing to the cost of the insurance premiums since doing so would diminish the worker's sense of accountability. The fact that employers and employees would independently contribute and administer the insurance funds would allow labor and capital to develop a common habit of collaboration and understanding, which was the most crucial factor of all, in his opinion. However, Lohmann was forced to put Bismarck's wishes ahead of his convictions for the government to draft a bill to reflect his wishes rather than Lohmann's. (Pflanze, 1990b)

In April 1881, Bismarck presented the Reichstag with his first accident insurance bill. Its distinguishing attribute was that it mandated accident insurance for numerous groups of workers. All employees in the construction, shipbuilding, steel and iron foundries, and mining industries who made less than 2000 marks a year must be covered by insurance. Two thousand marks in salary each year. The Imperial Insurance Bureau, which would promise pensions and death pay-outs and, therefore, create a paternal relationship between both the laborer and the government, was the organization chosen by Bismarck to handle the insurance program. The three key components of the bill- the compulsion to insure, an Imperial Insurance Bureau, and state contributions- which Bismarck had insisted were precisely the issues that drew the most criticism and eventually destroyed the proposal. When two-thirds of its liberal members refused to support Bismarck's protective tariff law and turned to the opposition in 1879, the National Liberal Party had been Bismarck's major ally since 1866 but later broke up. The Catholic Centre Party was bitterly opposed to the Imperial Insurance Bureau as a centralized intrusion on state authority despite their severe divisions. Even though they were royalists rather than centralists and received a sizeable portion of their support from Catholic Bavaria, the leaders of the Catholic Centre were always fearful of Prussia's dominating influence in the Empire. Due to several objections, the Social Democrats opposed all of the bill's insurance measures. The Reichstag was dissolved, and the bill was withdrawn by Bismarck. On November 17, 1881, only a few days before the next Reichstag elections, he, along with William I, delivered an Imperial Message to promote a newly updated accident insurance bill. Additionally, another three schemes of accident, illness, and old age insurance were offered. The opposition parties strengthened their position in the Reichstag despite the emperor's warning. Because Bismarck would not give up his notion of a centralized, state-aided, bureaucratic organization, the second accident insurance bill that Lohmann prepared and presented to the new Reichstag in May 1882 did not fare any better than the first. It was subsequently replaced by a third accident insurance bill after being criticized and modified, and it was finally approved by the Reichstag in 1884. Bismarck, meanwhile, fared better with health insurance. (Pflanze, 1990)



On June 15, 1883, the bill was rapidly approved by the Reichstag and became law. A substantial number of wage earners were required to have health insurance, while professionals and white-collar workers were excluded from this mandate. Catholics and other opponents of states' rights feared Bismarck's centralization of state authority. The legislation stated that all local sickness funds should be regulated and managed by the legislatures and insurance bureaus of several German states rather than being under an Imperial Insurance Bureau. Bismarck was a pragmatic opportunist rather than a man of principles and theories. He made several amendments to his third accident insurance bill, which was adopted by Reichstag in July 1884 and went into effect on October 1, 1885, after taking notice of the critiques and prejudices his previous two accident insurance bills had experienced. Greater caution in accident prevention and a significant drop in accident occurrence were two of accident insurance laws' most significant indirect effects. When the Reichstag repeatedly criticized his proposals for dealing with accidents and illnesses and fiercely objected to the notion of significant financial contributions from the Reich government, he lost interest. He was also upset that the Social Democrats did not seem to be persuaded by his ideas for accident and sickness insurance. At every election, their numbers were steadily increasing, and they were as aggressive and dissatisfied as before. Bismarck stated that he was prepared to use the military to assassinate strikers during the 1888 Westphalian coalminers' massive trike. But on the other hand, William II preferred to avoid violence at the beginning of his rule. (Pflanze, 1990)

According to the law of 1889, practically all wage laborers of all genders over 16 who made below 2,000 marks annually were required to have insurance for old age and disability. All three social insurance programs had some expansion in 1911. These were the initial stages of the German welfare state's insurance provision. (Fay, 1950)

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Otto von Bismarck's life and political career reveal a nuanced and multidimensional person whose influence on German and European history is immense. Despite facing early difficulties as a result of coming from an aristocratic background, Bismarck's foray into politics signaled the start of an incredible journey that altered Germany's social and economic structure in addition to its political environment.

Deeply conservative, Bismarck's political theory was based on the idea that a Christian state governed by divine law existed. In his early political career, he was known as a rustic conservative because of his opposition to liberalism and Jewish emancipation. But as things developed, Bismarck's influence in international relations grew, and this resulted in the unification of Germany under Prussian rule.

The post-unification changes that Bismarck started were crucial in determining how the German Empire developed. Economically, Bismarck overcame obstacles by putting in place measures that increased industrialization and production. Even though they were initially conservative, his social reforms set the stage for a limited German welfare state that included policies on work, housing, and accident insurance.

The influence Bismarck had on education is among his most enduring legacies. Under his direction, the German educational system saw substantial changes that strengthened the country's sense of patriotism and nationalism. A population with a wide range of cultural and religious backgrounds was brought together in large part by the emphasis placed in schools on German language, history, and culture.

Notwithstanding these successes, there are still disagreements over Bismarck's legacy. The complicated nature of his reign is demonstrated by the laws he enacted discriminating against women and by the oppressive actions he took against the Social Democratic Party, which was on the rise. Bismarck's

readiness to deploy authoritarian methods to uphold order was demonstrated by the anti-socialist legislation, which was passed in response to perceived threats.

Some of Bismarck's social initiatives were revised and made more progressive following his demise in 1890. The foundations for the German welfare state, which developed over the ensuing decades, demonstrate the long-lasting effects of Bismarck's policies.

Fundamentally, the life and political career of Otto von Bismarck represents the complex relationship between authoritarianism, pragmatism, and conservatism. His legacy had a permanent influence on Germany's political, social, and economic landscape, leaving an indelible mark on the country's history.

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